A Stronger, Fairer Australia
The Australian Government is determined to build a stronger, fairer nation. This statement sets out our plan for achieving that vision of social inclusion.

The Australian Government's social inclusion agenda aims to make sure every Australian has the capability, opportunity and resources to participate in the economy and their community while taking responsibility for shaping their own lives.

Too many Australians are held back by entrenched disadvantage, despite a growing economy in recent years.

We are determined to address this social exclusion which stops many Australians from getting a fair go and costs the entire community in lower productivity, chronic health problems, welfare dependence and fractured, dysfunctional families and communities.

This statement sets out our agenda for change. It builds on work already done over the last two years through reform and investments in fairer workplace relations, employment, pension reform, housing and homelessness, closing the gap, early childhood and schools to create a stronger, fairer Australia.

We understand that entrenched disadvantage is not a new problem but addressing it requires a new approach.

This statement sets out our new approach.

> A new approach to forming partnerships between the people in government, the not for profit sector and business who have the greatest experience in addressing disadvantage.
> A new approach that emphasises delivering world class services that meet the needs of every Australian.
> A new approach that supports flexible, local solutions to individual problems.
> A new approach that builds on reforms already made.
> A new approach to our continuing commitment to build a nation that is better equipped for the future and in which every Australian gets a fair go.

Julia Gillard
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Social Inclusion

Jenny Macklin
Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

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Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion
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PART 1: Reducing Social Disadvantage and Increasing National Prosperity
Chapter 1 – Social Inclusion Strategy

Building a stronger and fairer Australia through a new approach to reducing disadvantage and increasing national prosperity

Our aspirations

The Australian Government is committed to building a stronger, fairer nation.

Social inclusion is central to this vision.

Social inclusion means building a nation in which all Australians have the opportunity and support they need to participate fully in the nation’s economic and community life, develop their own potential and be treated with dignity and respect.

Achieving this vision means tackling the most entrenched forms of disadvantage in Australia today, expanding the range of opportunities available to everyone and strengthening resilience and responsibility.

This involves making sure that income, financial support and services meet people’s essential needs. It goes beyond minimum standards of living to the skills and relationships that underpin people’s long term wellbeing and the economic opportunities through which they can develop themselves. In the long run, individuals, families and communities are the most important shapers of social inclusion.

An inclusive Australia is one where all Australians have the capabilities, opportunities, responsibilities and resources to learn, work, connect with others and have a say.

In Australia today, not all Australians can do these things.

Our social inclusion strategy is about making sure that, over time, every Australian can play an active part in shaping their own life and contributing to the economy and community. As a nation, we must do more to build a fairer society in which:

- those currently facing disadvantage have improved opportunities for education, health, work and wellbeing and all Australians enjoy improved quality of life;

- all cultures and communities are strong and resilient, with a sense of pride, identity and a respect for others;

- all sectors of the economy ‘roll up their sleeves’ and contribute to tackling the most challenging social problems and reaching out to those who need extra support; and

- an adequate safety net is available for all Australians which provides the opportunities and resources needed to participate in the economy and community life.

As our economy grows, we should invest to make sure that the whole community can contribute to and benefit from the resulting prosperity.

A strong economy is vital but, by its own action, it will not ensure the social inclusion of all Australians.

Active government plays a big role, but social inclusion is about more.

Social inclusion is about all Australians working together.

It’s helping individuals to develop their skills and abilities. It’s supporting local communities to respond with confidence to new pressures and problems. It’s recognising our national responsibility to share the costs of giving all Australians a decent life and a fair go at a better life.

Financial resources are limited. Our strategy aims to make the right investments, ensure that money is spent well and that we all make a fair contribution.

Achieving social inclusion also means taking tough decisions and insisting that, while everyone deserves support and opportunity, we all have a personal obligation to take part and put our best effort into taking those opportunities.
This means focusing on the people facing the greatest disadvantage and helping them build the skills and capabilities that encourage self-reliance. It means improving our core services, such as health and education, so they help prevent social exclusion by supporting people through challenging life events in order to avoid long term dependency. To achieve this, services must improve so they better meet the needs of every Australian, not only those people who already use them with ease.

### Capabilities, responsibilities, opportunities and resources

**Being socially included means that people have the capabilities, opportunities, responsibilities and resources to participate fully in Australian life.**

**Capabilities:** are the skills and abilities needed to take up opportunities including life skills such as the ability to communicate, negotiate, organise, manage time, raise children and understand and navigate services, as well as the skills and abilities developed through formal education and training.

**Opportunities:** are the options that are available and the choices that a person has. Opportunities include the chance to participate in education, work, leisure, relationships and community activities.

**Responsibilities:** are the formal and informal duties we owe to each other, including abiding by the law, working to the best of our abilities to support ourselves and our families, extending a fair go to others and treating each individual with respect and courtesy.

**Resources:** are the assets needed to support participation. Resources can be material (e.g. possessions, clothes, a car, tools, facilities, equipment) and non-material (e.g. information, good health, social networks and family support). Resources can belong to an individual (such as tools of trade, personal income, personal strengths), a family (family home, warm and supportive relationships) or a community (library, services, public transport, community organisations, informal community networks).
We also need to forge new partnerships and better ways of working between governments, community, not-for-profit organisations and business.

The Australian Government, working with its partners in all sectors, has already taken big steps to tackle some of the worst forms of exclusion and prevent the global economic downturn from creating far wider disadvantage.

This social inclusion strategy sets out those actions and our approach to making Australia stronger and fairer over time, by:

- maintaining a strong and internationally competitive economy;
- creating the opportunities and resources that every Australian needs to participate in the economy and community life;
- ensuring that services which are provided to all Australians meet high standards;
- supporting families and building strong and cohesive communities; and
- building new and innovative partnerships with all sectors of the economy.

Our social inclusion priorities have been selected by using evidence about the causes and consequences of social and economic disadvantage.

These priorities, where disadvantage is often a result of multiple, complex and interconnected barriers to participation, are:

- targeting jobless families with children to increase work opportunities, improve parenting and build capacity;
- improving the life chances of children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage;
- reducing the incidence of homelessness;
- improving outcomes for people living with disability or mental illness and their carers;
- closing the gap for Indigenous Australians; and
- breaking the cycle of entrenched and multiple disadvantage in particular neighbourhoods and communities.
Chapter 2 – The Case for Change

Despite a long period of strong economic growth, not all Australians have benefited from increased prosperity. Without determined action they and their families may fall further behind.

Disadvantage is often associated with a range of social, economic and health problems, including:

- lower levels of trust and community participation;
- increased levels of mental illness;
- higher rates of obesity and preventable chronic disease;
- poorer educational outcomes for low skilled Australians and for their children;
- fewer opportunities for labour market participation by some people;
- more limited opportunities for people to improve their economic and social circumstances; and
- concentrations of multiple and entrenched disadvantage in particular communities.

These problems are significant in themselves but, left unchecked, their costs are likely to multiply, contributing to a cycle of intergenerational disadvantage that Australia cannot afford.

Australia is changing

Australia’s economy has changed in recent decades, with greater demand for skilled workers, shrinking opportunities for people with limited training or education and a geographical redistribution of job opportunities as some sectors contract and others expand.

The Australian population is ageing and becoming more diverse as increasing life expectancy, fertility and migration all contribute to a wider spread of household types and life circumstances.

More women are participating in the workforce and having children later in life. More families with children have both parents working and face the challenge of balancing their work and family life.

Community structures and social life are also changing. Average economic standards of living have increased; average household size has fallen; there are more lone parent households; and people are smoking less but eating more, leading to changing patterns of disease. We have more wealth, information and choices than a generation ago, but there are also new risks and pressures, especially for those with fewer skills and resources to deal with change.

As our economy continues to change, more and more work opportunities will be available only to those with qualifications and higher level skills.

Social challenges will be different for a community with more older Australians and more people living on their own.

As our society ages, Australia needs to build a ‘full participation economy’ to help meet the costs of health and other services and make sure that economic growth is not constrained by lack of skilled workers.

Drivers of social exclusion in Australia

International comparisons show that overall Australia is faring very well. However, when we look at outcomes for particular groups, it is clear that some Australians are not sharing in the benefits of national prosperity.

The following sections of this chapter provide information on drivers of social exclusion in Australia, including:

- poverty, low income and income inequality;
- lack of access to the job market;
- poor educational outcomes;
- poor health and wellbeing;
- lack of access to social supports and networks;
- exclusion from services; and
- discrimination.

Statistics show that these drivers are often inter-related. When they combine, they can have a compounding effect, deepening disadvantage and creating a vicious cycle that undermines people’s resilience and reduces their ability to participate.
Similarly, drivers of social exclusion are more prevalent in certain population groups, regardless of where they live. Those at greatest risk of social exclusion include sole parents, jobless families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability and mental illness, those with low income and people who are homeless.

**Poverty, low income and income inequality**

On average, Australians have a high standard of living compared to other countries. However, the benefits of our national prosperity are not being shared by the entire population.

In 2007-2008 the 20 per cent of households which earned the lowest incomes received 7.6 per cent of total income, a decrease from 7.9 per cent in 1994–1995. Over the same period, households in the top 20 per cent of incomes received 39.4 per cent of income in 2007–2008, an increase from 37.8 per cent in 1994–1995. This means poor households did not experience the same growth in income as other households and the gap between the richest and poorest households slowly grew. Increasing income and opportunity for all Australians is good for Australia. Ensuring that the incomes and circumstances of those who are worst off can improve as the national economy grows is an important part of building a stronger, fairer nation.

Some Australians are at risk of poverty and struggle to meet the rising costs of living:

- around one in five Australians were considered to be at risk of poverty;
- one in eight people lived in households with high financial stress;
- 40 per cent of one parent families with children lived in high financial stress;
- one in five low income households were classified as being in housing stress.

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*a Six selected disadvantages were considered in three areas: economic (low income and no access to funds in an emergency, jobless households); personal (poor self-assessed health, education below Year 10); and social (feeling unsafe at home alone after dark, unable to get support in times of crisis).

*b Income refers to equivalised household disposable income

*c With equivalised household income below 60% of median (noting that there are some concerns with this as a measure of poverty risk).

*d High financial stress describes the proportion of people whose household reported an incidence of five or more individual financial stress indicators (out of a total of 15) in the previous 12 months. These included being unable to pay certain bills on time, whether they could not afford activities such as a night out once a fortnight, or a special meal once a week; or whether they had gone without food or heating because of a shortage of money.

*e Spending more than 30% of their gross equivalised household income on housing costs.
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10% had unemployment rates of 6.9% or higher.

Low educational attainment is also linked to higher levels of unemployment. While people without a non-school qualification make up only 34 per cent of the population, they make up 58 per cent of the unemployed and 63 per cent of the long-term unemployed.

With the economic downturn, there has been an increase in jobless families as a proportion of all families from 12 per cent in June 2008 to 14 per cent in June 2009.

Poor educational outcomes

Education is fundamental to achieving a fairer and stronger Australia and for many people provides a pathway out of disadvantage. It also offers protection from unemployment. People who do not have a Year 12 education, or an equivalent non-school qualification, are 18 per cent less likely to be in the workforce than people that do. If they are in the workforce, they are 1.6 times more likely to be unemployed.

Low educational outcomes tend to be associated with particular social groups and concentrated in particular locations:

- the rate of employment of people with disability and severe mental illness is still well below that of people without disability and mental illness, and, in recent years, their relative employment prospects have declined— from 1993 to 2003, the employment rate of people without disability increased by 13 per cent (from 67.6 per cent to 76.5 per cent), while the employment rate of people with disability (including psychological disability) increased only by 8 per cent (from 45.1 per cent to only 48.7 per cent);
- rates of Indigenous employment were much lower than for the non-Indigenous population. In 2008, 54 per cent of Indigenous Australians aged 15 years and over were employed compared to 73 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians;
- Australia also has considerable regional variation in unemployment with some areas consistently showing much higher rates of unemployment. In 2008, 10% of Statistical Local Areas (SLAs)—1334 small standard geographic areas across Australia—had unemployment rates of 1.5% or lower, while 10% had unemployment rates of 6.9% or higher and
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Lack of access to the job market

As with average income, Australia is well placed in terms of our overall rate of labour force participation and has amongst the lowest long-term unemployment rates when compared to other developed countries.

Some Australians, however, experience persistently high levels of unemployment and in some households, unemployment is a way of life. For example, over one third of households that were jobless in 2001 remained jobless in 2006.

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The gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians is estimated to be 9.7 years for women and 11.5 years for men. More than half of this life expectancy gap is estimated to be due to chronic disease; people in jobless families and those born in non-English speaking countries are much more likely to have poorer health outcomes; and low socio-economic status is linked to higher prevalence of many conditions including arthritis, asthma, diabetes and heart disease.

Lack of social supports and networks

The resources available to a person or household extend beyond income to include other forms of support from friends, neighbours, relatives and work colleagues. These other forms of support can be material or emotional:

> in 2006, 93 per cent of the population had someone to turn to in time of crisis, generally family or friends; and
> 63 per cent of the Australian population aged 18 years and over were involved in a social group in their community over the last 12 months.

For some groups, levels of support are lower:

> people with low income, the unemployed, people with disability, those with poor health, the aged and people not proficient in English reported lower levels of support in a time of crisis; and
> only 61 per cent of people living in households in the bottom 20 per cent of household incomes were involved in a social group compared to 80 per cent in the top 20 per cent.

Exclusion from services

Services represent another form of support for persons and households. These include both government services and those provided privately. The vast majority of Australians are able to access services readily.

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f The 20 per cent of all collection districts with the lowest Socio-economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) score.

g The 20 per cent of all collection districts with the highest SEIFA IRSD score.
In 2009, 94 per cent of Indigenous respondents who participated in the Australian Reconciliation Barometer reported a high level of prejudice from other Australians towards Indigenous people.\textsuperscript{49}

Research also suggests that race-based discrimination in particular can lead to ill health, reduced productivity, and reduced life expectancy. It can also negatively affect families and local communities, with resultant social and economic costs.\textsuperscript{50, 51, 52}

The need to improve measurement is recognised in the indicator framework of social inclusion, which includes a supplementary indicator on tolerance of diversity (see Appendix B).

The broader impact of social exclusion

While social exclusion has an immediate negative impact on those experiencing the exclusion, disadvantage also has economic and social impacts on society more broadly. Social disadvantage results in:

- costs to the budget through:
  - increased health spending on preventable chronic disease and mental illness;
  - increased provision of financial support to those who are unable to work; and
  - increased costs for policing, the courts and corrective services;
- costs to the economy through lost productivity and workforce participation;
- costs to communities, where disadvantage becomes entrenched, levels of social interaction and safety are reduced and social isolation may ensue; and
- costs to individuals and families who can experience financial hardship, social and physical isolation, chronic or persistent health problems and family breakdown.

By tackling the drivers of social exclusion, with a focus on the people facing long term risks and multiple disadvantages and the places experiencing concentrated disadvantage, we aim to reduce these costs and achieve our aspiration of a fairer society in which all individuals, families and communities have the capabilities, opportunities, responsibilities and resources they need to participate successfully.

However, some groups found this more difficult than others:

> almost 40 per cent of people living outside cities and major towns reported difficulty accessing service providers;\textsuperscript{42}
> people with low income, in one parent families, with disability or poor health, those not proficient in English, the unemployed and the aged are more likely to have transport difficulties than the general population;\textsuperscript{43}
> low income households were less likely to have access to the Internet at home (33 per cent) compared to all households (64 per cent);\textsuperscript{44} and
> many people facing a legal event or financial stress (33 – 47 per cent) take no action and do not seek any assistance because of lack of knowledge, lack of capacity, disempowerment or for fear it would make no difference or would make the matter worse.\textsuperscript{45}

Discrimination

While Australia is a tolerant and diverse society, some level of discrimination exists.

Discrimination may take a number of forms and can be based on appearance, ethnicity and culture. People may also feel discriminated against because of their age, gender, disability or sexuality.

Measuring discrimination is difficult and there are currently no large scale, national sources of data on this issue. Although their scope and sample size are limited, surveys and research have found evidence of discrimination in Australia.

Some research has found that people from a non-English speaking background reported being treated with distrust, disrespect or experienced discrimination because of their national or ethnic background.\textsuperscript{46, 47}

Other research has found that Australians with names that imply that they belong to a minority group may suffer from discrimination when they attempt to secure employment in jobs that do not require post-secondary qualifications.\textsuperscript{48}

Discrimination can directly impact on groups that are already at particular risk of social exclusion, such as people from a refugee background and other vulnerable migrants, people from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background and people with a disability or mental illness:

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Chapter 3 – A Framework for Action

The Government’s framework for building a stronger, fairer Australia is built on five pillars.

1. Economic growth – maintaining a strong, internationally competitive economy.
   > To improve social outcomes over time and between generations, Government economic strategy needs to be consistent with sound fiscal and macroeconomic policy settings.

2. Equitable social policy – creating the opportunities and resources that every Australian needs to participate in the economy and community life by:
   > providing an adequate safety net;
   > increasing the productive capacity of low skilled Australians through local skills, training and employment strategies; and
   > getting people to take responsibility for the choices that are within their control and providing support in ways that build and reinforce their capabilities, resilience and independence.

3. Quality services – ensuring that services which are provided to all Australians meet high standards, especially for those Australians who need them most but may have difficulty accessing them. This means improving the quality and accessibility of mainstream services and targeting the right support directly to the most disadvantaged individuals and communities.
   Our service reform priorities include:
   > building a world-class education system which prepares children for work and life, including through lifting the quality of education in the most disadvantaged schools;
   > building world-class health and community services which improve life outcomes, particularly for the most disadvantaged and including through better access to primary and preventative health services, linking people to the range of supports they need before crises occur, and at critical life transitions;
   > improving the supply of affordable housing; and
   > closing the gap for Indigenous Australians in areas including life expectancy, education, health, housing and employment.

4. Strong families and communities – supporting families and building strong and cohesive communities especially in areas experiencing entrenched and multiple disadvantage:
   > ensuring that all communities benefit from the opportunities afforded by Australia’s strong recovery from the global economic downturn and from future economic growth;
   > supporting families with their responsibilities through paid parental leave, better quality childcare and family support programs;
   > supporting strong, diverse communities, free from discrimination, violence and abuse, by confronting intolerance and promoting respect and a sense of belonging for everyone;
   > supporting individuals and communities affected by disasters and critical incidents to recover and build resilience; and
   > improving social infrastructure in communities and supporting volunteering.

5. Partnership for change – building new and innovative partnerships with all sectors of the economy, so that all levels of government, businesses and not-for-profit organisations are working together to build a stronger, fairer Australia; such as:
   > developing a Compact with the not for profit sector;
   > supporting new models of social enterprise and social investment;
   > working with philanthropic foundations and individual donors in areas of national priority like reducing indigenous disadvantage and improving child health outcomes;
   > effectively coordinating action across sectors to prevent and reduce homelessness and;
   > working together with business to help Australians living with disability and mental illness to participate in work and community life.
Government response to the global economic downturn

The Australian Government provided unprecedented support and direct stimulus to the economy through:

- payments to households;
- support for housing and affordability; and
- a program of investment in nation building infrastructure which has maintained demand for employment and skills and invested in meeting Australia’s long term social and infrastructure needs through:
  - social housing;
  - schools;
  - energy efficiency; and
  - transport and communications.

This package has limited the negative effects of the global economic downturn on Australians by preventing the loss of jobs, skills and financial security.

The establishment of a Jobs and Training Compact has further helped cushion the impact of the global financial downturn on unemployment – backed by the $2 billion investment in 711,000 training places and the creation of a $650 million jobs fund. The new Apprentice Kickstart Bonus and Pre-Apprenticeships Package will also invest $100 million to support up to 21,000 young Australians entering traditional trades through extra employer incentives and increased pre-apprenticeship training opportunities.

The Government has also helped those Australians most vulnerable to the effects of the downturn through Compacts with Young Australians, Retrenched Workers and Local Communities, to make sure that help and opportunity are available to those most affected by the downturn.

A strong foundation

In its first two years, the Australian Government has taken major steps to build a stronger and fairer Australia across all of these five pillars.

Economic growth

A strong economy is essential for Australia’s future. The global economic downturn threatened to cause huge damage to the livelihoods and future prospects of millions of Australians and to destroy skills and capital through economic contraction, and the Australian Government responded promptly.

