



MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING
THE HON DR BRENDAN NELSON MP

Underpinning Prosperity: Our Agenda in Education, Science and Training

A speech spoken to by Dr Brendan Nelson at the *Sustaining Prosperity* Conference at the University of Melbourne
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Education, science and training now, more than at any other time, are crucial to Australia's future economic growth and social well-being. The links between sound public policy in these areas and strong and sustainable economic growth have never been more apparent – nor of greater importance.

The Government's policies provide a blueprint for continued improvement and change in education – this work is underpinned by the key themes of consistency, quality, equity, sustainability, diversity and choice.

The programmes and initiatives now being put in place will create an Australian education, research and innovation system that will be marked by an unprecedented degree of national consistency, diversity and quality across the entire education system.

Let's take a look into the future and imagine an eight year old boy being able to transfer easily from a school in Victoria to one in New South Wales, knowing that what he learns in the classroom will be consistent across state borders. Perhaps later he will choose a school-based apprenticeship, opting for a trade from which he might build a thriving business enhanced by world class Australian technology. Years later he may decide to study commerce at university and find it is an easy transition to make. He will be typical of a new generation of lifelong learners looking for a system that doesn't differentiate between study pathways, but focuses on choices which enable a fulfilling and challenging working life.

This is a vision the Australian Government hopes will be shared by all Australians, as we work to implement the Government's fourth term agenda in education, science and training.

The Government's vision for education has been very much influenced by the aspirations of the Australian community:

- Parents want to be confident that their children will be able to read when they leave primary school;
- Businesses want to see more young Australians with high quality technical and vocational training, especially in the trades;
- Australians want greater flexibility in moving between vocational education and university;
- Universities want to be able to compete on a level playing field when it comes to engaging in commercial activities;
- University graduates want to know that they have attained a degree from a world class higher education system — one that is thriving in a globally competitive economy;
- Members of our highly mobile defence forces need to be able to move interstate without impeding their children's primary and secondary schooling;
- Indigenous students participating in Australian education and employment;
- All school educators and career advisors want to be assured that every student at risk of dropping out of school is supported to stay engaged and on track to complete Year 12 or its vocational equivalent; and
- Researchers want to deliver innovation in a system where the very best research can be easily identified and appropriately funded.

In these early years of the 21st century, where so much that lies ahead of us is unknown, it is absolutely critical that our education system becomes more responsive. Responsive to economic needs and to parents' and students' expectations. Our education system will need to be more diverse; and yet less divided between sectors. It will need to be more nationally consistent; and yet offer greater choice. If we cannot achieve this, we risk compromising our future prosperity.

Schools

Within my portfolio, the schools sector has the greatest reach and some of the most significant challenges. Schools enrol 3.3 million students, employ 250,000 teachers and consume \$26 billion of taxpayers' money each year. Apart from parents, schools exert the greatest influence on our children's development.

The key priority in schools is to raise the quality, professionalism and status of our teachers. Quality teaching is by far the most important factor that influences the educational outcomes of our children, accounting for up to 60% of the variation in learning outcomes. Despite this, however, there are structural problems with enhancing teaching quality. Teachers are poorly organised professionally, there are doubts over the quality and adequacy of university education faculties, and teacher salary structures are so outdated and lacking in flexibility that it is no wonder that many turn away from the profession in frustration. Any profession must have the ability to train, recognise and reward its best and brightest performers.

The Government is determined to tackle these challenges. One of the most important initiatives that we are undertaking in the portfolio is the establishment of an initial \$10 million investment into the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership. NIQTSL is an organisation managed by the teaching profession for the teaching profession. Its mandate is to promote the profession, to conduct professional learning and research and develop nationally consistent standards for teachers and principals. Through this Institute, teachers and school leaders will finally have some control over their professional agenda.

There are undoubtedly problems in the training of teachers in some universities. I have seen research indicating poor standards and I understand anecdotally that not all education faculties are up to scratch. In the future, NIQTSL will have a role in accrediting teacher training courses. However, I have also asked the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training to inquire into the quality and adequacy of teacher education faculties. If, as I suspect, there are issues in the way in which our teachers are trained, then this Inquiry will be equipped to identify them and propose solutions. Other initiatives to support teacher quality include an investing \$159 million into teacher professional development and an additional \$110 million for teacher practicum.