Other measures to build Australia’s economic strength, skills and productivity include:

- a $970 million investment in early childhood education services to ensure, in partnership with State and Territory governments, that by 2013 every child has access to 15 hours a week of quality play-based early childhood education (eg. in a preschool or kindergarten) for 40 weeks in the year before full-time schooling;
- introduction of a National Quality Framework for early childhood education and child care, to ensure all early childhood services meet national quality standards;
- the national rollout of the Australian Early Development Index to help understand the location and needs of children at risk and better tailor early childhood services;
- increased investment in schools to ensure that children have access to modern school infrastructure through the $14.7 billion school modernisation program, the $2 billion Digital Education Revolution and the $2.5 billion investment in trades training centres in schools;
- investment of $2.6 billion through new National Partnerships to improve the quality of assistance to disadvantaged schools and high quality teaching;
- investment of $3.8 billion in Australian Apprenticeships over four years, including broadening eligibility for incentives to employ apprentices studying Diploma and Advanced Diploma level qualifications and extending eligibility payments to support adult apprentices from those aged 30 and over to those aged 25 and over;
establishment of a new curriculum authority that is already working with expert panels to draft a new national curriculum to give children the skills and knowledge to succeed and introduced transparent national reporting on education outcomes and school performance;

> establishment of the new Job Services Australia to provide flexible and tailored support to job seekers, along with a new flexible, demand driven Disability Employment Network to provide tailored assistance and stronger links to skills development and training;

> investment in Australia’s skills to lift the number of working age Australians with qualifications by investing $2 billion in training, providing 711,000 Productivity Places, with a focus on job seekers and newly retrenched workers. Since the program began in April 2008, more than 110,000 job seekers have enrolled, over 86,000 have commenced training and more than 40,000 have completed their courses;

> reform of Higher Education to increase the number of young Australians who can get a degree and give universities the funding and flexibility to improve access, teaching quality and facilities. From 2012, all Australian students who qualify will be offered a place. Improved student income support will help more students from disadvantaged backgrounds to attend university. This will help achieve the ambition that 40 per cent of 25 to 34 year olds will have attained a bachelor level or above qualification by 2025, and that the proportion of students in university from disadvantaged backgrounds increases from 15 per cent to 20 per cent by 2020; and

> abolition of Work Choices and its replacement with a Fair Work Act to provide a fair and balanced industrial relations system for all Australians.

Equitable social policy

Initiatives to ensure that Australians in need have a sufficient income and adequate material resources to participate in our economy and society include:

> tax relief to working families, including income tax cuts, increasing the Child Care Tax Rebate from 30 per cent to 50 per cent and a 50 per cent Education Tax Refund on eligible primary and secondary educational expenses;

> increases in the low income tax offset from $750 to $1,200 on 1 July 2008, to $1,350 on 1 July 2009 and to $1,500 from July 2010 which, for those eligible for the full low income tax offset, will raise the effective tax free threshold from $11,000 in 2007-08 to $16,000 by 2010-11;

> a new National Disability Agreement with increased Australian Government investment totalling more than $5 billion over the life of the agreement to improve specialist services for people with disability and their carers;

> a permanent carer supplement of $600 per annum, introduced for the first time in recognition of carers’ significant sacrifices and frequent financial pressure;

> a $1.1 billion plan to halve the rate of homelessness by 2020 and provide accommodation for all rough sleepers who seek it;

> investing $5.67 billion to build over 19,300 new dwellings and refurbish 70,000 existing public dwellings to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, the single biggest expansion of social housing ever undertaken in Australia;

> the single largest reform of the age pension, to make sure that older Australians can maintain an adequate standard of living (including significant increases for single pensioners, new pension indexation arrangements and an increase in the legislated benchmark for the pension of 27.7 per cent of male total average weekly earnings), and make the pension system simpler to understand and more flexible, so that pensioners can plan and budget more effectively and securely; and

> providing funding for essential microfinance services to people across Australia, including expanding both the No Interest Loans Scheme, a community-based program that will enable an additional 10,000 people to access fair, safe and equitable credit, and the SaverPlus matched savings scheme, reaching up to 7,600 more people, with financial education as a compulsory element of the scheme, and a small component to pilot a loans program for people unable to access mainstream credit.
Quality services

Reforms and measures now taken include:

- establishment of a new $64 billion National Healthcare Agreement to drive improvements in quality, accessibility and sustainability of health services in all states and territories;
- development of a National Preventative Health Strategy partnered with an investment in preventative health to reduce the chronic conditions that can hold back social and economic participation;
- a $600 million investment in elective surgery to reduce the number of people waiting longer than clinically recommended for their surgery and to increase the capacity of public hospitals to conduct surgeries into the future with the 2008 national target of 25,000 additional procedures exceeded by 65 per cent;
- establishment of a company to build and operate a National Broadband Network, which will deliver superfast broadband to homes and offices, which will drive efficiency, improve the delivery of social services and help regional and remote areas overcome the challenges of distance through a Regional Backbone Blackspots program, which will benefit 395,000 Australians in 100 regional and remote locations and support more than 1000 jobs;
- investment in infrastructure to enhance the liveability and productivity of our communities, including $4.6 billion to improve metropolitan rail networks in six major cities (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and the Gold Coast) and more than $1 billion for local governments across Australia to build and modernise community infrastructure; and
- a National Apology to Indigenous Australians, backed by a national strategy to reduce Indigenous disadvantage in life expectancy, health, housing, education and employment.
Work in progress

The Government established the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission in 2008 to develop a long term health reform plan and used the recommendations of the Commission as a basis for direct consultation with the health sector and the Australian community in the latter half of 2009. At its 7 December 2009 meeting, COAG agreed to commence work immediately on the development of a national health reform plan as a priority in 2010.

As announced in December 2009, the Government is initiating reforms in the Human Services portfolio to make sure its service delivery systems work effectively for anyone who needs these services. These reforms include:

> creating a single point face-to-face, phone and online access to a range of Government services currently delivered through the Human Services portfolio, - this includes opening at least another 20 co-located Centrelink and Medicare offices by the end of 2010;

> bringing payment and services directly to Indigenous communities and rural and remote Australia through Mobile Offices;

> giving Australians the ability to ‘tell us once’ so people won’t need to tell different Human Service agencies the same information again and again.

Over time, more offices will have Centrelink, Medicare and Child Support Agency services under one roof so that staff can better help vulnerable people who need intensive assistance. Other features of the reforms include coordinated services for those most in need of intensive support, with a move towards more of a case management approach across Government, business and non-government sectors; and linked services through partnerships with business and community sector organisations that need to engage across various service delivery agencies.

Another area of focus for improvements to service delivery is support for job seekers, to help them capitalise on the employment opportunities that come with the economic recovery and prevent them falling into long term unemployment. Learning from past economic downturns, the Government has established a Taskforce for Strengthening Government Service Delivery for Job Seekers. The Departments of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Human Services and Centrelink will work together over six months to mid-2010 to:

> examine strategies and processes to enable job-ready job seekers to find employment as quickly as possible, including international best practice;

> consider an assessment process to quickly identify Centrelink customers capable of self-help and online job searching to free up resources for those who need extra support;

> consider ways to support job seekers from becoming long-term unemployed;

> consider a more collaborative approach to support mobility of workers seeking jobs, particularly for large employment projects and growth labour markets, and

> consider ways to better assist national employers to access Job Services Australia providers across Australia.

Strong families and communities

The Government has:

> announced that it will introduce, from 1 January 2011, Australia’s first national Paid Parental Leave Scheme of up to 18 weeks of payment at the rate of the Federal Minimum Wage to help parents take the time needed to nurture their child’s early development and maintain links with their employer;

> increased funding for emergency relief and Commonwealth Financial Counselling under the Financial Management Program, to build financial capability and resilience and provide immediate financial support. This additional funding provides emergency, financial or
other assistance to individuals and families in immediate financial crisis and improves access to independent advice and information for people in financial difficulty;

> initiated and funded the establishment of a National Representative Body, the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, that will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have a voice in decisions that affect them and help Government shape its approach to Indigenous affairs;

> implemented the first ever National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children with the State and Territory Governments, and recognised the ongoing impacts of child abuse and neglect through a national apology in 2009 to the Forgotten Australians (care leavers from institutional and out-of-home care) and former child migrants; and

> released the Strategic Framework for Access to Justice in the Federal Civil Justice System and achieved, in November 2009, the agreement of all States and Territories to a coordinated national approach to improving access to justice, including through coordinated funding for legal assistance services and seamless access to information and services.

**Work in progress**

The Australian Government is developing a National Volunteering Strategy to be released ahead of 2011, which will mark the 10 year anniversary of the United Nations Year of Volunteering celebrated in 2001. A national strategy will articulate the Government’s vision and commitment to volunteering in Australia and highlight the key issues.

The Government is currently developing a new cultural diversity policy framework which will contribute to social inclusion by pursuing respect, fairness and opportunities for participation in community life for all Australians.

**Strengthening opportunities for social and community participation**

The new Golden Gurus program, which started on 1 January 2010, encourages skilled mature age people who are retired, semi-retired or not working full time to share their skills and experience as mentors for community organisations and small businesses. This could involve helping a community organisation to grow or helping a community organisation deliver support to others (for example, by transferring skills and experience to people with disability, young people, Indigenous Australians or people experiencing challenges in life).

Community festivals also create opportunities for participation and to build community pride and identity. In 2009, Wimmera Uniting Care received funding to support its For Your Information project at the Awakenings Festival in Horsham Victoria in October 2009. The festival is a ten day celebration of the disability arts sector with mainstream community groups performing alongside disability groups. The project was developed in response to an identified need by people with a disability to have performance opportunities.

In October 2009, the Government opened a National Conversation with Australia’s youth, to better understand the values, needs and aspirations of Australia’s young people today. Participation in their community is very important to young people. One example of what young people can achieve by working together on issues they care about is the Australian Youth Climate Coalition. All major youth organisations, and over 50,000 young Australians, work together to facilitate young Australians taking action to address climate change in our schools, TAFEs, Universities and communities. All Coalition staff, volunteers and steering committee members are under thirty, and the vast majority are under twenty-five.
Partnership for change

Actions to date to build new partnerships include:

> new federal financial relations established through COAG, designed to improve the quality and effectiveness of government services by providing greater flexibility in the way they are delivered by the States and Territories along with clearer roles and responsibilities for each level of government and stronger accountability for outcomes;

> developing a national compact with the Third (not-for-profit and community) Sector (see Chapter 10 for more information);

> establishing the Australian Council of Local Governments, to forge a new cooperative engagement between the Commonwealth and local government;

> establishing the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council, linking registered Indigenous businesses with corporate purchasers, to give Indigenous business a real chance to win contracts (see Chapter 8 for more information);

> support for the GoodStart not-for-profit company, established by not-for-profit organisations including Social Ventures Australia, Mission Australia, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, and the Benevolent Society to provide high quality, accessible and affordable education and care programs for Australia’s children, and selected as the preferred purchaser of the majority of the former ABC Learning child care centres; and

> formation of the Community Response Taskforce for government to engage with the welfare sector in a new and cooperative way to respond to the global economic downturn, and to enable the sector’s direct engagement with business to work together to ameliorate the impacts of the downturn on vulnerable Australians.

Work in progress

The Business-School Connections Roundtable, an idea that came out of the 2020 summit, is being sponsored by the Government to foster more partnerships between schools and business, increasing opportunities for students and improving educational outcomes. The Roundtable will start in 2010 and will consist of top business, community and education sector representatives and will oversee the development of a strategy to ensure secondary schools benefit from a business connection, widening the life choices for students, particularly those in disadvantaged schools.

The Government is exploring ways to work together with business and not-for-profit organisations to form new partnerships to encourage philanthropy and social enterprise.

These actions to support a stronger and fairer Australia have been designed to increase the number of Australians who are able to benefit from the opportunities created by a changing economy and society.

However, to make sure that Australians most in need are able to benefit, targeted action is also needed to tackle the multiple disadvantages faced by some people, to build up skills, resilience and motivation and to ensure that temporary hardships do not translate into entrenched, long term exclusion.
Social Inclusion Priorities

Based on evidence about the causes and consequences of social and economic disadvantage in Australia, the Government is focusing on six specific priorities:

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

Part 2 of this Statement outlines actions that have already been taken and the next reform steps for each of these priorities through:

> definition of the key problems that need to be tackled;
> reforms and investments the Australian Government has already put in place to start making a difference;
> innovations we are piloting to test out new solutions; and
> future directions we intend to take in each area.

Our work on these priorities, and evidence about how they can be addressed effectively, will guide our ongoing approach to reform. This work is also helping to inform the development, with States and Territories, of a joint National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.
Principles to guide delivery

Two themes unify and define the Australian Government’s approach to delivering action on social inclusion.

First, services provided by the Government and the non-Government sector can help but they cannot provide the whole solution to social exclusion. All parts of the community and all sectors of the economy have to work together.

Second, individuals and families are equally important players in their own stories. Government programs should build resilience and self reliance so that people can take greater responsibility for their own futures.

The following principles were designed by the Social Inclusion Board to help guide how governments, community organisations and businesses work with disadvantaged Australians, and with each other, to ensure that Australians have the best access to the capabilities, opportunities and resources they need.

The Australian Government seeks to apply these principles in practice to designing and delivering tax and transfer payments, governance and other support services. State and Territory governments have endorsed the Principles as part of their commitment to develop a National Action Plan on Social Inclusion.

Principles for Social Inclusion in Australia

1. Building on individual and community strengths – Making the most of people’s strengths, including the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from other cultures

2. Building partnerships with key stakeholders – Governments, organisations and communities working together to get the best results for people in need

3. Developing tailored services – Services working together in new and flexible ways to meet each person’s different needs. For some members of the Australian population experiencing, or at immediate risk of, significant exclusion, mainstream services may not be sufficient or appropriate to mitigate exclusion

4. Giving a high priority to early intervention and prevention – Heading off problems by understanding the root causes and intervening early

5. Building joined-up services and whole of government(s) solutions – Getting different parts and different levels of government to work together in new and flexible ways to get better outcomes and services for people in need

6. Using evidence and integrated data to inform policy – Finding out what programs and services work well and understanding why, to share good ideas, keep making improvements and put effort into things that work

7. Using locational approaches – Working in places where there is a lot of disadvantage, to get to people most in need and to understand how different problems are connected

8. Planning for sustainability – Doing things that will help people and communities deal better with problems in the future, as well as solving the problems they face now

A more detailed description of the principles with examples of how they are being put into practice is at Appendix A.
PART 2: Action Plans: Early Priorities
Chapter 4 – Targeting jobless families with children to increase work opportunities, improve parenting and build capacity

When families have no parent employed for a long period of time it can mean that adults and children do poorly across a range of fronts, including health and education. This disadvantage can continue into adulthood and be reflected in intergenerational unemployment and diminished life chances.

- The proportion of families with children under 15 years that are jobless decreased over the past decade of economic growth, from 19 per cent in June 1998 to 12 per cent in 2008, and increased to 14 per cent in June 2009, reflecting the economic downturn.

- In June 2009, 67 per cent of jobless families with children under 15 were single parent families, and 93 per cent of those were headed by mothers.

- Even in times of economic strength, Australia has a high proportion of children living in jobless families compared to other countries. In 2003–04, the proportion of children living in jobless families was higher in Australia than in all but four of the 27 European Union member states.

- Looking at a longer period of joblessness, in October 2009 there were 235,123 Australian families with children under the age of 16 years old where the parents had not had a job for at least a year and the parents were receiving income support.

- 126,024 of these families were persistently jobless – that is, they had received no earnings and had been receiving income support for at least the last 3 years.

- Around 196,500 of the jobless families in October 2009 (84 per cent of all jobless families) were single parent families, and 104,729 of these single parent families were persistently jobless.

- Single parent families receiving income support are more likely to be jobless for a year or more (46 per cent) compared to couple parent families (18 per cent).

- Indigenous children are 3 times as likely as other children to live in jobless families.

- Parents in jobless families were less likely to have attained a non-school qualification than those parents who were employed.

- Compared to employed single parent families, jobless single parent families were much more likely to:
  - have children under the age of 5 years and/or have more than one child;
  - be headed by a parent under the age of 30;
  - have no post school qualifications and/or have Year 10 or below as their highest level of school education;
  - have no access to a motor vehicle and report difficulties with transport;
  - report poor/fair health, a disability or long-term health condition;
  - report a low level of generalised trust;
  - report not being able to raise $2,000 in a week for an emergency; and
  - have no access to a computer and/or the Internet at home.

- People who, at the age of 14, had both parents out of work were 1.8 times more likely to be out of work as adults compared to those who had a working parent.

- At age 18, children whose parents had been on long-term income support were more likely to:
  - have left school early;
  - have experienced a childhood where they moved home frequently;
  - have poorer health and be obese;
  - engage in risky behaviour including smoking and drug use;
  - have more contact with the criminal justice system; and
  - have had a child or children.

Income support rules mean that parents with children not yet at school do not have to seek paid
This more detailed analysis suggests that policies should:

- provide employment and other services that are family-centred – recognising parents’ family responsibilities while planning for their progressive pathway into work;
- build parents’ skills and training through education or training that accommodates their family responsibilities – to increase their ability to get jobs that are well paid and offer stability with some flexibility;
- build the right links between health, family and community services so that parents can access integrated support which develops their skills and confidence, deal with issues that may prevent them from working and learning successfully and give their children good early experiences that help their development; and
- overcome practical barriers to work by providing high quality, flexible and affordable childcare, access to affordable and convenient transport and access to IT and communications.

Reforms and investments already in place

The Australian Government has made a series of reforms and investments to better support job seekers into work and to protect against the impact of the economic downturn.

The new Job Services Australia, which commenced on 1 July 2009, focuses resources to make mainstream employment services work better for those that need assistance most, including jobless families. Intensive services help job seekers to deal with whatever may be stopping them from getting work. Individual Employment Pathway Plans that take account of each individual’s circumstances are supported by the $800 million Employment Pathway Fund, which enables job service providers to purchase goods, services and training that meet the specific needs of each individual. This could include wage subsidy payments to help people obtain and retain work, work experience placements, literacy and numeracy training, work related clothing, short term travel costs, relocation costs and short term child care and school holiday care costs.
While it is too early to assess the full impact of
the new arrangements, in the three months to
end September 2009, 8,700 job placements were
recorded by Job Services Australia providers
for parents who are the primary carers of their
children. Options for further improvements to
employment services and the delivery of other
government services to job seekers will be
considered by the Taskforce for Strengthening
Government Service Delivery for Job Seekers
over the six months to mid-2010 – see the Strong
Foundation section of Chapter 3 for more details.

The $650 million Jobs Fund is part of the stimulus
package that is supporting employment through
hundreds of community projects in regions
hardest hit by the downturn. Local Priority
Employment Areas (see Chapter 9 for more
detail) are supported on the ground by Local
Employment Coordinators (LECs) who work with
employers, Job Services Australia providers, not-
for-profit groups and communities to identify new
job opportunities and help match employment and
training opportunities with Government services
and funding. At the end of the September quarter
2009 there were over 173,000 parents who are
primary carers of their children receiving income
support in the Priority Employment Regions.

The Government has made changes to parents’
income support participation requirements and
supports for child care so that jobless parents
and other carers can balance their family
responsibilities while at the same time supporting
their preparation and search for work.

When children are very young, parents, usually
mothers, may prefer to care for them full-time
at home for a period of time. In Australia, many
mothers leave the workforce for at least the
first 12 months of their child’s life. Families with
two or more children under school age are even
more likely to have a mother at home full-time.
Single mothers are less likely than partnered
mothers to work while their children are small and
generally stay out of the workforce for longer than
partnered mothers. Both single and partnered
mothers’ participation in paid work gradually
increases as children grow older.

Parents who do rejoin the workforce before
children reach school age can get support and
encouragement through education, training, child
care and employment policies. For example, a
parent may volunteer with a Job Services Australia
provider for employment assistance or participate
in a training program through the Productivity
Places Program. Support for children and parents
is provided through Child Care Benefit and the
Child Care Rebate.

Eligible parents receiving income support who
need child care so they can work or study or do
job related activities, can be assisted with their
child care costs. These parents can receive the
income tested Child Care Benefit at maximum
rate where their child(ren) attend an approved
child care centre. They may also be eligible to
receive additional assistance under the Jobs,
Education and Training Child Care fee assistance
program where, after this assistance, they will be
left to contribute 10 cents per hour for their child
to attend. Since July 2008 for all eligible parents
(not just those receiving income support) the
Government has increased the Child Care Rebate
from 30 to 50 per cent of out of pocket expenses
(up to an annual limit of $7778 in 2009-10 per
child) to help parents afford the cost of child care.