Providing a nationally consistent schooling system is also one of our key priorities. Last year, 84,000 school-aged children moved interstate – they might as well have moved to a different country. Our goal is to ensure that standards are equally high regardless of where a child resides. We have an ambitious agenda in this area. We are insisting, as a condition of funding, that school starting ages will be the same across the country by 2010. We are introducing common testing standards in key subject areas; we are driving consistency in curriculum outcomes and a common information system for the transfer of student data when students move interstate. Most importantly, we are beginning the work to implement an Australian Certificate of Education as the key year 12 certificate. Of course we are proud of our state origins, but we live in an increasingly mobile and globalised world and it is time that our schooling system caught up.

The Government is also ensuring that quality information about their child's progress and about the performance of schools is made available to parents. I am determined to put an end to school report cards that are meaningless and full of jargon. Parents want to be told in plain language how their child is performing against objective measures and against others in their year. Additionally, it is time that schools became more transparent in how they are performing so that parents have objective data when selecting schools and specific information against which they can judge schools and hold them accountable. The Schools Assistance legislation implements these objectives.

Other priorities in the schools sector include ensuring that school principals have more power over the running of their schools. Of particular importance in this area is the power over staffing. Without some

control over the day to day running of their schools we cannot expect principals to be accountable for their school's performance.

I also believe that it is crucial that Australian values are explicitly taught in schools, and that special programmes to assist boys and to stamp out school bullying are implemented. Education is as much about building character as it is about transferring skills, knowledge and the thirst for learning. Our national values education programme will commit almost \$35 million over the next four years to support values education and civics and citizenship education programmes in Australian schools.

Of course we will continue to work on the basic building blocks of schooling. Literacy and numeracy initiatives will receive a major funding boost. The new overarching Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs Programme, introduced this year, targets the most disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities. Over this quadrennium it will receive funding of \$2.1 billion, representing an increase of \$445 million or 28% over the previous four year funding period.

In addition, we are providing \$700 tutorial vouchers to the parents of children who did not meet the year 3 reading benchmark in 2003.

All schools will continue to be funded at record levels: \$33.0 billion will be provided to schools over the next four years, a massive \$9.5 billion increase over the previous four year period. This includes the extra \$1 billion committed during the election campaign for school capital infrastructure.

Indigenous Education

The Australian Government is committed to closing the educational divide between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. We are currently implementing a \$2.1 billion Indigenous education package that provides targeted supplementary assistance for indigenous students over the next four years. This funding represents an increase of \$381 million or 22.3% over the previous four year period.

By focussing on "what works", the Government is building on a range of new and ongoing initiatives that have delivered genuine improvements. One example is the *Scaffolding Literacy* programme, which utilises a structured approach to teaching and has proven to be especially effective in assisting students in remote areas. The Australian Council of Educational Research described the results of Scaffolding as "little short of sensational." This programme is now being rolled out in the Northern Territory with some \$9 million of Australian Government assistance, targeting 10,000 Indigenous students (90% of whom are in remote areas) in 100 Northern Territory schools. 700 teachers will be retrained to implement this approach.

Two election commitments, the Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme and the Indigenous Youth Leadership Programme, will provide additional targeted assistance.

Under the Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme, \$19 million will be provided over four years, to provide the opportunity for 600 young Indigenous people in remote areas to relocate to major provincial centres and capital cities to take up employment and training opportunities. The programme will target apprenticeships and other occupations in particular areas of community needs such as nursing, accountancy, business management and teaching.

Under the Indigenous Youth Leadership Programme, \$10 million will be provided over four years to identify and develop future Indigenous leaders. Over 250 school and university scholarships of two, three and four years' duration will focus on Indigenous young people in remote communities. School based scholarships will be offered at the best Australian schools.

The Australian Government's initiatives will make a considerable difference but they will not be the panacea to every Indigenous education problem. All levels of government need to be contributing, and just as importantly, education providers and Indigenous communities themselves need to be placing the success of their children at school as the highest possible priority. We have no time to lose.

Higher Education, Innovation and Science

The Australian Government's ambition for higher education is that of a confident, strong, high quality sector that plays a vital role in our economic, cultural and social development.

The Australian Government has already committed to increased investment of \$11 billion over the next ten years for higher education in Australia and has embarked on a wide-ranging reform agenda to improve the quality of our higher education system and the choices available to students.

If Australia is to remain internationally competitive we must foster all aspects of our social and economic framework, and most vitally, build on our higher education system and ensure it is nationally consistent, high quality and flexible. While Australia already has an internationally competitive higher education system, other countries are investing and transforming their systems. The challenge is to make sure our system not only stays internationally competitive, but that our best universities are in the top tier of world rankings. Universities must continue to diversify, and to foster creativity, great teaching and research. At the same time our universities must be responsive to the needs of their local students and communities.