Eligibility for assistance with child care fees has
been extended to make it easier for more parents
receiving income support to get help so they
can study or train for work. Support under Jobs,
Education and Training Child Care fee assistance
can now be provided for up to two years for
multi-year courses, rather than one year and can
also be extended to the part time equivalent of
the full time duration. 22 722 families and 34 054
children were assisted in 2008-09.

When children reach school age, many parents
increase their workforce participation. When their
youngest child turns six years of age, parents
receiving income support payments such as
Parenting Payment, Newstart Allowance or Youth
Allowance are generally asked to work, or look
for work for at least 15 hours per week. In some
circumstances, parents are also able to study to
contribute to meeting their requirements.

Parents can access Job Services Australia services
to help them find work suited to their individual
needs and family circumstances. Parents do
not have to take up a job if there is no suitable
child care available for their child or children,
nor do they have to accept a job offer if it won’t
make them at least $50 a fortnight better
off. Exemptions are also available for parents
whose family circumstances mean they cannot
participate in work.
The Government has recognised that parents sometimes found it difficult to meet their participation requirements by investing $26.8m in more flexible participation arrangements for parents and carers (to begin 1 July 2010). These will:

> allow parents to meet participation requirements through part-time study; or by combining part-time study, voluntary work with vocational value and part-time paid work;

> support parents wanting to start their own business to participate in self-employment programs such as the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme on a part-time basis;

> extend exemptions and flexibility for parents during the long school holidays;

> introduce appropriate exemptions for grandparents and other relatives who are entering into kinship care arrangements and foster carers who are between foster care placements;

> extend exemptions for large families, families participating in distance education and home-schooling and parents of older children who are still at secondary school;

> improve the ability of parents experiencing domestic violence to obtain exemptions from participation requirements;

> make more information available to parents about existing participation rules and exemptions; and

> allow more practical reporting for carers and parents on their earnings and participation efforts to Centrelink via the Internet or telephone.

To ensure that all families, including jobless families, are given the help they need to give children a healthy start, the Government has provided a range of measures across maternal and child health and early childhood education and care. Details of these measures are set out in Chapter 5 – Delivering effective support to children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage.

**Innovations we are piloting to test out new solutions**

As well as making participation rules more flexible and helping with training and childcare, our aim is to find out how support programs can best be tailored to meet the needs of individual families and make sure that parents get personalised help to develop the skills and routines that help them to benefit from work and learning.

Compacts are a new way the Australian Government is trialling support for individuals and communities at risk of joblessness. The compacts bring together a range of supports and reciprocal arrangements through which the Government will work with those individuals and communities to keep them connected to the labour market and moving towards employment through economic events and important transitions.

**Compacts – working together to tackle joblessness**

**Compact with Retrenched Workers** – a package of immediate intensive assistance to retrenched workers, including access to job services, training places, apprenticeships, and financial support.

**Compact with Local Communities** – assistance for communities most at risk of rising long term unemployment due to the global economic downturn, including through the Jobs Fund and Local Employment Coordinators described above.

**Compact with Young Australians** – to encourage young people to either earn or learn and in particular to stay at school and attain a Year 12 or equivalent qualification.

We are also investing in a range of local projects to test out different methods of support and delivery.

Through the **Family Centred Employment Project**, the Government is testing several ways of providing more focused family support, working with jobless families in three locations (Broadmeadows in Victoria, Mansfield Park in South Australia and Goodna in Queensland). Service providers will work together with families to identify what each family needs in order to
overcome barriers to employment. The aim is to get at least one member of each jobless family who volunteers to be part of the project, into a job or training/education. This may be achieved, for example, by service providers working intensively with individual families in a ‘life coach’ role, and working with employers and training providers to broker suitable jobs and placements that fit around family needs. The project will commence in the second half of 2010 and run for two and a half years.

The South Australian State Government is trialling complementary approaches through the Building Family Opportunities Program which is operating in Port Augusta, Playford and Port Adelaide/Enfield. This program aims to break the cycle of intergenerational family joblessness by engaging and supporting parents to stabilise their life circumstances, develop new skills and find a pathway into work.

The Government is also trialling different ways of assisting job seekers on their pathway to employment, including parents from jobless families, through projects funded by the $41 million Innovation Fund. These projects are testing different models of specialised training, work experience, self development activities and wrap-around services. Each project will be monitored and evaluated to see what works best.

**Innovation Fund projects assisting jobless families**

**Work Savvy Parents – Parent Mentoring Program**

This project focuses on helping a total of up to 160 disadvantaged parents from jobless families in NSW and Queensland, specifically Western and South West Sydney and Ipswich/Logan.

The program will provide coaching to address specific needs, such as housing problems and poor social or family networks. Participants will receive assistance with vocational selection and training needs assessment, work experience placement, targeted reverse marketing (actively marketing job seekers to potential employers), interview preparation and post placement visits and intervention between the employer and the participant.

**Job Futures – Kwinana Families Community Partnership Project**

The project will assist jobless families in Kwinana, South West Perth, with a history of long term unemployment and intergenerational unemployment. The project will work intensively with members of these families over 18 months, providing one-on-one individual counselling and family counselling, referral to services, re-integration into community and social life, career counselling, access to training, work experience and employment. It will focus on addressing family function by using a strengths based approach helping to break the culture of worklessness and the ongoing cycle of unemployment.

**CatholicCare – Connect 200**

This project targets highly disadvantaged people of working age and is based in NSW in the areas of Southlakes, Lake Macquarie, Windale and Port Stephens.

Connect 200 will engage with business and community organisations to connect job seekers with services to help address their barriers to employment through community forums focusing on local needs; the establishment of local advisory groups; use of employment mentors; development of a tool box resource for communities; and provision of skills training related to local employer needs.

**Over 70 social enterprise projects have been funded under the first round of the Jobs Fund and 16 social enterprise and social enterprise related projects have been funded under two rounds of the Innovation Fund –more examples and information about social enterprise are provided in Chapter 9.**
Through new conditions linked to income support payments, the Government is also trialling ways to help build parents’ capabilities and insist they share responsibility for improving outcomes for children. While income support has historically been provided on condition that people look for and accept suitable work, the Government is implementing pilot schemes that make the payment of income support conditional on school attendance, income management and child protection – more details are provided in Chapter 5 – Delivering effective support to children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage.

**Future directions**

The lessons learned from these new approaches and trials, including family-centred approaches, integrated local partnerships, wrap-around services, mentoring and social enterprise, will provide evidence about what works best for jobless families to help them into work and prevent intergenerational disadvantage. Services and supports need to respond flexibly and be able to match families’ specific circumstances and needs. They need to be accessible, responsive, simple to understand, easy to navigate and provide responses that make sense to families and the real lives they lead.

The Government will work to ensure that jobless families benefit from the opportunities afforded by Australia’s strong recovery from the global economic downturn and from future periods of economic growth.

The OECD states that work, not welfare, is the best weapon to fight child poverty. Work experience and employment protect against long term unemployment in and of themselves. Research suggests that any employment reduces future income support dependency and serves as a bridge to higher paid employment. Supporting parents to gain the skills and support that enable them to sustain participation in work and improve their earnings and prospects over time is an important part of any strategy to reduce long term disadvantage.

The new Job Services Australia will be monitored and evaluated against the employment outcomes it achieves for jobless families and single parents (as well as other target groups) to continue improving the effectiveness of employment and other services for these families.

As more is learnt about where and how these approaches work best, they will be applied more broadly into mainstream service design, delivery and practice.

The Government is committed to results for jobless families and will work to make successful services and interventions more widely available for the families and communities who could benefit.
Chapter 5 – Improving the life chances of children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage

Australia is a great place for most children and young people to grow up, but the evidence shows that a significant number of children either experience, or are at risk of, significant disadvantage:

- on the night of the 2006 Census, 12,100 children under the age of 12 years and a further 21,900 children aged 12 to 18 years were homeless;65
- in 2006, over half a million Australian children under 15 years (15 per cent of all children) lived in jobless families;66
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people continue to be disadvantaged across a number of areas – they are less likely to attend early childhood education and care and school, meet minimum standards for literacy and numeracy and to continue their schooling to Year 12; are over-represented in the child protection system; and are more likely to be under juvenile justice supervision;68
- in 2007–08, 34,279 children were on care and protection orders and a majority of these children (26,425 or 77 per cent) were also in out-of-home care.69
- in 2005, it was estimated that more than 260,000 children were living with family violence;70 and
- in 2003, it was estimated that more than 100,000 people aged 15 years and under were carers to someone in their household.71

Some children are more likely to be at risk of disadvantage and its long term consequences. Analysis of families with a child aged 4-5 years using the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children found that:

- children from families with three or more disadvantages were nearly three times more likely to be in the bottom 15 per cent of learning outcomes for children aged 4-5 years;78 and
- one-parent families, families in government housing and families with mothers aged 25 or under are more likely to experience three or more disadvantages.79

Other children who are likely to be at particular risk of long term disadvantage include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children born in remote communities, who have some of the worst life prospects of any children in Australia;
- young carers, who are often at risk of social exclusion because of their caring responsibilities but may not be identified and offered support;
- young people who migrate to Australia under the Humanitarian Program, who face many additional, more complex challenges than those confronted by the general adolescent population; and
- young people exiting out-of-home care, who are often at risk of homelessness and other associated problems, such as substance abuse, and require additional supports to make a successful transition from care.

There is evidence that the effects of childhood abuse and neglect have had life-long impacts on
some adults and their families, such as higher risk of mental illness, self harm and substance abuse, difficulty forming and maintaining relationships and parenting effectively and poor health, housing, education and employment outcomes.\textsuperscript{27}

In many instances, the number of children identified as being at risk has been growing, despite the strong economic growth of the past two decades:

> the rate of reported child abuse and neglect substantiated by child protection services has more than doubled over the past 10 years,\textsuperscript{86th} and

> in 2008 there were 30,166, children in out-of-home care, more than double the number of 10 years ago.\textsuperscript{82}

As set out in Chapter 2, too often there is a strong link between a family’s socio-economic status and their children’s health and education outcomes.

This data indicates that there are a number of challenges for the social inclusion agenda to address:

> we need to act in the early years of a child’s life to maximise the positive influences on early childhood development and encourage all of those around a child to make their contribution;

> we need to encourage parenting and family relationships that strengthen the resilience of children as they grow up; and

> we need to improve education, health and support services for families and communities where disadvantage is concentrated and where risks are greatest.

\textbf{Reforms and investments already in place}

The Government recognises that early childhood development is a vital foundation for long term life chances and resilience. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has developed the first ever \textit{National Early Childhood Development Strategy} to ensure that all children have the best start in life to create a better future for themselves and for the nation. The strategy is based on clear evidence from Australia and overseas that the early years of a child’s life have a profound impact on their future health, development, learning and wellbeing.

When children get the support they need, they are more likely to complete high school, get a job, stay healthy, enjoy stable relationships and become informed parents. The Government recognises the importance of children’s parents and carers, a safe and supportive home environment and supportive relationships with other adults. Actions to support young children and their families include:

> National rollout of the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) to help identify communities with young children who may need extra support to make the transition to school. The AEDI measures the development of young children through a teacher-completed checklist across five domains including physical health and wellbeing and language and cognitive skills.

\textsuperscript{h} Some of the increases over time are the result of of changing social values and better knowledge about the safety and well being of children.
The Government is working with the States and Territories in a coordinated national effort to strengthen antenatal care and maternal and child health services through:

- developing a National Maternity Services Plan;
- developing a new National Framework for Child and Family Health Services; and
- a National Perinatal Depression Initiative which aims to improve prevention, early detection and treatment of antenatal and postnatal depression through routine and universal screening and better care and support for expectant and new mothers.

Families and children are benefiting from the Government’s significant investment in early childhood education ($970 million) to ensure, in partnership with State and Territory governments, that by 2013 every child has access to 15 hours a week of quality play-based early childhood education (eg. in a preschool or kindergarten) for 40 weeks in the year before full-time schooling.

COAG agreed in December 2009 to a new National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care and Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) that will provide a single set of improved national quality standards, incorporating an Early Years Learning Framework, for more than one million children attending Long Day Care (LDC), Family Day Care (FDC), OSHC and preschool. The learning experience will be enhanced for children through improved staff to child ratios and staff qualifications.

The new Family Support Program brings together a number of existing family, children and parenting services that share a common interest in supporting Australian families, parents and children. The Family Support Program enables services to better focus on the needs of families and children, particularly those at risk, by linking services more effectively, facilitating greater flexibility and responsiveness of services and moving towards a ‘no wrong door’ seamless approach.

The Government is also introducing new leave and flexibility in the workplace to help ensure parents have time to nurture their child’s early development. The Government’s Paid Parental Leave Scheme will commence

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Understanding children’s early development – the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)

The first AEDI report, released on 9 December 2009, confirmed that demographic factors have a significant impact on the development of Australian children.\(^3\)

> Across Australia on average, 23.4 per cent of Australian children are developmentally vulnerable on one or more of the AEDI domain/s and 11.8 per cent of Australian children are developmentally vulnerable on two or more of the AEDI domains.

> Higher proportions of children living in very remote areas of Australia are developmentally vulnerable on all the AEDI domains (47.2 per cent are developmentally vulnerable on one or more of the AEDI domain/s and 30.6 per on two or more domains).

> Children living in the most socio-economically disadvantaged Australian communities are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable on each of the AEDI domains (31.8 per cent are developmentally vulnerable on one or more of the AEDI domain/s and 17.5 per cent on two or more domains).

> There are children in Australia who only speak English, but are reported as not proficient in English. These children are more likely to be developmentally vulnerable on all the AEDI domains.

> There are higher proportions of Australian Indigenous children developmentally vulnerable on each of the AEDI domains compared to non-Indigenous children (47.3 per cent are developmentally vulnerable on one or more of the AEDI domain/s and 29.5 per on two or more domains).

> The first AEDI report, released on 9 December 2009, confirmed that demographic factors have a significant impact on the development of Australian children.\(^3\)
on 1 January 2011. The scheme will provide greater financial support to families, increase workforce participation and promote early childhood development. In addition, the National Employment Standards will introduce the right to request flexible work arrangements for parents with children below school age from 1 January 2010.

> The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children was agreed by COAG on 30 April 2009. The Framework provides an unprecedented, coordinated effort to prevent abuse and neglect and promote the safety and wellbeing of children, placing children’s interests firmly at the centre. A safe and supportive home and community environment is essential for children’s current and future wellbeing. This Framework recognises that protecting children is everybody’s business. The Framework focuses on:
- preventing and addressing abuse and neglect;
- improving the integration of services and supports; and
- community-based strategies, including raising community awareness.

> Work is commencing on a range of other immediate actions under the National Early Childhood Development Strategy, including enhancing collaboration across schools and early childhood services to improve transition to school, and to coordinate existing national investments to improve service delivery in rural and remote areas around the needs of young children.

One of the most significant supports that the Government provides for children at risk of long term disadvantage and families most in need of assistance is targeted financial support through the Australian tax and transfer system. Australia has one of the most targeted and redistributive tax and transfer systems in the OECD. Ongoing effort is needed to make sure our tax and transfer systems facilitate workforce participation and maximise fairness as the risks and opportunities available to Australians continue to change.

> At the heart of the Australian Government’s support for families is the family payment system. Family assistance payments are designed to help families who need support with the cost of raising children.

> Three quarters of all Australian families with dependent children receive Family Tax Benefit (FTB) and in 2009-10 around 2.2 million families with 4.3 million children are expected to receive FTB. 94

> Child care payments assist families to help parents balance their caring roles and participation in employment and training. The Government provides two major payments to help families with the cost of child care. Child Care Benefit (CCB) is a payment made to families to help with the cost of approved or registered care and is dependent on family income, number of children in care, the number of hours per week and the type of care used. The Child Care Rebate is extra assistance available to help eligible families with out-of-pocket child care expenses for approved child care, and in 2008 the government increased the rebate from 30 per cent to 50 per cent.

In schooling the Government is making significant investments to improve quality - including improving literacy and numeracy and the quality of teaching and focusing more effort on schools in low socio-economic status communities. The schooling reforms are key initiatives to support children at risk – they aim to improve the quality of mainstream schooling so that it works better for all students, not just those who are already managing well.

> Under the Smarter Schools National Partnership on Low Socio-Economic Status School communities the Government is targeting additional resources to the most disadvantaged schools and helping to ensure that the most highly accomplished teachers are recognised and rewarded for teaching in disadvantaged and difficult -to- staff schools. This includes additional support for children such as access to health and social workers, homework centres and help for families to support their children’s learning.

> To help children who are falling behind the Government is investing to improve literacy and numeracy, with a strong focus on early intervention in primary schools. To help guide progress COAG has agreed targets to halve the gap in literacy and numeracy and Year 12 (or equivalent) attainment for indigenous students.
Increasing transparency of school performance will also help to drive better outcomes for disadvantaged students.

Quality teaching can overcome location and other disadvantages and is the single greatest influence on student engagement and achievement. The Smarter Schools Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership contains funding for a number of initiatives to ensure quality teachers work in disadvantaged schools where they are needed most.

For example, the Teach for Australia initiative aims to raise the profile of the teaching profession and address educational disadvantage by recruiting high-calibre, non-teaching graduates (who may otherwise not have considered a career in teaching). Graduates are selected for aptitude and university trained via a new accredited employment-based Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching that involves a two-year supported placement in disadvantaged secondary schools. Recent research of similar overseas programs found that graduate standards compared favourably with other high-quality initial teacher training courses and that the impact of graduates on their students’ achievement is equal to or greater than that of other new teachers.

Other initiatives under the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership include improved reward structures and in-school support for teachers and leaders who work in disadvantaged Indigenous, rural/remote and hard-to-staff schools, improving teachers’ cultural understanding and skills in teaching students with diverse backgrounds and assisting Indigenous teachers’ and school leaders’ engagement with community members.

Transparency in Schools:

From 28 January 2010 a new era of transparency will begin with the launch of the My School website. This website will provide the most comprehensive information that Australia has ever had, school by school, to show what is happening in our schools. It will include accurate data on individual school performance and importantly, relevant contextual information about the school.

This will enable a comprehensive, accurate picture of how different schools in different communities perform that will be valuable to governments, schools and the community. It will help governments to support accountability, school evaluation, collaborative policy development and to effectively target resources. Schools will be able to evaluate their performance against other schools across Australia that serve similar student populations. It will also assist the community to understand and support the public investment in education.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority is responsible for reporting the information. This new transparent reporting will ensure that clear and accurate information is publicly available which will facilitate honest, comprehensive public debate on schooling in Australia.
Investments in school education

An estimated $17.5 billion in supplementary Commonwealth funding is being provided to the States and Territories for government schools over 2009–10 to 2012–13. This includes additional funding of $1.9 billion for National Partnerships in the priority reform areas of literacy and numeracy, improving principal leadership development and teacher quality, and improving educational outcomes in disadvantaged school communities and funding for Indigenous education programs.

In negotiating the National Education Agreement (NEA) with the States and Territories, the Government provided additional funding to support government primary school education and a more generous indexation formula. The Council of Australian Governments agreed to estimated additional funding for government schools of $635 million over 2008-09 to 2012-13 to align primary and secondary government schools. All government schools will now receive 10 per cent of the Average Government School Recurrent Costs (AGSRC) amounts for both their primary and secondary students. This represents an increase for primary students who were previously funded by the Commonwealth at 8.9 per cent of AGSRC.

Through the NEA, the Schools Assistance Act 2008 and new funding available through National Partnership arrangements, the Government has committed to provide a record estimated $47.3 billion in funding for government and non-government schools over the 2009-2012 funding period, compared to $33.2 billion under the previous schools agreement.

The Smarter Schools National Partnership Agreements will provide $2.5 billion in additional funding to government and non-government schools.

The National Partnership on Literacy and Numeracy includes a particular focus on early intervention in primary schools and for Indigenous students.

The Building the Education Revolution component of the Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan includes:

> $14.1 billion to build or refurbish large scale infrastructure in primary and special schools;
> $821 million to build science laboratories and language learning centres in secondary schools; and
> a further $1.3 billion to refurbish and renew existing infrastructure and build minor infrastructure in all schools.

Building the Education Revolution is not only about jobs for today, as part of the economic stimulus package. It is also about longer term productivity as the Australian Government partners with state and territory governments and non-government education authorities to improve the learning environments for students in every school in the country with a view to improving learning outcomes.

It also increases the availability of infrastructure to local communities. Primary schools are required to make libraries and multipurpose halls (or comparable facilities if they have received funding for different facilities) available at no, or low, cost to the local community and community or not-for-profit groups in the local community.

Through the Digital Education Revolution, the Government is providing $2.2 billion over six years to provide new information and communication technology (ICT) equipment for all secondary schools with students in years 9 to 12, support high speed broadband connections to schools, ensure teachers have access to ICT training that enables them to enrich student learning, provide online curriculum tools and resources and enable parents to participate in their child’s education through online.

The Trade Training Centres in Schools Program will provide $2.5 billion over 10 years to enable all secondary schools to apply for funding of between $500,000 and $1.5 million for Trade Training Centres. The program aims to help increase the proportion of students achieving Year 12 or an equivalent qualification through greater access to high-quality, relevant trade training opportunities in secondary schools. Schools can apply for funding to build new, or upgrade, existing trade or vocational education and training facilities that will deliver qualifications in a range of traditional trades including metal and engineering, automotive, building and construction, electro-technology and commercial cookery.
Innovations in prevention and early intervention

The Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy 2010-2015 recognises the biological, health, social, cultural, environmental and economic importance of breastfeeding and provides a framework for governments at all levels working in partnership with the community to protect, promote, support and monitor breastfeeding throughout Australia.

A Healthy Kids Check has been introduced for every four year old child in Australia to see if they are healthy, fit and ready to learn when they start school.

The Government is expanding the successful KidsMatter Primary School program which helps children deal with stress and emotions. A version that can be used in preschool and long day care centres is being developed for 2010.

Communities for Children Plus aims to deliver positive and sustainable outcomes for vulnerable children and families in disadvantaged sites throughout Australia. It funds non-government organisations to develop and facilitate a whole of community approach, building on community strengths and the existing infrastructure of organisations, networks and resources, as well as making use of strong evidence of what works in early intervention.

> It is implemented through a national framework which allows for tailored approaches at the local level and provides communities with the opportunity to develop flexible and innovative approaches that best reflect their circumstances.

> Sites will have strong links to child protection authorities, and adult services, including mental health, drug and alcohol, family violence and housing services for parents at risk of child abuse and neglect.

> The initiative will link services for children and vulnerable families and may include case management, intensive parenting services, breakfast and homework clubs, peer support for children with drug addicted parents, and home visiting services.

> Each Communities for Children Plus site maintains a Communities for Children Committee (CCC). The CCC is a voluntary group of key stakeholders who work together with a key local non-government organisation to develop, guide and implement activity.

35 new Children and Family Centres will be established in urban, regional and remote areas with high Indigenous Australian populations and disadvantage. Centres will be established from June 2010 to provide early learning, child care and parent and family support services, and health services to Indigenous children and their families.

The National Partnership on Homelessness includes strategies to support children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to maintain contact with the education system.

Innovations we are piloting to test out new solutions

There are strong links between early child health and development outcomes and quality maternal, child and family health, early childhood education and care and family support programs. Focusing Government attention in these areas can be of particular benefit to children from low socio-economic and disadvantaged backgrounds. However, this is where the take up rate for services is poorest – making it imperative that these services effectively reach the children at greatest risk of disadvantage.

The Government is placing particular emphasis on early intervention and prevention services, which includes a range of innovative pilot projects to test new solutions in areas such as:

> improved maternal, child and family health services;

> new community based programs to prevent child abuse and neglect and intervene early for children at risk;

> improving linkages and referral pathways between children’s health and early childhood services;

> quality child care for children at risk;

> better support for children who have been homeless, including to maintain contact with the education system; and

> identifying communities where young children may need extra support to make the transition to school.
Through new conditions linked to income support payments the Government is also trialling ways to help build parents’ capabilities and support self-reliance to improve outcomes for children. While education is a key to overcoming disadvantage, many children from disadvantaged backgrounds, regional and remote Australia and Indigenous children are currently not achieving well – and are sometimes not enrolled in or regularly attending school.

Approaches in various locations include making the payment of income support conditional on income management, child protection and school attendance.

### Conditional income support to promote children’s welfare

The Government believes it is every parent’s responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly because education is key to the child’s future. The School Enrolment and Attendance Measure links the receipt of income support by the parent to the parent’s responsibilities to send their children to school, extending their role as job seeker to their role as a parent. SEAM uses the possible suspension of income support payments, with the offer of Centrelink Social Work support, to encourage responsible parental action to ensure children are enrolled at and attending school. Where a child has unsatisfactory school attendance despite the best efforts of their parents to work with the school to resolve this, no suspension of payments will occur. SEAM commenced on a trial basis in six Northern Territory communities during the 2008-09 financial year. It was extended to a number of sites in Queensland from the beginning of term four, 2009. Results in the selected locations will be monitored and evaluated to provide an evidence base for future action in this area.

On 25 November 2009, the Government announced a new scheme of income management aimed at helping people receiving income support, and their children, by directing money towards food, clothes and rent and reducing the amount available for alcohol, tobacco and gambling. The new scheme will replace the current Northern Territory income management scheme progressively from 1 July 2010. The new scheme will apply across the NT (in all communities) as a first step in a national rollout of income management in disadvantaged regions. Participants will include people who have received certain welfare payments for more than 3 months in the last 6 months (young people aged 15-24) or more than 12 months in the last 2 years (people aged over 25), and people referred by child protection authorities or by Centrelink social workers due to financial crisis, family violence or economic abuse.

People are also able to volunteer for income management, and there will be incentives and matched savings schemes to encourage people to budget and save.

This has built on the introduction of income management as part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response in June 2007 to promote socially responsible behaviour and help protect children. Improvements in outcomes for children were identified during community consultation about the redesign of the emergency response. The most common were more money being spent on food, clothing and school-related expenses, and a number of people commented that children were looking healthier because of a better diet, perhaps as a result of the school nutrition program.

Voluntary income management and income management for child protection is also being trialled in certain locations in Western Australia. The Cape York Welfare Reform Trials are also testing the effectiveness of linking income support to behaviours including school attendance and protecting children from harm and neglect – more detail is provided in Chapter 8.

The “Learn or Earn” youth participation requirement is another part of this suite of reforms to link income support to education and employment outcomes – see “Compacts” in Chapter 4.
The Government is also working closely with government and non-government schools to provide additional literacy and numeracy support – particularly in primary schools – so that children are getting the basic skills they need to participate and succeed in school. The Government has funded 30 pilot projects in schools across Australia in low socio-economic areas to trial new ways of lifting literacy. Innovative approaches being trialled include:

The Successful Language Learners pilot

The Successful Language Learners pilot is operating in 11 Western Sydney primary schools. It aims to improve the language, literacy and numeracy performance of students who are learning English as a second language (ESL). The schools involved have a high proportion of ESL students, including refugees.

As well as helping schools to put in place successful ESL teaching approaches, the pilot is encouraging greater community involvement. Each school has nominated a liaison person to work with parents and community support groups to develop a positive learning environment. Parents and community members are encouraged and supported to improve their own English literacy skills and become more engaged with the school community.

Supporting young people at risk

The Youth Connections Program, part of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions, will provide an improved safety net for young people at risk.

The Reconnect program uses community-based early intervention services to assist young people aged 12 to 18 years who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and their families. Reconnect assists young people stabilise their living situation and improve their level of engagement with family, work, education, training and their local community.

From 1 July 2009, the Newly Arrived Youth Support Services (NAYSS) were incorporated into Reconnect as Newly Arrived Youth Specialists. As specialist Reconnect providers, these services will continue to support young people aged 12-21 years who have arrived in Australia in the previous five years, focusing on people entering Australia on humanitarian visas and family visas, and who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The new Apprentice Kickstart program will invest $100 million to support up to 21,000 young Australians entering traditional trades.

The National Green Jobs Corps will work to give young unemployed Australians an opportunity to develop skills by doing work experience in new green and climate change industries.

The Social Inclusion Pathways for Refugee Youth (SIPRY) program is a collaborative initiative that evolved out of Centrelink’s Fairfield Young Refugees place based trial (see Chapter 9 and Appendix A for more information), developed in partnership with Fairfield High School, TAFE, and the NSW Department of Education. The eight week program is a tailored bridging course designed to assist refugee students who are having difficulty completing Years 11 and 12 studies due to low literacy levels. The program aims to enhance students’ self-esteem and emotional resilience as well as their literacy and numeracy, and also provides refugee youth and their parents with insights into a range of post-school options.

To help young people improve their educational attainment – and thus help secure future employment opportunities – the Government is investing in training opportunities and supporting a smooth transition from school to further education or work. This includes developing stronger links between schools, the community and employers, so the educational experience is more engaging and relevant for young people, and providing safety-net programs for early school leavers and students at risk of leaving school early.
In particular, COAG will give further consideration to action such as:

- improving access to maternal, child and family health services by vulnerable families;
- timely assessment, referral and early intervention for children and families with complex needs, including by improving the effectiveness of referral pathways across universal, targeted and intensive early childhood and family support services;
- improving the way in which services reach out to, and engage with, vulnerable families in their homes and through participation in universal health, early childhood education and care and family support services;
- targeted awareness raising about the importance of early childhood, the value of children, role of parents and those who work with children; and
- building community-level responses to improving early childhood infrastructure, especially in disadvantaged communities.

These reform priorities are directly focused on achieving greater social inclusion among young children at risk.

Consideration of actions in these areas will complement existing Government initiatives that take an integrated approach to early childhood development services for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, most notably, the thirty five Children and Family Centres being established in partnership with States and Territories in areas with large Indigenous populations and high levels of disadvantage. These centres will improve access to services and outcomes for children and their families by providing a range of early learning, health and family support services.

An ongoing priority for the Government will be to improve access to quality early childhood education and care for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The new National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care will help children to benefit from greater access to quality early childhood education and care experiences which have been demonstrated to have particular benefits for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
Increasing the participation rates of Indigenous and disadvantaged children in early childhood education in the year before formal schooling has also been identified as a national priority, especially for the first two years of implementing the Early Childhood Education National Partnership Agreement. This is being addressed through implementation plans developed with each State and Territory. Ensuring that all Indigenous four year olds in remote Indigenous communities have access to a quality early childhood education program is identified as a specific outcome under this National Partnership and is a key priority for the period ahead.

The Government is also committed to action that will help create a safe environment for all Australian children. This is the key focus of the first of four three year action plans under the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020.

Priority actions under the plan include:

- developing ambitious national standards for out of home care;
- improved support for young people leaving care;
- new demonstration sites in disadvantaged communities to enhance service integration for children at risk;
- focus on early intervention and prevention services including development of tools for universal service providers; and
- a number of national leadership projects such as the development of a national research agenda.

The negative impacts on children of exposure to family violence are well known. Governments are now working together to finalise a National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, which will aim to reduce both the prevalence and the impact of family violence on children. A Commonwealth-State Ministerial Council has been established with the involvement of ministers from a range of portfolios to drive this work. The vision of the National Plan is that Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities.
Chapter 6 – Reducing the incidence of homelessness

A home is a basic need. Stable housing supports participation in social and economic life. The lack of housing exposes people to many risks, including poor health and physical violence.

In Australia, around 105,000 people are homeless on any given night. While the overall rate of homelessness has been relatively stable over the last 12 years, increasing numbers of children, families and older people are experiencing homelessness. Indigenous Australian people are over-represented among people who are homeless. 85

People who are homeless include people sleeping rough, as well as those staying in temporary, unstable or substandard accommodation. Many people who are homeless cycle between homelessness and marginal housing, including crisis accommodation.

Common pathways to homelessness include:

- domestic and family violence;
- housing crisis;
- substance abuse;
- mental health problems and mental illness (which can lead to homelessness, or result from homelessness); and
- being homeless as a youth (under 18) due to unstable housing, family conflict or after exiting state care. 86

Despite a drop in the number of young people who are homeless since 2001, they remain an important focus because young people who experience homelessness have a higher risk of experiencing homelessness as an adult. 87 Some young people are particularly vulnerable – the risk of homelessness is at least 6 to 10 times higher for youth who migrate to Australia under the Humanitarian Program, when compared with other youth. 88 For many young people the experience of homelessness can lead to a lifetime of disadvantage.

Reforms and investments already in place

The Government has acted to increase the supply of affordable housing. It has invested an extra $20 billion over 10 years over and above ongoing funding to the States and Territories through the National Affordable Housing Agreement and ongoing Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

The Government is implementing a $1.1 billion plan to achieve the two goals set out in The Road Home: White Paper on Homelessness – to halve homelessness and offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who seek it by 2020.

On top of this, over the next 4 years the Government will increase the supply of affordable housing by:

- boosting social housing through the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan – the single biggest expansion of social housing ever undertaken in Australia. State and Territory governments will build at least 19,300 new dwellings and refurbish over 70,000 existing public dwellings to assist people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless;
- building 1,600 new houses over two years under the National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing. Innovative approaches to benefit people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, such as Common Ground and Foyer style facilities which will provide wrap-around services as part of the housing solution to assist people address the causes of homelessness;
- allocating incentives to housing providers to build 50,000 new affordable rental homes for low income households through the National Rental Affordability Scheme;
- improving the supply and quality of remote Indigenous housing – 4,200 homes will be constructed in remote areas under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing; and
- providing capital funds for at least one new specialist aged care facility for older people who are homeless in each of the next four years to 2012.
The newly established Prime Minister’s Council on Homelessness will help make sure that commitments are achieved by providing an independent overview of implementation of the White Paper goals and targets for 2013 and 2020 and providing advice to the Government on progress, risks and emerging issues.

**Innovations we are piloting to test out new solutions**

Government action is focused on three priorities:

**Turning off the tap – prevention and early intervention to stop people becoming homeless.**

**Early intervention through support to manage finances and budget**

The Government is supporting financial management and budgeting for vulnerable people, including through:

- the Household Organisation Management Expenses (HOME) Advice Program;
- the introduction of weekly Centrelink payments to those at risk of homelessness; and
- Commonwealth Financial Counselling, which provides free financial counselling services to vulnerable Australians.

**Improving and expanding services – the right mix of mainstream and specialist services to provide targeted and integrated support to people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.**

The Government is working to provide additional support at times of transition or crisis. This includes putting in place a policy of ‘no exits into homelessness’ from statutory, custodial care, health, mental health and drug and alcohol services. There is also additional support to help women and children who experience domestic violence to stay safely in the family home. The Australian Government is improving support through Centrelink and many States and Territories are implementing programs and initiatives to provide this support under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

**Better support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness**

The introduction nationally of specialist Community Engagement Officers within Centrelink, from December 2009, is the first of many changes designed specifically to assist people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Community Engagement Officers will deliver services to people outside the usual Customer Service Centre environment in various locations across the country, initially based on areas of greatest need as identified in the 2006 Census. They will also provide outreach services to agencies that support homeless people such as drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres, mental health services, hostels, boarding houses, refuges and drop-in centres.

The Victorian Government is providing increased support to women and children in the form of case management for women who have been referred by police, courts and other services following family violence incidents.

Through its Family Violence Investment Strategy, the Northern Territory Government is preventing family homelessness resulting from family violence by expanding accommodation facilities and better skilling support workers.

**Breaking the cycle of homelessness – boosting specialist models of supported accommodation to house people permanently.**

Tackling homelessness is especially challenging because responsibilities for housing and support services are spread between different levels of government and not-for-profit organisations. The wider community and business also have a role to play. The Government recognises that effective partnerships and collaboration are critical both to address homelessness and to reduce the risks of homelessness.
Innovative housing models

Innovative specialist housing models offer a secure home as well as onsite, wrap-around support for young homeless people and rough sleepers. Over the last 12 months across a range of housing programs, the Australian Government has funded 40 new innovative approaches targeted to people who are homeless including:

- 8 Common Ground style developments;
- 3 innovative housing projects for young people while they work or study based on Foyer (see below);
- A Place to Call Home will provide safe, affordable long term accommodation, including homes for families;
- two aged care facilities for ageing people who are homeless, one in Melbourne to house 60 people and one in Sydney to house 72 people;
- specialist accommodation for young people aged from 11 years who are unable to live at home;
- ‘Reunification House’ in South Australia for 15 young people and the Youth Housing and Reintegration Services in Queensland to provide 30 bungalows for young people at risk; and
- housing for domestic violence perpetrators, transitional accommodation for Aboriginal people in SA and NT, and accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence.

Foyer is a supportive housing model specifically designed for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and adopts the housing first principle, which is also the basis of the “Common Ground” model. The model is specifically designed to permanently break the cycle of homelessness through secure, stable, supported housing with a focus on developing life skills, education, training and other opportunities that may well lead young people towards meaningful employment.

Through the Home Options and Pathways to Employment Project, the Government is working with homelessness services and Job Service Australia providers to facilitate joined-up responses which address both employment and accommodation issues.

Providing joined-up responses – the HOPE project

The aim of the Home Options and Pathways to Employment (HOPE) Project is to improve social inclusion outcomes for homeless job seekers or those at risk of homelessness by providing the most appropriate mix of services for their circumstances.

The Government is working with National Employment Services Association and Homelessness Australia to develop practical tools to help employment and accommodation service providers across Australia work better together.

The Project will develop a Service Level Agreement that sets out how services will work together and a training package to build the capabilities that service providers need to work together effectively.

These new arrangements, to be implemented in the first half of 2010, will help provide improved joined-up services to unemployed people who are homeless.

Future Directions

Our future directions will be guided by the two ambitious goals set out in the Government’s White Paper on Homelessness, The Road Home:

- to halve overall homelessness by 2020; and
- to offer supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who seek it by 2020.

The Government is working with States and Territories, through Implementation Plans, to ensure that all governments deliver on their commitments to improve services on the ground for people experiencing homelessness. Clear headline, interim and progress targets have been set to guide our progress towards these goals. Meeting those goals will involve overcoming significant challenges. Not least of these is the
need to ensure progress can be measured and the evidence base developed for future improvements. As better data becomes available, it will inform and improve implementation to maximise results from this ambitious program.

In accordance with the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, State and Territory Governments will provide annual reports against the agreed outputs in their Implementation Plans. As part of their reporting, States and Territories will also capture and report on Indigenous outcomes in urban, regional and remote areas under their Implementation Plans for the National Affordable Housing Agreement and all National Partnership Agreements.

The performance of all governments under the National Affordable Housing Agreement is also being monitored and assessed by the independent COAG Reform Council and reported publicly on an annual basis. All governments contributed to the one year progress report, released on 20 December 2009, on achievements in the first year since the launch of the Government’s White Paper on Homelessness, The Road Home.

The Prime Minister’s Council on Homelessness will also independently monitor achievements towards the goals and targets set out in The Road Home. The Government will be responding to the advice it receives on progress, risks and emerging issues. This will be critical to the early years of implementing this ambitious plan.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics have a key role in collecting data and measuring progress against the White Paper targets. The AIHW is developing a new national homelessness data collection, to be constructed by mid 2011. It will also incorporate, where feasible, data on mainstream services provided to homeless people and some housing related data. In the meantime, the AIHW is collecting proxy data to measure interim progress.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics is leading work to improve the quality of the 2011 Census homelessness count, with a view to providing better information on the number, location and circumstances of people who are homeless. This will enable us to better design and target services to prevent homelessness and support people through and out of homelessness.

**Tackling pathways to homelessness – family violence**

Domestic and family violence is a significant pathway to homelessness, particularly for women and their children. Reducing violence against women and children, and improving responses when it occurs, will help to reduce homelessness. Informed by the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children’s Time for Action report, significant progress has been made in developing a National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. COAG will consider the National Plan, including an initial three year action plan, in 2010.

Addressing homelessness will require a long-term and sustained effort from all levels of government and from the business and community sectors. Ongoing efforts will include:

- continuing to prevent homelessness by understanding and tackling the pathways into homelessness. The Australian Government has set aside $11.4 million over 4 years from 2009-10 to 2012-13 to develop and implement a comprehensive research agenda on homelessness. Applications have been called for competitive funding under the Homelessness Research Partnership Agreements and the Homelessness Research Projects; and

- changing the way services are delivered so they can provide the full range of supports that people need when they are at risk of becoming homeless – rather than leaving individuals to try to navigate a complex system looking for help. This will require stronger partnerships to be developed between mainstream and specialist service providers.