Higher education today is operating in a vastly more dynamic environment, one which presents a number of challenges to the current framework. For example, we need to consider the blurring of the public/private institution divide and the growth of private higher education provision globally including through internet delivery; new higher education frameworks in other countries that impact on growth and diversity; and the increasing demands of a knowledge-based economy.

All of these challenges necessitate a broader debate around the governance and role of universities.

Governance and management in public universities has not always kept pace with changes in the operating environment over the past decade. While the Government, together with the assistance of the State and Territory governments, have put in place a number of reforms to university governance, the broader issue of who should be responsible for higher education remains.

The fact that the Australian Government has significant financial and policy responsibility for higher education, while State and Territory governments retain major legislative responsibilities, has created overly complex arrangements which lack transparency.

Legislative differences mean that universities cannot always operate on a level playing field when engaging in commercial ventures. Variations in the recognition and accreditation of universities and courses between jurisdictions has also been costly for providers seeking to operate in more than one State and Territory and often confusing for students.

It is timely for us to consider these issues and debate the merits or otherwise of changing the current arrangements. This is not about the Commonwealth taking control of universities from the States and Territories. It is about taking a serious look at how we can best achieve more consistent, efficient and effective higher education provision in Australia through cooperation at all levels.

Certainly if there is to be any change, it will ultimately be the product of consultation between the Australian Government and the States and Territories, as many would see it. Though, I believe it is clear that we have a responsibility to carefully examine the regulatory framework within which Australian universities compete with the rest of the world.

With many other countries now offering more varied and specialised types of institutions, it is also clear that Australia's current one-size-fits-all approach may not be the best model to position us internationally, to cater to our regional communities and to offer our students a choice of excellence in teaching and research.

One of the key priorities of this Government is to stimulate an informed debate about the role of our universities. It is the Government's view that universities should be defined more by their quality and diversity and less by their form and structure, which is currently the case.

We need to re-examine the requirement for all universities to undertake research as well as teaching. We know that our best research universities are not our best teaching universities. The stellar performers in the nationally administered Course Experience Questionnaire are not our 'Group of Eight' Universities, which are our best research performers.

Some countries, in looking at different ways of providing higher education, are inviting reputable foreign universities to establish new campuses at home; while others are asking their institutions to be more active in seeking to operate offshore. This is part of a global trend. In Australia, for example, Carnegie-Mellon in the United States is seeking to establish a university presence in South Australia. In addition, a number of private higher education institutions, which have been operating successfully for many decades and offering a high quality education to students, are aspiring to be authorised by government to accredit their own courses, and use the title university.

At the moment our higher education approval framework does not cater for these developing trends. The current National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes outline only one model for an Australian university – one which is active in both teaching and research` across a broad range of disciplines.

The Government is currently encouraging a debate about the way in which we should define universities into the future. For example, how much research should be undertaken in order for an institution to be approved as a university and what should the definition of research be? Should the National Protocols allow for the creation of 'specialist' institutions covering only a narrow field of study rather than a wide range of disciplines?

Another key priority for this Government is to make it easier for Australians to enter higher education from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences. There are many pathways to higher education. In building a strong skill base for tomorrow, it is important that we recognise the skills and competencies people gain in the workforce and through vocational education and training and facilitate their entry into university.

While Australia has been active in recognising prior learning and granting different levels of credit and recognition for such learning for the purposes of university entry, we need to do more to ensure that we keep pace with international developments and that we have a consistent approach across all States and all institutions. The Australian Government is determined to continue working with the States and Territories to improve credit transfer and articulation between the two sectors.

For too long emphasis in terms of funding and profile has been disproportionately placed upon research in universities, and not on teaching. Under this Government, excellence in learning and teaching will be placed alongside the delivery of research excellence as a valued contribution to Australia's knowledge systems. An increased focus on learning and teaching will foster diversity and help to ensure the ongoing high quality of Australia's higher education sector.

The Government has been encouraging universities to focus on quality in learning and teaching for some time, and will reward those universities that can demonstrate excellence in learning and teaching through its new Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. With more than \$250 million in funding over the period 2006-08 my aim is to have universities and academics that excel in teaching being truly recognised for their efforts. This is after all one of the most visible of university activities and one where student's learning most directly benefits from quality performance.

The Government is also determined to improve universities' ability to respond flexibly to the needs of their constituencies including potential and existing students, staff, employers, industry, local and regional and national communities. It is the Government's long-held position that employees should have a choice about their preferred form of employment arrangements or agreements. Higher education should be no exception. Workplace reform in the higher education sector will focus on a number of key areas, including offering employees genuine choice regarding their employment.