Following an extensive consultation process, the Australian Government and the not-for-profit (or Third) sector are developing a National Compact. The Compact will outline how the two will work together to improve and strengthen their relationship and build the capacity to meet the considerable challenges contained within the social inclusion agenda, including homelessness. For more information about the Compact, see Chapter 10.
Chapter 7 – Improving outcomes for people living with disability or mental illness and their carers

People with disability and mental illness, their families and carers have an equal right to participate in the community, have a job if possible and live a meaningful life. However, people with disability and mental illness face multiple barriers to full participation that adversely affects their life outcomes.

The impact of mental illness or disability on life outcomes can be severe. For example, people with mental illness have an estimated 2.5 times higher mortality than the general population.89

As well as the practical challenges presented by disability and mental illness, many people also encounter misunderstanding and systematic discrimination. This can occur in the workplace, in schools, the build environment, the media, the general community and even in health services. These factors can affect social, community and economic participation.

The education system can be a challenging place for many people with disability and mental illness. It can be difficult to access an education that is appropriate and meets an individual's learning needs. This lack of access can limit a person's ability to realise their potential and fully participate in society. In 2003, only 30 per cent of people 15 years and over with a reported disability had completed Year 12, compared with 49 per cent of those without a disability.90

When a person with disability or mental illness does not achieve a quality education it can limit future opportunities, particularly for employment.

Employment has significant benefits in terms of economic and social participation. For many people with disability or mental illness, it can improve opportunities for social inclusion. Yet the rate of employment of people with disability and mental illness is still well below that of people without disability and, in recent years, their relative employment prospects have declined:

> in 2003, the labour force participation rate of people with disability aged 15 to 64 years was 53 per cent and the unemployment rate was 8.6 per cent, compared to 81 per cent and 5.0 per cent, respectively, for those without disability;90 and

> from 1993 to 2003, the employment rate of people without disability increased by 13 per cent (from 67.6 per cent to 76.5 per cent), while the employment rate of people with disability increased only by 8 per cent (from 45.1 per cent to only 48.7 per cent).92

The number of Disability Support Pension recipients has risen by 31 per cent over the last 10 years to more than 750,000 people. The growth for men has been 13 per cent, consistent with the growth in the working population. The growth for women was much greater, 64 per cent, which can be mostly attributed to the closure of other payments. The average duration on income support for Disability Support Pension recipients is twelve years and fewer than 10 per cent of Disability Support Pension recipients report earnings from work. Of the 100,000 or so disability pensioners who reported earnings over the two years to the end of 2008, only 36,000 were employed for the whole two years.93

Although many people with mental illness (psychological disability) do gain employment, they experience even higher rates of unemployment and lower rates of labour force participation than those with physical disability:

> in 2003, the labour force participation rate of people with mental illness aged 15 to 64 years was 28.2 per cent and the unemployment rate was 19.5 per cent, compared to 48.3 per cent and 7.4 per cent respectively for those with physical disability; 94 and

> psychological and psychiatric illness is the second largest category of disability for DSP recipients accounting for 28 per cent, which is approximately 214,000 people. 95

Many people with disability and mental illness want to work, but are not offered the opportunity. They may face barriers such as poorly coordinated support services or inadequate education and training opportunities. They may fear the loss of eligibility for crucial benefits. Some employers can also be unwilling to take on people with disability, reflecting outmoded community attitudes and beliefs about productivity and risk.
The Government recognises that some people with severe disability and mental illness may not be able to join the work force, but they should still have opportunities to participate in our society and community.

The accessibility of the built environment and community infrastructure is critical to participation. Unfortunately, access to facilities such as workplaces, schools, public buildings, sporting facilities, restaurants and airports can be limited or completely unfeasible for many people with disability. In Australia, over 500,000 people have mobility impairment. Another 546,000 have a vision impairment and 920,200 million a hearing impairment. The lack of equitable access for people with disability to our community can limit participation and social inclusion.

Carers of people living with disability, mental illness, medical conditions and the aged are among the most disadvantaged and socially excluded in Australia:

- carers are often socially isolated and disconnected from their peers as a result of a lack of alternative care;
- they are more likely to experience poor health; and
- they can suffer from increased financial and emotional stress.

National Disability Strategy

The first ever National Disability Strategy will provide a long term road map to improve outcomes for people with disability and their families. Being developed with the States and Territories, it will work across governments to address barriers faced by people with disability and promote their participation. The Strategy is being informed by the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council’s report on national community consultations – Shut Out: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia. The Strategy will be released in 2010.

A key element of the Strategy is a comprehensive feasibility study into a National Disability Long-Term Care and Support Scheme. The Government has engaged the Productivity Commission to investigate the costs, benefits and feasibility of a National Disability Long-Term Care and Support Scheme.

Support for People with Disability and Mental Illness

The Government has already made significant progress in its ambitious reform agenda to better support people with disability and mental illness and their carers, including:

- helping pensioners and carers with the cost of living through pension increases to around 720,000 Disability Support Pensioners and 152,000 Carer Payment recipients;
Increasing access to services for Indigenous Australians as a priority area for action under this agreement; and

the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy, which was released in September 2009, will improve supports and services, and reflects the Australian Government’s commitment to improve the employment of people with disability in the Australian Public Service.

National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy

The National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy was released in September 2009. It includes a series of initiatives to help people with disability, including mental illness, find and keep work. Elements include $1.2 billion for new demand driven employment services for people with disability, a $6.8 million Disability Support Pension Employment Incentive Pilot trialling a new way of encouraging employers to offer employment to people with disability and allowing recipients to demonstrate their skills, and strategies to set a strong example to all Australian employers through the direct employment of people with disability in the Australian Public Service.

Innovative projects that address barriers to employment for job seekers with mental illness or disability will also be trialled under the Employment Innovation Fund.

The Government has also removed disincentives for people on the Disability Support Pension using employment services to find work. Previously, disability pensioners may have feared that they would lose their pension if they sought help to find a job through an open employment service. Now disability pensioners can seek employment assistance without fear of losing their pension through an automatic review of their eligibility. Since this reform was introduced in September 2008 more than 12,000 Disability Support Pensioners have sought employment assistance.

Increasing employment of people with mental illness and disability by the Australian Government

The Australian Public Service Commission will develop training and best practice advice for Australian Public Service agencies and managers, and establish and support disability networks. All Australian Public Service agencies will need to consider what an appropriate target could be for the employment of people with disability in their agency, and what strategies could be adopted to increase employment of people with disability in the Australian Public Service.

Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines have been amended to make it easier for government agencies to purchase from Australian Disability Enterprises – commercial businesses that provide employment opportunities for people with disability. The Australian Government is soon to release a vision paper for Australian Disability Enterprises, which will include improving social inclusion for employees with disability.

Other measures to support people with disability and mental illness include:

- Australia becoming one of the first western nations to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 17 July 2008;
- increased support for children with autism and their families through the $190 million Helping Children with Autism package;
- harmonisation of disability parking permit schemes across Australia;
- expanding the National Companion Card Scheme across Australia, achieving national consistency and increasing the base of national affiliate organisations;
- increased funding to $26.3 million over four years for additional outside school hours care places for teenagers with a disability; and
- an additional $2.1 million in 2009-10 for emergency and short-term respite under the Respite Support for Carers of Young People with a Severe or Profound Disability Program.
MyTime Peer Support Group
Program carers of young children with disability

Parents of young children with disability are at significant risk of isolation and are often socially disconnected from family and friends due to the intensity of their caring role. The MyTime Peer Support Group Program provides peer support groups for parents and carers of young children with disability or a chronic medical condition throughout Australia. While MyTime groups meet, play helpers lead activities for children, or parents can come on their own if they have other child care available. This program gives parents the chance to socialise and share ideas with others who understand the rewards and challenges of the caring role. The groups also provide an opportunity for parents to find out about available community support services and research-based parenting information. MyTime Peer Support Groups are provided in the community by local organisations and coordinated nationally by the Parenting Research Centre.

Outside School Hours Care for Teenagers with Disability

The Australian Government funds services to deliver flexible outside school hours and holiday care for teenagers with disability aged 12 to 18 years in areas where there is unmet need. As well as giving teenagers with disability access to quality and flexible outside school hours care that is age-appropriate and stimulating, it also gives their parents and carers time to either get into work for the first time, return to or increase their hours in the workforce or participate in the wider community.

The Fourth National Mental Health Plan, an agenda for collaborative government action 2009-2014 was endorsed by Health Ministers in September 2009 and launched on 13 November 2009. It will provide an integrated national approach to mental health reform and service delivery. The Plan was developed through a comprehensive consultation process and has a strong focus on social inclusion.

> Outcomes from one of the five priority areas of the Plan, Social Inclusion and Recovery, are:
  - improved community understanding of mental health;
  - improved housing, employment, income and health outcomes for people with mental illness and mental health problems; and
  - more coordination of care across health and social domains.

> Actions under this priority include: integrating approaches between education, employment, housing, justice, community and aged care service systems with mental health services; enhancing consumer choice; and promoting stigma reduction in the community.

All governments, over the next twelve months to September 2010, will work together on a detailed implementation plan and develop targets and indicators to measure their progress as the Fourth National Mental Health Plan is implemented over the next five years. Governments will report annually on progress of implementation to COAG.
A number of Australian Government Community Mental Health initiatives, including Personal Helpers and Mentors, Mental Health Respite and Community Based Programs help people with mental illness and their families and carers to participate by providing support in recovery, building resilience through skills and knowledge and supporting carers.

The Personal Helpers and Mentors Program and the Support for Day to Day Living Programs focus on encouraging community participation for people with mental illness who are at risk of exclusion. The Personal Helpers and Mentors Program is now offered in 158 sites across Australia with 17 more to be rolled out in coming months.

The Support for Day to Day Living (D2DL) in the Community program

The D2DL program forms part of the Australian Government’s component of the Council of Australian Government (COAG) National Action Plan on Mental Health (2006 – 2011). The program aims to improve the quality of life for individuals with severe and persistent mental illness by providing additional places in structured and socially-based day activity programs. Participants are assisted to develop new skills or relearn old skills, develop social networks, participate in community activities, develop confidence and accomplish personal goals, thereby empowering them to live at an optimal level of independence in the community.

Participants in D2DL have reported greater confidence in getting out of the house, meeting new people and making new friends, enjoying a wider range of activities, feeling less isolated, learning new skills, gaining greater independence, better health and feelings of hope for the future.

The government also provides support for early intervention and support for children and young people who may be at risk of or experiencing mental illness.

Prevention of mental illness and support for young people

One in four young Australians will experience mental illness in any one year, which can lead to social isolation. Through headspace, the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, the Government is providing 30 youth-friendly shopfronts around Australia which provide access to primary mental health care services, alcohol and drug services, and vocational support, as well referral to a range of other social support services.

Complex mental health problems can appear in childhood and infancy, and can impact on early development and long term mental health and wellbeing. The successful KidsMatter initiative, which involves and supports parents, carers, primary school teachers and the school community to promote positive mental health, prevention and early intervention, will extend to preschool and long day care centres in 2010.

MindMatters is a key Australian Government program aimed at improving the mental health outcomes of secondary school students. Using a range of resources MindMatters aims to increase the capacity of Australian secondary schools for mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention. It includes the delivery of professional development to teachers and other key school personnel and the provision of materials and a website to support a whole school approach.
> Critical elements of improving employment and broader social inclusion for people with mental illness and disability are changing community perception, reducing discrimination and improving public attitudes toward mental illness and disability. A number of mental health programs are targeting public attitudes towards mental illness, including beyondblue and StigmaWatch.

Community awareness and attitudes to mental illness

beyondblue is a collaborative initiative funded by the Australian, state and territory governments. beyondblue is an independent, not for profit organisation that aims to address issues associated with depression, anxiety and related disorders in Australia. It has a key goal of raising community awareness about depression and reducing stigma associated with the illness. beyondblue works in partnership with governments, business, professional, sporting and community organisations, academia and the media, as well as people living with depression, across a range of community awareness and destigmatisation projects, prevention and early intervention programs, training projects, and research activities.

The StigmaWatch program monitors the Australian media to ensure accurate and respectful representation of mental illness. StigmaWatch voices community feedback about representations within the media that stigmatisate mental illness or inadvertently promote self-harm and suicide. The program also provides positive feedback to the media about accurate and responsible portrayals of mental illness and suicide which help break down stigma and increase understanding of mental illness.

Support for carers

The Commonwealth Carer Recognition Legislation and National Carer Strategy, represents a significant step forward in the social inclusion of carers by recognising their vital role in legislation and, in the Strategy, outlining a vision for carers, articulating broad guiding principles and objectives to guide policy development and the delivery of services by government agencies and third sector organisations that work with carers. Other steps and suggestions include:

> supporting carers to participate in the workforce and manage their care responsibilities by provisions in the Fair Work Act 2009, including the right to request flexible working arrangements for parents caring for a child with disability under 18; and

> Young Carers Respite and Information Services support young carers who are who are caring for someone with a mental illness and are at risk of not completing secondary education or vocational equivalent due to the demands of their caring role by providing help with access to respite services, information, advice and age appropriate support.

Innovations we are piloting to test out new solutions

Employers play a critical role in supporting economic participation. The government is working to provide better support for employers to take on a person with disability in order to:

> raise awareness of the support available;

> make it easier for employers to access support in their workplace; and

> pilot innovative ways of encouraging employers to provide sustainable job opportunities.

The Government is also putting in place better supports and services designed to recognise that the circumstances and needs of each person with mental illness, disability and caring responsibilities will be different. They will be able to be joined up and tailored to respond to the particular combination of barriers to inclusion and employment that each individual faces.
Reform to carer payments

The new annual Carer Supplement provides ongoing certainty about the level of assistance that carers will receive and provides carers with a greater level of security and a greater capacity to balance and plan the household budget:

> a $600 Carer Supplement is paid to recipients of Carer Allowance for each person being cared for.
> an additional $600 Carer Supplement is paid to recipients of Wife Pension and Carer Allowance; recipients of both Department of Veterans’ Affairs Partner Service Pension and Carer Allowance; and recipients of Department of Veterans’ Affairs Carer Service pension; and
> in addition, from 20 September 2009, some 152,000 carers will receive an increased rate of Carer Payment. In combination with indexation this sees the maximum rate of Carer Payment increase by $70.83 per fortnight for singles, and $29.93 per fortnight for couples combined.

Payments for carers of children with disability or medical condition

In response to the concerns of Carers raised in the Carer Payment (child) Review Taskforce report Carer Payment (child): A New Approach, changes were implemented on 1 July 2009 that included widening eligibility and changing the basis of assessment from a narrow medical model to one that recognises the impact on the carer of the significant care provided to children with disability or medical condition.

Further changes will include streamlined assessment for Carer Payment and Carer Allowance (child) and a more flexible assessment process for carers when their child turns 16.

An additional 19,000 carers are expected to benefit from these changes in the first 12 months.

The Government also recognises the importance of the non-government sector. Under the COAG National Action Plan on Mental Health 2006-2011, organisations are being funded to build the capacity of non-government alcohol and drug treatment services to effectively address and treat coinciding mental illness and substance abuse issues. Peak bodies in each State and Territory are being funded to support this work, which includes:

> workforce training;
> developing partnerships with local health services; and
> implementing policies and procedures that support the identification and management of clients with coinciding mental illness and substance abuse issues.

Finding and navigating available services remains a challenge for many people living with disability or mental illness and their carers. To trial different ways to make access to disability services and community mental health services easier, the Government will build on joint work to develop a single access point model of service delivery in aged care. Nine Access Point Demonstration Projects are operating across seven states and territories to trial different ways to make access to community care services easier for clients and their carers – they provide information about services and client eligibility, conduct a broad assessment of a person’s needs and provide referrals to appropriate services and specialist assessors. The Government will be seeking the agreement of the states and territories, through relevant ministerial councils, to extend these demonstration projects to include disability services and community mental health services.

The Government is also aware that people with disability need different supports at critical transition periods in their lives. Through the Disability Employment Assistance Program, a small scale pilot to test Transition to Retirement options for ageing workers in Australian Disability Enterprises will be implemented in 2010 to identify the supports needed as retirement approaches.
Future Directions

While significant assistance is provided to people with disabilities, their families and carers, there are many weaknesses in the support systems that governments provide. The Australian Government is committed to improving the lives of all people with disability, their families and carers. The question of how we, as a nation, look after people with long-term impairment is a major public policy issue.

The Government is committed to finding new approaches to funding and delivering disability services. The feasibility study into a national disability long-term care and support scheme in Australia will include an examination of a no-fault social insurance model.

To properly understand options for the future, a serious examination is required, including extensive modelling and analysis of interactions with existing service systems. The Inquiry will consider costs, implementation and design issues, governance arrangements and administrative issues, including for a social insurance model that reflects a shared risk of disability across the population. The Productivity Commission has been asked to report to Government by July 2011.

A national long-term care and support scheme would require a transformational change to the disability service system – how it is delivered, funded and administered. It could help us achieve an important objective of the Australian Government – to build a fairer Australia, in which all Australian can reach their full potential in life.

Opportunities for people living with mental illness and disability and their carers to work, and to participate in our society and community in other ways, will be pursued through:

- changing community attitudes and behaviours by supporting and promoting positive community attitudes;
- encouraging and supporting people with mental illness to seek help and improve the quality of service delivery and supports in the community;
- continuously improving access and support to undertake and complete education and training through the Government’s significant education reform agenda;
- ensuring that workplaces are flexible and supportive; and
- increasing coordination between mainstream and specialist services to ensure that all people with disability or mental illness have access to both, where required.

Building on current reforms and strategies to improve employment outcomes for Australians living with disability or mental illness, and their carers, the Government will work to ensure that they benefit from the opportunities afforded by Australia’s strong recovery from the global economic downturn and from future periods of economic growth.

The Government will continue to prioritise the needs of people with disability and mental illness across the spectrum of Government reforms, including by:

- rolling out actions under the Fourth National Mental Health Plan, focusing in particular on progressing the detailed implementation plan across governments and developing targets and indicators to measure progress as the plan is implemented;
- examining and responding to the recommendations of the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission’s recommendations on Australia’s health system, which recognise the importance of good mental health; and
- finalising and implementing the National Disability Strategy.
Across the health and community sectors, service delivery is influenced by a number of different quality, safety and performance frameworks, including specific state and territory legislation, sector accreditation and professional regulation. The revised National Standards for Mental Health Services are being developed to increase the consistency of services where mental health is the primary focus of care, while accommodating these various frameworks and local community and cultural needs. They will include a new Supporting Recovery standard, designed to build a recovery-oriented culture amongst services. This means services working with consumers and carers towards a full and sustainable life after diagnosis or treatment to maximise people’s social and economic participation, individual potential and choice. Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the revised National Standards will require mental health services to incorporate recovery principles into service delivery, culture and practice, providing consumers with access and referral to a range of programs that will support sustainable recovery.

Through the development of the National Carer Recognition Framework the Government will continue to shape a support framework for carers in our communities. The framework will recognise the vital role of carers in legislation and will recognise that carers should have the opportunities and capability to enjoy optimum health and wellbeing, social inclusion and full participation.

The National Carer Strategy will consider the needs of Young Carers; the training and skills development needs of carers; and the adequacy of case management and care coordination for carers and care receivers. The streamlining of respite services will be progressed under the strategy, including the consideration of a single access point model of service delivery and consistent assessment processes.

Building the evidence base will continue to be a priority into the future. For example, under the National Disability Agreement, the Australian and State and Territory Governments have committed to developing a national model to estimate demand for disability services and undertake population benchmarking for disability services. This will help to measure, for the first time, unmet demand for community based services for people with disability and their carers.

Over future years, improving integration of services for people living with a mental illness and with disability will continue to be a priority. The Government will continue to explore better ways to bring together mainstream systems such as transport, health, housing, education, communication and human rights to support people with disability and mental illness in ways that enable them to maintain personal choice and responsibility.

It is the Government’s priority to have an enabling and inclusive Australia that will treat people equally and provide opportunities to fulfil their potential.
Chapter 8 – Closing the gap for Indigenous Australians

Closing the Gap is fundamental to building a fairer Australia. The current gap between the life opportunities enjoyed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is unacceptable:

- life expectancy for Indigenous Australians is approximately 11.5 years lower than the non-Indigenous population for men and 9.7 years lower for women;
- Indigenous children are up to three times more likely to die before the age of five than non-Indigenous children;
- Indigenous children are less likely to participate in early childhood education than non-Indigenous children, and have lower rates of completion of Year 12 or equivalent -47 per cent compared to 84 per cent for non-Indigenous Australians of the same age in 2006;
- Indigenous children aged 0–17 years were more than 6 times as likely to be the subjects of a substantiated child protection notification than other children in 2007–08, and were more than 7 times as likely to be on care and protection orders or in out-of-home care;
- in adulthood, employment rates are much lower for Indigenous people – 54 per cent of those aged 15 years and over compared to 73 per cent for non-Indigenous Australians in 2008;
- Indigenous Australians are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of partner violence; and
- Indigenous Australians are 14 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous Australians and Indigenous Australian youth are 28 times more likely to be detained.

Indigenous Australians in remote communities are the most disadvantaged.

- living in overcrowded housing;
- having little education – no early childhood education, erratic schooling and little opportunity to finish secondary education;
- developing limited skills, ultimately making getting a job difficult; and
- girls becoming mothers at a young age.

Indigenous adults in remote communities face similar disadvantage.

Reforms and investments already in place

The Government's reform agenda in Indigenous affairs is underpinned by a determination to close the gap in life outcomes and opportunities for Indigenous Australians and forge a new relationship based on mutual trust and respect.

Building on the Prime Minister’s National Apology to Indigenous Australians, the Government has provided $6 million for the establishment of a National Representative Body, the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, that will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have a voice in decisions that affect them and help Government shape its approach to Indigenous affairs. An additional $23.2 million will be provided for the operation of the body from January 2011 to December 2013.

In 2009 the Government endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration gives us new impetus to work together in trust and good faith to advance human rights and close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The Declaration recognises the legitimate entitlement of Indigenous people to all human rights, based on principles of equality, partnership, good faith and mutual benefit.

This is backed by the Australian Government and the States and Territories who have together committed over $4.6 billion in major new investments to improve health outcomes, early childhood development, remote housing, economic participation and remote service delivery.
This investment will pursue the significant targets set by COAG, to:

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

**National Partnerships to close the gap in Indigenous Disadvantage**

National Partnerships on Preventative Health, Social Housing, Homelessness, Smarter Schools, Low SES School Communities and Early Childhood Education will all contribute to reducing Indigenous disadvantage as part of the integrated strategy to Close the Gap. They are described in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6. The following National Partnerships are targeted specifically to the needs of Indigenous Australians:

**Indigenous Health Outcomes** – $1.6 billion over four years, including an $805 million contribution from the Australian Government for preventive health to reduce chronic disease risk factors; improving access to culturally secure health care and developing the Indigenous health workforce.

**Indigenous Early Childhood Development** – $564 million over six years, including an Australian Government contribution of $490 million, will provide antenatal, maternal and child health services for children and their families; sexual health services for teenagers and 35 Children and Family Centres. These centres, in urban, regional and remote areas with high Indigenous Australian populations and disadvantage, will provide early learning, child care and parent and family support services to Indigenous and disadvantaged families.

**Remote Indigenous Housing** – an allocation of $5.5 billion over ten years, including a contribution of $1.9 billion from the Australian Government, will see up to 4,200 new houses built and some 4,800 major refurbishments to existing houses made. These investments are complemented by landmark policy reforms to ensure remote social housing provision is underpinned by secure tenure, which will facilitate improvements to property and tenancy management standards and clarify responsibility for asset maintenance. Secure tenure in communities will also lay the foundations for home ownership into the future. The Australian Government is also working with States and Territories to clarify arrangements for delivery of municipal services and essential services and ongoing maintenance of infrastructure in remote areas.

**Indigenous Economic Participation** – through an investment of $229 million over five years, including an Australian Government contribution of $173 million, creating jobs in government service delivery that previously relied on subsidies through the Community Development Employment Projects, increasing public sector employment to reflect Indigenous working age population share by 2015, building Indigenous workforce strategies into all COAG reforms contributing to the “closing the gap” targets and strengthening government procurement policies to maximise Indigenous employment.

**Remote Service Delivery** – $291 million over six years, including a $188 million commitment from the Australian Government will reform remote services to provide better access to suitable and culturally-inclusive services required to progress achievement towards the COAG targets. The over-arching principle is that remote communities should have access to similar levels of infrastructure and services as are available in towns of an equivalent size, location and need elsewhere in Australia. A Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services has been appointed to drive and oversee these reforms in 29 remote priority communities – see Chapter 9 for more detail.
While all schools must strive to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students, the Government has introduced and expanded measures to provide Indigenous students, wherever they live, but particularly those from remote areas, with quality and choice in education.

The Government is also focusing on supporting safe, well-functioning communities for Indigenous Australians, whether they live in urban, regional or remote Australia.

Innovations we are piloting to test out new solutions

Alongside investment and reform in health, education, housing and participation, the Government is finding new ways to halt the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage through education, economic development, healing past trauma and strengthening culture.

To create high expectations for Indigenous young people and get better outcomes for them from wider reforms to education, the Government agreed in July 2009 to develop a National Indigenous Education Action Plan with States and Territories. This action plan is available for public comment until 28 February 2010 (see the website of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs) and will implement strategies in six areas that evidence has shown will make the most impact on closing the gap:

> readiness for school;
> engagement and connections;
> attendance;
> leadership, quality teaching and workforce development;
> literacy and numeracy; and
> pathways to real post-school options.

The Indigenous Education Action Plan will build on innovative approaches being trialled through the Smarter Schools Literacy and Numeracy and Low SES School Communities National Partnerships. More than 40 per cent of Indigenous students are enrolled in schools targeted under these National Partnerships.
Supporting well-functioning communities

**National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework** – supporting safe communities with a plan to address the serious and complex issues marking the interaction between the justice system and Indigenous Australians; reduce the over-representation of Indigenous Australians in the criminal justice system; reduce alcohol and substance abuse; and build strong and safe Indigenous communities. The Australian and State/Territory Attorneys General have also committed to establishing national justice targets for Indigenous Australians.

**Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy** – making services more accessible and effective for Indigenous people and getting the right mix of integrated mainstream and targeted services to strengthen capacity, engagement and participation. Governments have committed to target the substantial funding provided under the mainstream and Indigenous-specific NPs in the areas of housing, early childhood, education and health to address disadvantage.

**Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory** – moving the Northern Territory Emergency Response into a new phase to sustain long term outcomes. Funding has been provided to maintain and improve core supports and services in law and order, education and health while placing a greater emphasis on community development and engagement. A new income management scheme was announced on 25 November 2009 following intensive consultation with Indigenous Northern Territory communities on designing a non-discriminatory compulsory income management scheme; and ensuring people subject to income management have access to the full range of appeal rights, including through the Social Security Appeals Tribunal and the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. In addition, the Australian Government has introduced legislation into the Australian Parliament to reinstate the operation of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 as part of the package of reforms to move the NTER into a sustainable development phase.

**Employment programs** – Under the new Job Services Australia, providers have incentives to place job seekers into long term sustainable employment, and Indigenous job seekers typically attract higher levels of funding, reflecting their high degree of labour market disadvantage. Incentives are also in place for Indigenous job seekers to support engagement in education. In remote areas a range of additional incentives exist to help Indigenous Australians to return to primary or secondary school, engage in training and improve their foundation skills. As at mid-December 2009, over 90,000 Indigenous job seekers had engaged with Job Services Australia providers, 35,000 of whom lived in remote locations and over 15,000 job placements had been achieved, with a growing number of these placements (over 1000 to date) maintained over at least 13 weeks. During the same period almost 1000 remote Indigenous job seekers had participated in Certificate level vocational training.

**Indigenous Employment Programs** – the reformed Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) provides specialist project-based funding that complements assistance that is available through Job Services Australia and the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) Program. IEP projects have traditionally had a strong demand-side focus, to address employer needs. Reformed IEP is designed to be more flexible and responsive to the opportunities identified by employers, communities and Indigenous businesses.

To build opportunities for enterprise and work, the government has reformed the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) Program. It provides an increased focus on building work readiness for individuals and supporting community development in regions with limited or emerging economies. In areas where CDEP will be ending, a new Community Support Service will link employment and other services.
Improving outcomes for Indigenous students under the Low SES School Communities National Partnership

Innovative approaches being tried in states and territories include:

- establishment of Aboriginal Rapid Response Teams to work with schools to support the case management of individual students in identified regions. The teams, consisting of a social worker, an Aboriginal youth worker and an Aboriginal inclusion officer, will respond to critical incidents and coordinate community, non-government and government agency groups to respond together to the social and wellbeing needs of Aboriginal children and students. The Teams will provide a range of service that are tailored to the specific learning needs and wellbeing of students, such as tutorial support, mentoring support, individual learning plans, as well as helping to implement whole school approaches where appropriate.

- place-based models of collaboration among early childhood experts working across a range of disciplines to meet the needs, values and perspectives of Aboriginal families and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Participating schools will focus on the health, development and learning needs of young children through coordination of services provided to very young children and their families. The operating model established for each school will reflect the specific needs of the school community. Each participating school will employ a full-time early childhood development and learning coordinator to work with existing child-health, early intervention and family support services; broker new services according to local needs; and focus outreach services towards identified high-needs families.

In partnership with Indigenous business people and corporate Australia, the Government has commenced the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council pilot. The Government is investing $3 million to test an approach that has been successful in boosting minority business in the United States, Canada and the UK. Over 3 years, the Pilot is linking registered Indigenous businesses with corporate purchasers, to give Indigenous business a real chance to win contracts. Thirty-one Australian corporations had signed up for the pilot when it was launched in September 2009.

Recognising the key role of the private sector in creating jobs, investing in local economies, and promoting innovation and capability, the Government has also funded a Business Action Agenda. The agenda will build on the work already being undertaken by the private sector to increase Indigenous economic participation by:

- further engaging the corporate, not-for-profit and philanthropic sectors to take action in closing the gap; and

- establishing a national advisory group to provide strategic advice to government on improving Indigenous economic participation.

In Cape York the Government is supporting welfare reform trials, which started on 1 July 2008 and will run for three and a half years. Coordinated by the Cape York Institute, and in partnership with the Queensland Government and Griffith University, the four communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge are participating in a suite of programs to build social responsibility and economic opportunity, and improve education and management of housing. A Family Responsibilities Commission has been established led by an experienced magistrate and senior community members. The Commission can recommend conditions on welfare payments (making sure children attend school, keeping children safe from harm and neglect, not committing drug, alcohol or family violence offences and abiding by tenancy agreements). The trial also includes a focus on Indigenous employment and financial literacy. This is one of several welfare reform initiatives being trialled to improve outcomes for children – see Chapter 5 for more information.
To try a new way to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, especially the Stolen Generations, to heal from past trauma, the Government has invested $26.6 million over four years to establish the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation* to address trauma and aid healing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Government is also strengthening Link-Up services that unite families separated by past government policies.

The Government agreed one of the actions from the Australian 2020 Summit would be to pursue the idea of an *Indigenous Knowledge Centre* in order to strengthen Indigenous cultures and reinforce their significant place in Australian society. The Government has invested over $500,000 in a feasibility study including extensive consultation which is expected to start shortly, and will report on possible models and options for a centre later in 2010.

**Future Directions**

Closing the Gap is a significant national challenge, but also a significant opportunity to achieve lasting change and ensure that future generations of Indigenous Australians have all the opportunities enjoyed by other Australians to live full, healthy lives and achieve their potential.

Our medium-term strategy must reflect the reality that Indigenous disadvantage is deep seated and long-standing, the result of chronic under-investment by governments for decades. To turn this around, all Australian governments will need to sustain these investments over the next decade and beyond.

Just as important as the increased investment by the Australian Government and States and Territories through COAG is a commitment to fundamental policy reform to remove the hurdles and blockages which have bedevilled attempts to address disadvantage in the past.

In health, developing innovative strategies targeting chronic diseases which prevent children learning and adults from working and hinder full participation in the community will be an ongoing priority.

In housing, the Government will continue driving reform of land tenure to ensure that responsibility for tenancy management is sheeted home to governments and not tenants, and that pathways to home ownership are developed.

It will be critical to sustain momentum in the COAG remote service delivery strategy, which involves the targeting of extra resources to 29 priority locations in remote Australia, aimed at ensuring that they have access to the same infrastructure and services as equivalent towns elsewhere in the country.

Policy reform itself is an ongoing process, requiring long term commitment, a clear vision of the end point, and perhaps most importantly, a commitment to working with Indigenous Australians to achieving the improved outcomes necessary to close the gap. The Government will build on the platform established through the Apology to the Stolen Generations, the endorsement of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the establishment of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples to pursue a new relationship based on open and honest dialogue, consultation and engagement and a commitment to facilitate human development within the Indigenous community.

To achieve the targets agreed by COAG all governments will need to maintain a strong focus on implementation over the years ahead, making sure the planned reforms deliver real outcomes for Indigenous Australians. The Government has committed to annual reporting on our achievements to publicly monitor the impact of all areas of reform and ensure they deliver better outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Building functioning, resilient and safe remote communities will be a priority. The Australian Government will work with States and Territories to agree law and justice targets and find practical ways to achieve them and will work with remote Indigenous communities to trial innovative approaches to better deliver essential services.
The Government will continue to explore opportunities to work with the community and corporate sectors and forge corporate and philanthropic partnerships to deliver real and sustainable improvements with Indigenous communities.

Continued funding in the 2009/10 Budget for Reconciliation Australia will support these partnerships through the Reconciliation Action Plan program, which fosters links with the corporate, community and education sectors and encourages tangible action on the inclusion of Indigenous people in these key sectors. It supports organisations, large and small, to engage within their sphere of influence in the national effort to close the 10-11 year gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and other Australians.

Through the National Partnership on Economic Participation the Government will continue to develop opportunities for procurement provisions to support Indigenous business and employment, with a particular focus on large construction projects, maintenance contracts, cleaning and infrastructure projects agreed through the COAG Infrastructure Working Group. By requiring successful contractors of major projects to implement Indigenous training, employment and supplier strategies, jobs will be created for Indigenous Australians, the skills of Indigenous Australians will be developed and Indigenous businesses will be created and supported.
Chapter 9 – Breaking the cycle of entrenched and multiple disadvantage in particular neighbourhoods and communities.

As set out in Chapter 2, there is mounting evidence that different kinds of disadvantage – lower incomes, poorer housing, poorer health, lower education attainment, higher unemployment and higher crime rates – tend to coincide for individuals and families in a relatively small number of particular places, and that these concentrations of disadvantage tend to persist over time.

The Government has identified the following 20 priority employment regions and 29 remote priority areas as experiencing or at particular risk of disadvantage.

### Priority Employment Regions:
- **New South Wales**: Canterbury-Bankstown and South Western Sydney, Illawarra, Richmond-Tweed and Clarence Valley, Mid-North Coast, Sydney West and Blue Mountains, Central Coast-Hunter;
- **Victoria**: South Eastern Melbourne, North Western Melbourne, Ballarat-Bendigo (Central Victoria), North Eastern Victoria;
- **Queensland**: Ipswich-Logan, Southern Wide Bay-Burnett, Bundaberg-Hervey Bay, Cairns, Caboolture-Sunshine Coast, Townsville-Thuringowa;
- **Tasmania**: North West/Northern Tasmania;
- **South Australia**: Northern and Western Adelaide, Port Augusta-Whyalla-Port Pirie, and
- **Western Australia**: South West Perth.

### Remote Priority Areas:
- **Northern Territory**: Angurugu, Galiwin’ku, Gapuwiyak, Gunbalanya, Hermannsburg, Lajamanu, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Nguiu, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Wadeye, Yirrkala, Yuendumu, and Umbakumba;
- **Queensland**: Hope Vale, Aurukun, Mossman Gorge and Coen (which are also part of the Cape York welfare reform trial), Mornington Island and Doomadgee;
- **South Australia**: Amata and Mimili;
- **New South Wales**: Walgett and Wilcannia;
- **Western Australia**: Fitzroy Crossing and surrounding communities; Halls Creek and surrounding communities; Beagle Bay and Ardyaloon.
The priority employment regions have been selected based on an analysis of various labour market statistics, which indicate a region’s likelihood of experiencing disadvantage now or in the future. These included:

- those regions that already face high levels of labour market disadvantage and a high unemployment rate;
- those regions displaying a notable increase in Centrelink unemployment beneficiary numbers since the onset of the global economic downturn and which may be ‘at risk’ of employment losses and increases in unemployment as the slowdown takes full effect;
- those regions that already have a high proportion of their population receiving Centrelink benefits;
- those regions whose population has poor educational attainment levels/low skills;
- those regions which, in previous downturns, experienced entrenched disadvantage or a significant lift in the unemployment rate; and
- those regions with a high concentration of industries that are likely to exhibit or are already exhibiting a significant decrease in employment (or rise in unemployment) due to the global economic downturn (e.g. those with high concentrations of manufacturing, financial and insurance services, rental, hiring and real estate services, mining or accommodation and food services).

The remote priority communities were selected by the Australian Government and the States and Territories because they have significant Indigenous populations and governments have an existing presence or investment on which to build improved service delivery.

On 4 December 2009, the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services presented his first bi-annual report. He reports on the development and delivery of government services and facilities and on the progress that has been made towards achieving the Closing the Gap targets in the identified 29 remote priority communities. His recommendations included national issues, such as the role of local government, government presence in communities, governance and leadership training, education pathways and the construction of infrastructure, as well as specific issues for state or territory governments. These recommendations are now being considered by COAG’s Working Group on Indigenous Reform.

The data shows that there are multiple, complex and inter-related factors of disadvantage in some neighbourhoods and communities. Remote and rural communities face added difficulties accessing services and barriers to participation, due to distance and small populations.

The reforms and innovations being put in place to support the priority groups identified in this Statement will provide significant assistance but more is needed to overcome the deep and entrenched disadvantage these neighbourhoods and communities experience, and to ensure they are not left behind again in times of economic prosperity.

Mainstream services need to work better and to be complemented by community-wide initiatives, developed with the community, and tailored to the needs of each unique neighbourhood. Consistent with the social inclusion principles, solutions should be strengths-based rather than deficit-based – they should focus on what the communities already do well, and be built on existing local governance structures rather than being imposed from above.

Innovations we are piloting to test out new solutions

The Government has been testing and evaluating a number of innovative approaches to social policy in areas of entrenched disadvantage.

Healthy Communities

The Healthy Communities Initiative commits $72 million, under the COAG National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health, to fund the roll-out of programs for at-risk adults who are not in the paid workforce. The Healthy Communities Initiative will specifically help to improve diet and physical activity in targeted disadvantaged communities experiencing high rates of chronic and preventable conditions. This initiative will fund local governments to deliver physical activity, dietary education, and healthy lifestyle programs in local communities.
providing the company with business advisory assistance to help ensure the ongoing viability of the business and protect the jobs of the remaining employees, and

> linking retrenched workers with another local manufacturer looking to expand their workforce. Seventeen of the retrenched workers were offered work trials with the company and several of them gained employment.

Centrelink – Place Based Trials

Centrelink has put in place seven place based trials to develop a more socially inclusive service delivery system.

Each trial site developed local responses to problems specific to their local area. Focus groups in different locations included young refugees, young carers, mature age unemployed men, urban Indigenous people and survivors of domestic violence. In each case, responses were built around local level partnerships between Centrelink, state and local governments and local business and community partners, to provide bridging support for disadvantaged and vulnerable people to enable them to better connect with services appropriate and relevant to their needs and aspirations. Centrelink developed a common framework for managing these initiatives to provide a structured approach to program planning and evaluation.

An independent evaluation of the initiatives has found that addressing multiple needs in an integrated way and building capacity in the local community can have positive results, that a strength-based approach builds the trust and confidence of vulnerable people to access services and that social inclusion can be advanced for customers by a flexible and tailored approach to service delivery. The results will help in developing future place based strategies for a more socially inclusive and accessible service delivery system.

For more information about trials focusing on young refugees in Fairfield and Broadmeadow, see Appendix A.
Centrelink Mobile Offices

In October and November 2009, Centrelink launched two brand new mobile servicing units, to be known as Mobile Offices. The Mobile Offices are an example of how Centrelink is adapting its servicing to meeting the specific servicing needs of rural communities. The vehicles will be fully functional mobile offices providing Centrelink and Medicare services to rural and regional Australia, plus Australian Hearing services at selected locations. Information will also be provided from a range of Government agencies such as the Department of Environment, Heritage, Water and Arts, the Australian Taxation Office and the Child Support Agency, as the mobile office concept evolves into a ‘one stop shop on wheels’ for Government services.