Just as the Australian Government is addressing these challenges in higher education, it is also matching gaps in our research sector and looking to fund the best researchers. It is our scientists and researchers, who

address the big-picture issues of our time, whose legacy will be the world our grandchildren inherit. Issues such as population ageing, land degradation and climate change, just to name a few, are vital to Australia's prosperity.

If we are to tackle these and other issues successfully, Australia must continue to build a world-class innovation system. This ambitious agenda depends on effective partnerships between governments at all levels, researchers and business, to share the substantial financial investment necessary to ensure that ideas move smoothly from generation to end use.

Research and development activities perform a crucial role in both science and innovation, covering a continuum from pure basic research to applied research and experimental development.

Innovation is the key to prosperity. Nobel Prize winning Economic Scientist Robert Solow, has said that technological innovation is pivotal to greater than 50 % of a country's economic growth. A Productivity Commission study in 1995 found the rate of return on domestic research and development was in the range of 25-90 %.

Australia's economy and population are relatively small by world standards, with comparatively limited resources. Our publicly-funded science and innovation investments must therefore be well-directed and provide excellent value-for-money.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring taxpayers' investment in research actually produces results that are of world standard and which contribute to addressing the economic, social and environmental challenges that Australia faces.

The Australian Government has already committed an additional \$8.3 billion to science and innovation through the 2001 and 2004 *Backing Australia's Ability* packages. We are also moving forward with major initiatives, including the Research Quality Framework, the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy and implementation of National Research Priorities to ensure we build a system based on excellence and with clear focus.

The National Research Priorities focus research effort squarely on the economic, environmental and social challenges that we face. The *Backing Australia's Ability* package also provides \$542 million for major investments in research infrastructure, to be designed in a way which directly addresses the National Research Priorities while driving greater collaboration in the national research and innovation system.

The Government is also committed to developing an Accessibility Framework for publicly-funded research to ensure that research that is produced can be easily found and accessed by other researchers and the wider community.

Improving collaboration between universities and publicly-funded research agencies is also a priority in achieving better outcomes for the research dollar.

In a global environment where Australia produces just three per cent of the world's research papers, it is imperative that we continue to strengthen our international collaboration in science, engineering and technology. Solid progress is being made through formal and informal national, international, institutional and individual linkages and more will be encouraged.

Research conducted in our universities and publicly funded research agencies provides commercial benefits directly and indirectly. The direct route — through the commercialisation of specific intellectual property in the form of patented inventions and ideas — is strongly encouraged by the Australian Government as a way of generating demonstrable benefits to industry and the wider community, and as a way of garnering income for our research institutions.

The indirect commercial benefits of publicly funded research are also very important. Australia's innovative businesses draw on ideas emerging from universities and publicly funded research agencies through a wide variety of means. These include recruiting high quality researchers and scientists trained in the universities, commissioning specific research through consultancies and contracts, drawing on new research findings

published in learned journals and elsewhere, and participating in industry conferences, seminars, workshops and the like.

Backing Australia's Skills

It is long past time that young people approaching year 10 had a choice other than university, which is regarded by society as a pathway of excellence.

This country's vision must be to see that every young Australian should be encouraged to find and achieve their own potential – whatever that is. For too long, students have been pushed by parents, teachers, and society in general, to consider university the one and only acceptable option for achieving status and success after school.

Our challenge for Australia is to maintain and further strengthen the vocational education and training sector by building an industry led system that delivers what Australian businesses, communities and individuals need to build their own personal, and our collective, economic and social prosperity.

70 % of young Australians do not go directly to university when they leave school. And many of those who do will drop out in their first year.

Every year more than 1.7 million Australians enrol in publicly funded vocational and technical training, an increase of 35% since 1995.

The national skills shortage is resulting in increased attention in and greater salaries paid for the trades careers. This, in addition to a vigorous marketing campaign undertaken by the Australian Government to promote trades careers, has resulted in a 19% increase in New Apprenticeship commencements in trades and related occupations in the last year.

But there is more to be done. Even though most apprentices in traditional trades can acquire their skills in two to three years, we cling to a time-based rather than competency-based system, demanding that young and mature aged New Apprentices “serve their time”. Particularly in the case of mature aged workers, we fail to recognise prior learning as much as we could. And despite rigorous attempts to achieve national consistency, the States and Territories continue to apply different licensing requirements for the same trade, inhibiting portability of skills.

In response the Australian Government is undertaking a major reform of the vocational education and training system. The reform is driven by three objectives:

- that industry and business needs must drive training policies, priorities and delivery;
- better quality training and outcomes for clients, through more flexible and accelerated pathways; and
- simplification and streamlining of all processes.