The Mobile Offices are also in a unique position to provide first hand feedback to the Government about issues confronting communities outside of large urban areas. This can also provide an important insight on the effectiveness and impact of programs and policies in rural communities. Mobile Offices grew out of Centrelink’s earlier innovation of the Drought Bus – see Appendix A for more information. They now form one of the elements of wider reform to human service delivery – see Chapter 3.

Many of the National Partnerships with the States and Territories also have a strong locational element. This is particularly the case for the National Early Childhood Development Strategy, the Remote Service Delivery Strategy.

The National Early Childhood Development Strategy

The National Early Childhood Development Strategy agreed by COAG in July 2009 recognises that child and family-friendly communities contribute to safe environments for children, provide access to a range of services and facilities and take into consideration the needs of young children and families in community planning in areas such as housing, transportation, urban design and community resources. The Strategy includes a commitment to provide better support to disadvantaged children and reduce current inequalities, as part of its overall objective to improve early years support for all Australian children.

The Australian Government will work with States and Territories to develop options to better identify and engage vulnerable children and their families by:

> improving assessment to identify vulnerable children;
> improving the effectiveness of referral pathways across universal, targeted and intensive early childhood and family support services; and
> improving outreach and engagement with vulnerable families with respect to in-home support, and participation in universal health, early childhood education and care, and family support services.

Remote Service Delivery Strategy

COAG agreed to a Remote Service Delivery National Partnership to support improvements to the delivery of services across the 29 remote priority areas across the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia.

The Remote Service Delivery Strategy will change the way governments invest in remote areas, providing coordinated, concentrated and accelerated development across all levels of government.

Governments will provide integrated engagement and service planning. Conditions in communities will be mapped to provide a baseline, and detailed local implementation plans developed for each location in partnership with Indigenous people and other local stakeholders.
Future directions

The next stages of work on locational disadvantage will focus on identifying lessons and models from the range of current initiatives and developing the frameworks for coordination and collaboration that can underpin successful long term strategies for particular places.

The National Action Plan on Social Inclusion currently being developed by the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments will include a strong focus on areas of entrenched disadvantage. Social Inclusion Ministers have agreed to prioritise early collaborative action in the 20 employment priority regions and 29 remote priority areas.

Ministers have agreed to share administrative data where appropriate, and to work through existing governance mechanisms in neighbourhoods and communities so there is local involvement in the design and delivery of social inclusion measures. Initial stages of joint work in selected locations are likely to involve:

- getting together with all partners, including local communities, community organisations, business and governments;
- establishing a comprehensive picture of the place and the community to understand strengths, needs and gaps; and
- agreeing or establishing appropriate governance arrangements.

The majority of Australia’s population lives in cities, whose infrastructure can have a profound influence on the functioning of the people and communities within them. That is why the Australian Government proposes to develop in 2010 the first ever national criteria for the future strategic planning of major cities. These would build on the work of the Council of Australian Governments Cities Taskforce and the Major Cities Unit within Infrastructure Australia.

The standards will be designed to foster strong, transparent and long-term plans for growth and high-quality urban development which achieve productive, affordable, livable and sustainable cities.

It is clear that many of the communities in Australia today that are socially excluded were the result of poor planning decisions that failed to understand or implement social inclusion principles. These communities were often built with insufficient infrastructure, with no regard for community development and building social capital and were designed to become home to Australians who were at risk of social exclusion.

Consequently, it is imperative that in current growth corridors and the new established suburbs of the future that social inclusion is considered at the start of urban development not at the end point when the location has become clearly disadvantaged. As always, early intervention and prevention is the most effective strategy.

Recognising that effective mainstream services need to underpin responses to locational disadvantage, and that rural and remote communities may be disadvantaged by their poor access to essential services including health, the Government is currently working with State and Territory Governments to develop a new national strategic approach to rural and remote health.

Not-for-profit and community organisations are also at the forefront of addressing locational disadvantage. The Australian Government is working on a number of fronts to enable those organisations to have maximum impact. This includes reducing the regulatory burden and improving relationships with the sector through a National Compact.

- The National Compact will be an agreement between the Government and the third sector that sets out how they will work together to improve and strengthen their relationship, now and in the future.

- It represents a commitment from Government to valuing and respecting the sector and its contribution, and to improving the way they work together into the future.

- Implementation of the Compact will include mechanisms for continued dialogue with the sector.

The Government is also exploring the use of social enterprises as an alternative way to deliver local services. Social enterprises are trading businesses which aim both to generate profit through the sale of goods and services, and also to provide a social, community or environmental benefit. Although well established in many other countries, the Australian social enterprise sector is relatively new.
Under the Jobs Fund and Innovation Fund, the Government has provided funding to establish and expand social enterprises in locations throughout Australia.

The Government is also exploring the barriers to establishment of social enterprises, such as lack of start up capital and support for business skills.

Disasters can put communities at risk of ongoing disadvantage, especially those communities and the families and individuals that are already vulnerable. The Government will work to build communities’ resilience to better prepare, respond and recover from these incidents and provide timely support when disasters happen to help reduce and prevent long-term effects. This includes the development through COAG of an ‘All-Hazards’ coordinated national disaster recovery framework, which will (in part) focus on building community resilience through work with organisations to help them maintain services during major emergencies such as a pandemic, flooding and or other disasters. This approach recognises that a disaster resilient community is one that works together to understand and manage the risks that it confronts.

The Government is also developing the evidence base for locational approaches and better social policy. This includes improving our capacity to capture, collate and share spatial data across government departments and agencies. As a first step, the Department of Human Services is currently trialling ways to make administrative data (from agencies like Centrelink and Medicare) and demographic information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics available together at a locality or suburb level for agencies to use and share when analysing locational disadvantage.

An area for further research and analysis in the future is mobility, to better understand people’s movement in and out of local areas. This will help to better interpret data about changing community characteristics and understand the impact of locational interventions.

**Support for social enterprise under the Jobs Fund**

STREAT Ltd in Melbourne is developing social enterprise to provide homeless young people with a pathway off the street and into a secure job within the food service industry. Its program will combine industry-level training with best-practice social support and commercial opportunities in food service businesses. STREAT’s first hospitality ventures will be small outdoor cafés run from mobile food carts. Trainees will receive a Certificate II in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations).

The Social Studies Remixed Design Project in Melbourne is a social enterprise where clothing is created from the style and skills of the young refugee community. Recycled and excess manufacturing materials are gathered from local industry and re-configured into original clothing which will be sold in specially designed mobile shopping carts across the city. The Social Studies Remixed Design Project deals with the main barriers faced by refugees in the community – unemployment, isolation and difficulties accessing education and training – by empowering people to learn in a vocational setting. The enterprise will give young people TAFE qualifications in fashion design with clothing to be sold under the ‘Remixed Design’ label through outlets across Melbourne.

Finding Workable Solutions Inc. provides a supported environment where people with a disability can work or gain work experience in various businesses. The range of small businesses is integrated into the community and competes on the open market with high quality products and services. One of these businesses is Salvage and Save, a social franchise model being supported by the Australian Government from the Jobs Fund. Salvage yards operated at the Windmill Hill transfer station (Mt Barker) and Goolwa (Fleurieu Peninsula), offering a range of employment opportunities to people with a disability within the local community while greatly reducing the amount of salvageable and recyclable items ending up in landfill. Jobs fund is funding the establishment of a new salvage unit save site at Murray Bridge in South Australia, which would provide employment to 49 people in regional South Australia.
PART 3: Achieving Our Goals
Chapter 10 – The Way Forward

This Statement describes the Australian Government’s approach to building a stronger and fairer nation in which all Australians have the opportunity and support they need to participate fully in the nation’s economy and community life, develop their own potential and be treated with dignity and respect.

This has the potential to dramatically improve some peoples’ lives by reducing financial hardship, social and physical isolation, chronic health problems and family breakdown.

It can also benefit the whole community by reducing costs to the Budget, reducing costs to the economy through lost productivity and workforce participation and costs to communities where disadvantage can become entrenched, damaging social networks and reducing community safety.

This Statement sets out the five pillars of the Government’s framework for building a stronger and fairer Australia:

> maintaining a strong and internationally competitive economy;
> creating the opportunities and resources that every Australian needs to participate in the economy and community life;
> ensuring that services which are provided to all Australians meet high standards;
> supporting families and building strong and cohesive communities; and
> building new and innovative partnerships with all sectors of the economy.
It outlines the social inclusion principles the Government will apply in the design and delivery of policies, programs and services, and identifies the six early priority areas for Government reform:

- targeting jobless families with children to increase work opportunities, improve parenting and build capacity;
- improving the life chances of children at greatest risk of long term disadvantage;
- reducing the incidence of homelessness;
- improving outcomes for people living with disability or mental illness and their carers;
- closing the gap for Indigenous Australians; and
- breaking the cycle of entrenched and multiple disadvantage in particular neighbourhoods and communities.

These priorities have been selected by using evidence about the causes and consequences of social and economic disadvantage. They reflect the areas where disadvantage can often be a result of multiple, complex and interconnected barriers to participation. Making progress in these areas will help address the cycle of disadvantage which currently exists for some individuals and communities in Australia.

Progress will be built on improved universal services like education and health that better meet the needs of all Australians, particularly those who most need the services but may have greatest difficulty accessing them.

These will be supplemented by flexible, tailored support that targets those experiencing disadvantage, such as improved services for people who are homeless, the unemployed and people with a disability or mental illness, and an increased focus on joined-up services in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities.

They will be implemented through new and innovative partnerships with all sectors so that all levels of government, business and not-for-profit organisations work together to build a stronger, fairer Australia.

All action to improve social inclusion will maintain a strong focus on building resilience and self reliance – on building capability rather than reinforcing dependence – so that individuals, families and communities are able to take responsibility and help themselves.

The Government recognises that only by working together, building on a strong economy and improved services, will our vision for social inclusion be achieved.

Through this strategy we have committed to putting in place the reforms, policies, programs, partnerships and supporting infrastructure that will make a difference to individuals and families that may otherwise be left behind as Australia recovers from the global economic downturn.

**Supporting structures**

Delivery and ongoing development of this agenda requires the right structures for partnerships, delivery and accountability. The essential structures include: the Australian Social Inclusion Board; the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion being developed with State and Territory Governments; a National Compact with the not-for-profit sector; and regional and local partnerships that help drive collaboration.
The Australian Social Inclusion Board

The Australian Government established the Australian Social Inclusion Board in May 2008 so that it could benefit from its advice on what the community, including experts, consider to be the most effective and worthwhile interventions to improve social inclusion. Its terms of reference are to:

> provide advice and information to the Minister for Social Inclusion, the Hon Julia Gillard MP;
> consult widely and provide input on different aspects of social inclusion, including issues of measurement, how to increase social and economic participation, and how to engage communities on social inclusion matters; and,
> report annually and provide advice on other specific matters referred to it by the Minister.

The Board’s 2010 report sets out how Australia is faring across a series of social inclusion indicators, providing a benchmark against which to measure our progress as a nation. As part of its commitment to transparency and public accountability, the Government will be asking the Board to monitor and report on progress in social inclusion.

To date, the Board has provided advice on many aspects of social inclusion and a number of policies as they are developed. The Board has led consultations with key stakeholders, including the mental health and disability sector and the Chairs of government advisory bodies, as well as developing advice such as:

> input to the Government’s Principles for Social Inclusion;
> the Compendium of Social Inclusion Indicators, designed to generate debate and discussion on how best to measure disadvantage and social inclusion in Australia;
> a short publication, Building Community Resilience, which provided advice on and practical examples of how to build inclusive and resilient communities;
> advice on effective services for children at risk of long-term disadvantage;
> input to the framework for measurement of social inclusion outcomes;
> input to the Homelessness Green and White Papers;
> a submission to the Review of Indigenous Employment Programs and Community Development Employment Projects; and
> advice on socially inclusive employment services.

The Government will continue to draw on the Board’s advice on key issues and emerging challenges for social inclusion.

Australian Social Inclusion Board Membership

Board members are appointed by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister for a period of up to three years. Current members are:

Ms Patricia Faulkner AO (Chair)
Monsignor David Cappo (Vice Chair)
Ms Elleni Bereded-Samuel
Dr Ngiare Brown
Dr Ron Edwards
Professor Tony Vinson
Ms Linda White
Ms Kerry Graham
Mr Eddie McGuire
Mr Tony Nicholson
Dr Chris Sarra
Professor Fiona Stanley
Dr John Falzon
National Action Plan on Social Inclusion

A National Action Plan on Social Inclusion, to be considered by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments early in 2010, will be a key driver of all governments’ efforts to support the outcomes in this Statement.

At the inaugural meeting of Social Inclusion Ministers on 18 September 2009, Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers affirmed their commitment to find new ways to work together to improve opportunities for social inclusion for the most disadvantaged Australians. Ministers agreed that social inclusion is a priority for all jurisdictions, especially as Australia recovers from the global economic downturn.

Governments agreed to work collaboratively and use common principles to improve social inclusion outcomes, prioritising:

- children at risk of disadvantage;
- disengaged young people;
- jobless families; and
- locational disadvantage.

Ministers agreed that Governments will:

- prioritise early collaborative action in those locations identified as the most disadvantaged areas within the Commonwealth’s 20 employment priority locations and 29 remote priority areas identified through COAG;
- complement multilateral work by exploring opportunities to work bilaterally on specific social inclusion initiatives and locations over the next 12 months;
- communicate to the Coordinators General the importance of focussing on social inclusion principles, especially as they relate to strengthening communities and employment opportunities for disadvantaged job seekers during the rollout of economic stimulus initiatives; and
- use existing governance mechanisms wherever possible to ensure local involvement in the design and delivery of social inclusion measures.

The National Action Plan will include a suite of key performance indicators against which progress on actions agreed by the various governments will be measured.

National Compact with the Third Sector

The Third Sector is an important and growing part of Australian society which greatly influences how our community functions and the extent to which people are socially included.

The Australian Government and organisations from the Third Sector have had extensive discussions on how they might work better together. The National Compact will be the culmination of these discussions and outlines shared principles and aspirations.

The next step will be to develop an overarching Commonwealth action plan that focuses on the following eight priorities for action:

- document and promote the value and contribution of the Sector;
- protect the Sector’s right to advocacy irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist;
- recognise Sector diversity in consultation processes and Sector development initiatives;
- improve information sharing including greater access to publicly funded research and data;
- reduce red tape and streamline reporting;
- simplify and improve consistency of financial arrangements including across state and Commonwealth jurisdictions;
- act to improve paid and unpaid workforce issues; and
- improve funding and procurement processes.
Social Inclusion Unit
The Social Inclusion Unit in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet provides advice to Ministers, supports the Australian Social Inclusion Board and helps to progress the social inclusion agenda across all governments and other sectors. In 2009 it produced *The Australian Public Service (APS) Social Inclusion Policy Design and Delivery Toolkit* to communicate the principles and priorities for social inclusion across the APS, and to support portfolios in embedding this approach in policies and programs.

Regional and Local Partnerships
The national infrastructure for social inclusion provides a framework for collaboration within and across governments and with the third sector, to deliver improvements in social inclusion. To be effective, it will need to be supported by appropriate regional and local partnerships that help people work together in new and different ways to support those at risk of social exclusion.

A number of recent Government initiatives will be instrumental in achieving this local and regional collaboration and cooperation. Examples include:

- establishment of the Australian Council of Local Government to forge a new cooperative engagement between the Commonwealth and local government;
- placement of local employment coordinators in twenty priority employment regions to co-ordinate and drive local responses to job losses and declining economic demand;
- appointment of a Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services to report to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, who will work closely with Indigenous people, community groups and businesses and co-ordinate action across agencies, to cut through red tape and deliver real results on the ground; and
- establishment of the Regional Development Australia (RDA) network, a partnership between the Australian, State and Territory and local governments to support the growth and development of Australia’s regions.

RDA committees will build partnerships between governments, regional development organisations, local businesses, community groups and key regional stakeholders to provide strategic and targeted responses to economic, environmental and social issues affecting the regions of Australia.

Building the Evidence Base
To understand how to protect against and reduce risks of disadvantage, we need to know what works and what doesn’t. The use of evidence is therefore central to the social inclusion approach, and building the evidence base will be a key element of taking forward the actions in this Statement.

The Statement outlines a number of innovative reforms and local pilots that are being put in place to develop new ways of supporting people facing disadvantage, to provide them with the long term capacity and ability to overcome the barriers they face to social inclusion.

The Government will use these pilots to analyse and monitor new approaches that contribute to improving the effectiveness of social inclusion policies.

All the pilots will be thoroughly evaluated to see how well they work and whether they should be scaled up. They will be monitored closely against the outcomes they achieve for priority groups. The Government will continue to innovate, based on this information, to achieve the best outcomes possible for those experiencing disadvantage.

There are also arrangements in place to evaluate the major Commonwealth-State reforms being implemented in health, education, housing and social support. These evaluations will be an important element of the review of all National Partnerships by the COAG Reform Council (CRC) as they reach the end of the agreement periods.

In evaluating outcomes of the National Partnerships the CRC will particularly focus on outcomes for disadvantaged groups, including Indigenous Australians and those from low socio-economic backgrounds.
Chapter 11 – Public Accountability and Reporting

The Government is committed to public accountability for progress against the actions outlined in this Statement, and for reducing the incidence of social exclusion, particularly in the six early social inclusion priorities.

Reporting and accountability will help drive greater effort towards those areas where progress might be slow, and will help identify where success is being achieved so that it can be shared and built on.

To achieve these goals we are implementing a national social inclusion measurement framework and reporting strategy to:

- strengthen accountability and encourage public debate by providing Australians with clear, accurate information about social inclusion outcomes;
- assess progress in achieving social inclusion over time and identify new challenges as they emerge; and
- increase our understanding of the extent and nature of social inclusion in Australia – by building a stronger evidence base.

Measurement Framework

A social inclusion indicator framework has been developed with advice from the Australian Social Inclusion Board and a wide range of experts, both within and outside government. The framework has benefited from experience in related fields, both in Australia and overseas.

The framework includes a suite of indicators of social inclusion (similar to the Productivity Commission’s action-oriented measurement framework on Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage).

The indicators measure social inclusion across domains which reflect the Government’s activity and the wider environment affecting social inclusion including the global economy, the actions of State and Territory and local governments, business and community groups.

The framework is at Appendix B and covers:

- Participation
  - work
  - learn
  - engage
  - have a voice
- Resources
  - material/economic
  - health and disability
  - education and skills
  - social resources
  - community and institutional resources
  - housing and personal safety
- Multiple and entrenched disadvantage

Headline and supplementary indicators will be analysed, where possible, by factors such as age, gender, remoteness and by population subgroups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people living with disability, homeless people and people in jobless families. Analysis will also be undertaken to better understand:

- relationships between different types of disadvantage (including multiple or deep disadvantage);
- the extent to which disadvantage is entrenched (using longitudinal data); and
- the concentration of disadvantage in particular locations.

In the future, short-term progress in improving social inclusion will be measured by strategic change indicators, which are still to be developed. These will be leading indicators of potential progress in relevant areas of government policy and service delivery. They may be risk factors for exclusion or outputs of government programs designed to improve inclusion outcomes.
The second major report is due in 2012, two years after the baseline report, when data will be available from the main data source for this framework, the Australian Bureau of Statistics General Social Survey. The focus will be on changes in indicators over time and for particular at-risk population groups. Assessments will be made about whether the social gradients that exist for a range of the indicators have reduced over time.

In future years annual reports on agreed strategic change indicators will show progress in social inclusion resulting from improved policies and programs as well as the changing economic and social environment (such as a changing global economic position, business cycle and/or demographic changes). Australian Government departments will be held accountable for their progress on social inclusion through reporting in departmental annual reports on strategic change indicators of social inclusion relevant to their portfolio. This information will be collated by the Social Inclusion Unit in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to produce an annual consolidated report on progress on social inclusion. It will include all of the strategic change indicators as well as selected headline indicators which have frequent data and can be expected to change over a year. The first of these reports will be released around December 2011.

When the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion is developed, it will include key performance indicators and a plan for annual reporting on joint work between the Australian Government and States and Territories. Annual reporting to Parliament on closing the gap for Indigenous Australians will also continue. Progress will be measured against the six key targets for closing the gap agreed by COAG (outlined in Chapter 8).

For example, possible indicators could include:

- the proportion of three year olds living in disadvantaged areas that are attending preschool, as improvements here are expected to lead to improved educational attainment for these at-risk children;
- the availability of crisis housing which could prevent some forms of homelessness; or
- the proportion of long-term income support recipients moving off payments, which could indicate successful transition of long-term welfare recipients into work.

Data is not currently available for all of the indicators in the framework, and for some, data cannot currently be disaggregated or can only be disaggregated infrequently for population subgroups. The Government is committed to developing and implementing a data development and information strategy, which will identify ways to address current data gaps and improve the information available to report against the indicator framework.

Over time, governments will work together to improve and standardise the collection of data at the small geographic area level to get a better understanding of what is happening in locations.

**Reporting Strategy**

Public reporting against the social inclusion indicator framework will provide regular and relevant information on overall progress on social inclusion in Australia.

Major reports on social inclusion, covering the full set of headline and supplementary indicators that measure improvement in social inclusion outcomes, will be produced every two to four years.

The first report against the framework was released by the Australian Social Inclusion Board in January 2010. It provides a comprehensive description of the nature and extent of social inclusion in Australia today and the baseline against which to measure future progress.
Appendix A
Social Inclusion Principles

This appendix provides a description of the principles for social inclusion, with examples of how they are being put into practice.

1. Building on individual and community strengths

Making the most of people’s strengths, including the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people from other cultures

Taking a strength-based, rather than a deficit-based, approach means respecting, supporting and building on the strengths of individuals, families, communities and cultures. Assuming, promoting and supporting a strong and positive view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and culture will be particularly important ways to reduce social exclusion for Indigenous Australians, working in parallel with specific initiatives to improve their health, education, housing and employment prospects. Recognising the varied and positive contributions of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will also be an important feature of the social inclusion approach.

Community Street Soccer

The Big Issue in Australia Community Street Soccer Program will establish 30 Community Street Soccer projects across Australia to improve the lives and opportunities of Australians experiencing disadvantage. The Australian Government has committed $3 million over three years from 2007-08 to the Community Street Soccer Program.

This project uses physical activity, in the form of organised sport, as a catalyst for transforming lives by reconnecting people who are homeless with the community and providing them with a real sense of purpose and belonging.

The aim of the Community Street Soccer program is to create social change and promote participation, inclusiveness, commitment, selflessness and team spirit through physical activity. The project is targeted towards assisting individuals experiencing disadvantage including homelessness, substance abuse issues, mental illness, disability, addiction, and social and economic hardship.

See also the example for Principle 7, Using Locational Approaches, Centrelink Place Based Trials, another example of strength-based approaches.

2. Building partnerships with key stakeholders

Governments, organisations and communities working together to get the best results for people in need

All sectors have a role to play in building a more socially inclusive Australia and the approach will rely on encouraging and supporting the diverse contribution of all. Strong relationships between government and these other stakeholders are key to achieving the joined up approach required for sustainable outcomes and to sharing expertise to produce innovative solutions. Building effective partnerships to tackle shared priorities is essential to improving social inclusion over time. Whether in forming city wide plans to reduce homelessness, or strengthening service provision in parts of the community sector, or jointly investing in new social innovations, policy on social inclusion needs to advance work through a diverse range of cross sector partnerships.
Mornington Island Restorative Justice

Mornington Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria, is one of Queensland’s most disadvantaged Indigenous communities. Following requests from the community for mediation of many disputes the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department worked with the community to develop a dispute resolution model. The model is tailored to the needs of the community and provides the resources and skills for the community to resolve its own disputes in the future.

Consultation with the community was extensive, involving the Moyenda (or Council of Elders), the Shire Council, Police Service, Police Citizens Youth Club, Aboriginal Legal Services Solicitors, the School Principal and staff, Uniting Church Elders, visiting Magistrates, the Department of Child Safety, the Department of Communities, probation and parole officers from Mornington Island and Mt Isa, and non-government organisations.

The resulting model was implemented in October 2009. It recognises the cultural needs of extended Indigenous family groups and provides a strategy to include their representatives as co mediators, working in partnership with the project mediators.

The project has conducted six mediations, all of which were successful. Four of these addressed the likelihood of escalating violence and two involved court referred victim offender mediations. Some 160 family members have participated to date. The high level of participation reflects a growing confidence to use mediation to resolve conflict.

3. Developing tailored services

*Services working together in new and flexible ways to meet each person’s different needs. For some members of the Australian population experiencing, or at immediate risk of, significant exclusion, mainstream services may not be sufficient or appropriate to mitigate against exclusion.*

Deep, intensive interventions tailored at an individual, family or community level are one way to support those experiencing deep and complex social exclusion, by helping them tackle their actual problems. Different service providers may need to link together to do this. For example, linking health and family support services may make the most difference to parents of children at risk. Linking employment preparation effectively with drug or alcohol treatment may be necessary as a pathway out of homelessness. Successfully overcoming social exclusion may also involve learning to change deeply held attitudes and behaviours, for example through anger management or family counselling, in order to access new opportunities. Overcoming the fragmentation of government service systems for people at high risk of social exclusion, and in relation to important milestones in the lifecycle, such as transitions from adolescence to adulthood or the end of working life, is a priority.

The Drought Buses

Since November 2006, Centrelink’s Drought Buses have been travelling around Australia through the worst drought-affected areas to help farmers and agriculture-based small business owners access the range of Australian Government drought assistance payments and support services available to them. They have visited almost 1000 towns, offering support to more than 30 000 people. Farmers, farm families, agriculturally dependent small businesses, irrigators and industry representatives have been able to speak to Centrelink rural experts, including Rural Services Officers, Customer Service Advisers and Rural Social Workers and Psychologists. From 1 July 2009, services for seniors, students and families have also been delivered by the Buses.

Learning from the success of the Drought Buses, Centrelink launched a brand new Mobile Office unit in October 2009, providing Centrelink and Medicare services to rural and regional Australia – see Chapter 9 for more information.
4. Giving a high priority to early intervention and prevention

_Heading off problems by understanding the root causes and intervening early_

It is important to tackle the immediate problems of social exclusion that many face, such as homelessness. But in the longer term it is clearly preferable to prevent such problems arising in the first place. Identifying the root causes of disadvantage and the connections between different types of disadvantage allows interventions to be designed to prevent the occurrence of problems and provide more effective support to those who are vulnerable before the disadvantage becomes entrenched. This is particularly important in preventing intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. Universal services such as schools and hospitals provide a range of opportunities to identify those at risk of disadvantage at an early stage. Giving priority to early intervention and prevention means focusing on children and young people, on the early identification of potential problems, and on taking effective action to tackle them.

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**Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)**

The Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) provides early support to disadvantaged families through a locational approach. It empowers parents and carers to be their children’s first teacher by spending time on educational activities with their child for 15 minutes each day, and helps them to be involved in school and community life. The program is delivered in disadvantaged regions with a high proportion of families with young children. Twenty two locations are currently operating across Australia and it will ultimately be established in 50 communities, supporting up to 3,000 families.

Mai came to Australia from Vietnam and was living in Flemington with her husband and two young children when she noticed a poster for the HIPPY home tutoring program. Mai started the HIPPY program with her son Daniel. Daniel has since graduated from the program and her daughter Anna is in her second year. ‘When Anna started prep this year, she could already draw and write and read some books’, said Mai.

For some parents, it also offers a supported pathway to employment and local community leadership through employment as a Home Tutor. At the end of her first year in the program with Daniel, Mai was approached to become a HIPPY Home Tutor. Mai has trained for her Certificate III in Community Services and worked with the Fitzroy coordinator to organise a parenting group.
5. Building joined-up services and whole of government(s) solutions

Getting different parts and different levels of government to work together in new and flexible ways to get better outcomes and services for people in need

The multifaceted nature of social exclusion means that the services offered by any one agency can only go so far in meeting the complex needs of a person or groups of people. Separate silos of funding, policy-making and service delivery can be systemic barriers to providing effective support. Flexibility and cooperation across agencies, both between Commonwealth agencies and across levels of government, is one key to comprehensively address social exclusion. Integration, transparency and collaboration between Commonwealth, State and Territory governments are particularly important. Priorities include:

> taking a ‘people-first’ view of what people and communities need, using evidence about their actual experiences and life outcomes;

> developing policy through integrated, problem-solving projects which draw together all relevant agencies and knowledge; and developing programs within a comprehensive social inclusion framework, researching and understanding the links between programs operating on the ground, and working across all levels of government, including through the Council of Australian Governments, to join up service delivery in strategic as well as practical ways.

The Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) program

Gerry had been in hospital and after being discharged he was told he could no longer stay at the retirement village where he previously lived. His many health problems included macular degeneration, type one diabetes, multiple toe amputations and partial foot amputation and he has had triple bypass surgery. His brother Roy, also on a Disability Support Pension, offered to care for Gerry and he was referred to the Assistance with Care and Housing for the Aged (ACHA) program by a hospital social worker.

The social worker arranged for Gerry to go into rehabilitation while housing was found and furnished. ACHA helped Roy with Centrelink paper work to get the Carer Allowance. A latex mattress and Gopher were purchased for Gerry, the brothers were able to purchase some household items themselves and received a grant from a charitable organisation to buy a fridge and washing machine.

While Gerry and Roy were given high priority for State housing, there was a two-year waiting list. Instead, ACHA staff located a two bedroom unit in a Uniting Care Wesley (UCW) retirement village, providing security, independence and support if needed. ACHA staff also linked Gerry with the Royal Society for the Blind and Diabetes Australia and arranged for a Royal District Nursing Service nurse come to the unit regularly. Now that Gerry and Roy are able to remain in an independent living situation with all the support they need, they have exited the ACHA program.
6. Using evidence and integrated data to inform policy

Finding out what programs and services work well and understanding why, so you can share good ideas, keep making improvements and put your effort into the things that work

Progress towards social inclusion must be accompanied by better information, faster learning and better use of knowledge to improve outcomes. As far as possible, interventions should draw on:

- practical experience of community and other delivery organisations;
- existing research and the evidence base on what works; and
- monitoring and evaluating strategies as they develop, focusing on outcomes as well as processes.

To the extent that interventions are experimental, they should be designed and evaluated in a way which builds on this evidence base. It will also be important for government to report regularly on progress in social inclusion, using clear indicators and reporting from the perspective of the individual, the family, the neighbourhood or the community affected. Indicators should be responsive to effective policy interventions and identify the essence of the problem and have a clear and accepted interpretation.

Communities for Children

Communities for Children is a locational prevention and early intervention initiative implemented in 45 disadvantaged communities around Australia from 2004. It takes a whole of community partnership approach to improve service coordination, address unmet need and improve community capacity around the needs of children 0-12 years and their families.

The recent three-year longitudinal evaluation, undertaken by the Social Policy Research Centre and the Australian Institute of Family Studies, found there were significant improvements in outcomes for children, families and communities compared with control sites, including improved vocabulary and verbal skills in children from low-income households, increased engagement of families, improved service capacity, reduced service gaps, increased tailoring of services and highly significant increases in coordination and collaboration between agencies.

Where Communities for Children worked best, there was flexibility in what was delivered, tailored to local circumstance; services were built from the needs of the community and integrated with other local services and connected to the community, so local parents used and benefited from them. These findings are being used to improve the service delivery model in Communities for Children sites and the new 8 Communities for Children Plus sites, focused on preventative locational approaches to child protection.

7. Using locational approaches

Working in places where there is a lot of disadvantage, to get to people most in need and to understand how different problems are connected

Evidence show that different kinds of disadvantage can be concentrated in particular locations. Focusing effort on building social inclusion in particular locations, neighbourhoods and communities can ensure that they are not left behind, and help us learn how planning, economic development, community engagement and service delivery can be integrated to achieve better overall outcomes.
8. Planning for sustainability

"Doing things that will help people and communities deal better with problems in the future, as well as solving the problems they face now"

Policies and programs should be focused on long-term sustainable improvement. To do this, it is important to ensure that interventions build an individual’s capacity and develop protective factors that will enable them to self-manage through life-course events.

For the government, it will be important to establish benchmarks and adopt formal quantified targets that are ambitious but attainable, measurable and time specific, focus on long term policy goals, and integrate long term social inclusion objectives in broader reform efforts, such as budgetary reform and reforms being pursued through the Council of Australian Governments.

Building capacity for the future with Centrelink support

Nathalia, in north central Victoria, is hard-hit by the ongoing drought, corresponding water shortages and diminishing income. When a women’s social support group agreed to explore opportunities for off farm employment, a skills shortage was identified in the health sector with an ageing population and a number of age care facilities in the region with vacancies.

The Centrelink Social Worker worked with local and state governments, a local training provider and the team from the community house to form a partnership with the local community. With the Social Worker’s ongoing support and peer support study groups, all 15 participants from this first round completed Certificate III in Aged care with over 50 per cent now working directly in the field and a further 3 have gone on to further study.
Appendix B
Indicator Framework of Social Inclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Headline indicators</th>
<th>Supplementary indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PARTICIPATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>Work</strong></td>
<td><strong>Persistent jobless families with children</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Employment rate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Persons in jobless families with children under 15 years, where the family has been jobless for 12 months or more</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>&gt; Employment/population ratio (working age (15-64 years) &amp; total population (15 years and over))</td>
<td><strong>Jobless households</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>&gt; Children under 15 years in jobless families (where jobless relates to parents being jobless)</td>
<td><strong>Persons living in jobless households</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Long-term (12 months) and very long-term (2+ years) full-rate, non-education related, working-age income support payment recipients (including transfers between payments) as proportions of the population aged 15-64 years</td>
<td><strong>Long-term unemployment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Children in jobless families</strong></td>
<td><strong>Long-term unemployment rate</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>&gt; Children under 15 years in jobless families (where jobless relates to parents being jobless)</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Long term income support recipient</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>&gt; Long-term (12 months) and very long-term (2+ years) full-rate, non-education related, working-age income support payment recipients (including transfers between payments) as proportions of the population aged 15-64 years</td>
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<td><strong>Children in jobless families</strong></td>
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<td>&gt; Children under 15 years in jobless families (where jobless relates to parents being jobless)</td>
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<td><strong>Long term income support recipient</strong></td>
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<td>&gt; Long-term (12 months) and very long-term (2+ years) full-rate, non-education related, working-age income support payment recipients (including transfers between payments) as proportions of the population aged 15-64 years</td>
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<td><strong>Persistent jobless families with children</strong></td>
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<td>&gt; Persons in jobless families with children under 15 years, where the family has been jobless for 12 months or more</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Jobless households</strong></td>
<td><strong>Persons living in jobless households</strong></td>
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<td>&gt; Persons living in jobless households</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Long-term unemployment</strong></td>
<td><strong>Long-term unemployment rate</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Long-term unemployment rate</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learn</strong></td>
<td><strong>Young people not fully engaged in education or work</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of 15-24 year olds that are fully engaged in education and/or work</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Year 12 equivalent attainment</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of 20-24 year olds attaining Year 12 or Certificate II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engage</strong></td>
<td><strong>Contacted family/friends</strong></td>
<td><strong>Got together socially with family/friends</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Social and community participation)</td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of people aged 18 years and over who contacted family/friends in past week</td>
<td><strong>Proportion of people who got together socially with friends/relatives not living with them in past month</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Participation in community groups</strong></td>
<td><strong>Voluntary work</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of the people aged 18 years and over that were involved in a community group in the last 12 months</td>
<td><strong>Proportion of people aged 18 years and over that undertook voluntary work in past 12 months</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Have a voice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Participation in community events</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Political and civic participation)</td>
<td>Participation in citizen engagement activities</td>
<td><strong>Proportion of people aged 18 years and over who participated in a community event or activity in past 12 months</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of people aged 18 years and over that participated in selected citizen engagement activities in the last 12 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domains</td>
<td>Headline indicators</td>
<td>Supplementary indicators</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RESOURCES</strong></td>
<td><strong>Low economic resources and financial stress/material deprivation</strong></td>
<td>Low economic resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Composite measure of low economic resources (to be determined, based on low levels of income, wealth &amp; expenditure, &amp; deprivation)</td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of population with low disposable income &amp; low wealth (bottom 3 deciles equivalised of both)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Persistent low economic resources</strong></td>
<td>Financial stress/material deprivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Low economic resources (as defined above) for 2+ years (a minimum of 3 time points marking the beginning, middle and end of a 2 year period)</td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of population with 5 or more selected financial stress/deprivation items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Note:</strong> These two indicators need conceptual and data development. For example, need to develop the actual indicator and more frequent household wealth and/or expenditure data</td>
<td>Real change in income for low income households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Change in average real equivalised disposable household income of 2nd and 3rd deciles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relative income inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health &amp; disability</strong></td>
<td><strong>People with long term health conditions affecting their ability to participate in employment</strong></td>
<td>Life expectancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Number and employment rate of people with disability (by level of severity)</td>
<td>&gt; Life expectancy (years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>People with mental illness affecting their ability to participate in employment</strong></td>
<td>Subjective quality of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Number and employment rate of people with mental illness (by level of severity)</td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of population reporting overall satisfaction with their lives</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Self-assessed health</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of population with fair or poor self-assessed health</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education &amp; skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>Literacy and numeracy</strong></td>
<td>Poor spoken English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of Year 9 students achieving literacy (reading &amp; writing) &amp; numeracy benchmarks</td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of people aged 5 years and over who do not speak English well or at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Adult literacy/ numeracy</strong></td>
<td>Non-school qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of 15-75 year olds with at least minimum standard of prose literacy and numeracy</td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of people aged 25-64 years and over with non-school qualifications</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Early child development</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; Proportion of children in first year of school assessed as “developmentally vulnerable” on 2 or more domains in the Australian Early Development Index (AEDI)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Domains</td>
<td>Headline indicators</td>
<td>Supplementary indicators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social resources</td>
<td>Support from family/friends in time of crisis &gt; Proportion of people aged 18 years and over who feel that they are able to get support in time of crisis from persons living outside household</td>
<td>Autonomy – having a voice in the community &gt; Proportion of people aged 18 years and over who do not feel able to have a say in the community on issues that are important to them</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Access to Internet &gt; Proportion of people with access to the Internet on home computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community &amp; institutional resources</td>
<td>Access to public or private transport &gt; Proportion of people aged 18 years and over who say they have difficulty accessing public or private transport</td>
<td>Access to justice services &gt; Proportion of people aged 18 years and over reporting difficulty accessing justice services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to health service providers &gt; People deferring recommended treatment due to financial barriers</td>
<td>Access to service providers &gt; Proportion of people aged 18 years and over reporting difficulty accessing services, by type of service and private/public provider (e.g., aged care, child care, employment services)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tolerance of diversity &gt; Acceptance of diverse cultures in local community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Homelessness &gt; Proportion of population that are homeless (total and those experiencing primary homelessness (rough sleeping))</td>
<td>Housing affordability &gt; Number of affordable houses available to purchase per 10,000 low income households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Housing affordability &gt; Proportion of low income private renter households with housing costs exceeding 30 per cent of household income</td>
<td>Repeat homelessness &gt; Proportion of people experiencing repeat periods of homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety</td>
<td>Feelings of safety &gt; Proportion of people aged 18 years and over who feel unsafe at home or in their local community at night (excluding family violence)</td>
<td>Family violence &gt; Proportion of persons experiencing family violence in past 12 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children at risk/Child protection &gt; Children aged 0-17 years in substantiations of notifications received during (year) (number and rate per 1000)</td>
<td>Victim of personal violence &gt; Victims (aged 18 years and over) of selected personal crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Victim of household crime &gt; Victims (aged 18 years and over) of selected household crime</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>Headline indicators</th>
<th>Supplementary indicators</th>
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</table>
| MULTIPLE AND ENTRENCHED DISADVANTAGE | Multiple disadvantage  
  - 3 or more of 6 selected areas of disadvantage (covering income, work, health, education, safety & support)  
  Entrenched disadvantage  
  - 3 or more disadvantages (as above) for 2 years or more  
  Note: These indicators need further development based on analysis of the most relevant set of indicators of inclusion/ exclusion for each population group | Indicators of multiple disadvantage will be developed appropriate to several life stages, including: Children (early childhood and school age), Youth, Working age & Older persons |

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