Above all is our commitment to national consistency across the whole system.

In resuming the functions of the Australian National Training Authority in mid-2005, we will have a unique opportunity to build on its successes to date, and ensure a training system second to none. Our goal is to ensure that Australia's training system will be even more responsive in future to the ever-changing needs of industry and will continue to build its reputation with young Australians, broadening their options after school. It will attract mature aged Australians back to study, and provide them with specialised skills, and pathways to new careers

Last year, the Australian Government committed a record increase in funding for vocational education and training, almost entirely directed to addressing skill shortages through increased places for pre-vocational training in trades, school based New Apprenticeships, New Apprenticeship Access Programmes places and, for the first time, incentives targeted at individuals – through opening up eligibility for the Youth Allowance to apprentices, introducing a Commonwealth Trade Learning Scholarship and offering Tool kits for New Apprentices in the traditional trades.

Overall, the Australian Government committed an additional \$1.06 billion for vocational education and training and professional careers advice over three years. This is in addition to the \$2.1 billion each year which is currently directed to vocational education and training.

But Australia needs more than dollars and programmes. Above all we need a cultural shift – away from the view that trade occupations and vocational training are less attractive than university. Training must be recognised as a path of equal importance and value as going to university.

In the last week of the Federal election campaign in 2004, the Prime Minister nominated his most important initiative of the campaign to be the establishment of 24 technical trade colleges.

These colleges will be established across Australia in areas of skill shortage and youth unemployment. Catering for year 11 and 12 students, these colleges will offer a basic academic programme, business skills training and a major focus on one of four traditional trades.

Australia has made a few mistakes over the years. Abolishing the old ‘tech schools’ was one of them. Although there will be no turning back the clock to kids streaming into trades in year 7, there is an enormous gap for senior secondary excellence in skills training.

Critics claim the technical colleges will duplicate what TAFE already does. Others argue that school based apprenticeships and vocational training already meet demand.

The colleges will be the product of consortia involving local industry, education and training facilities. Public and/or private schools are encouraged to link up with industry and trade training organisations. TAFE can and should be a part of any proposal to establish a technical college.

One of four trades will be the focus of each college: automotive; electrical; construction and metals.

Each college will have its own board of management, hiring and firing the principal who in turn will determine staff appointments. Staff will be trades focused, recruited and retained on a performance basis.

The Government will provide funds to either build the colleges on to an existing facility or on a green-field site.

It is time we built centres of unashamed industry led excellence in trades training. It is time we build pride and commitment in getting a trade. The Australian Technical Colleges will provide a strong stepping stone to this important cultural change.

Cultural change will also be forged through highlighting best practice in trade training. The Australian Government is establishing an Institute for Trade Skill Excellence to improve the quality of trade training and elevate the status of the trades as first choice careers. The Institute will be directed by key stakeholders including the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the Australian Industry Group; the Business Council of Australia; and the National Farmers’ Federation.

Much is also being done to shape the views of those who have the greatest influence over young people in making their career decisions including parents, careers advisers and teachers.

This year, for the first time, we will include a parents' tear out pack in the Job Guide delivered to every single year 10 student. The parents tear out pack assists parents in talking to their teenage students about the range of career options (not just university) and helps them to get involved in their students decisions from an informed perspective, if they want to.

Last year, I announced a further \$4.5 million to improve the standard of careers advice in Australian schools. Key initiatives in this area include the establishment of standards for all careers advisers, annual scholarships for careers advisers to undertake either an industry placement or further professional training and the

recognition of “career lighthouse schools” demonstrating best practice in careers education and sharing that practice with other local schools.

In addition, we will host forums bringing together school principals, careers advisers and industry representatives to be co-located with national careers expos to ensure that principals and advisers are learning about the range of modern careers open to young Australians.

This year the Australian Government will establish an Australian Network of Industry Careers Advisers. This network will for the first time provide a comprehensive national careers and transition support network for all young Australians from 13-19 years of age delivered through 216 Local Community Partnerships, which currently bring together schools and industry in local areas to provide worthwhile structured work experience for school students.

Funding of \$103.9 million from 2005-06 to 2007-08 will improve the career choices of young people and increase levels of student engagement and school retention by adding professional careers advice to each Local Community Partnership. Each Partnership will join local industry to promote to young people and their parents opportunities that vocational education and training pathways offer, as well as university pathways.

The development of strategic partnerships between the LCP network and key local industry bodies will support the Government’s efforts to address skills shortages, including through the establishment of the Institute for Trade Skill Excellence and Australian Technical Colleges.

Conclusion

The benefits of an outstanding education system are not just seen in our domestic economy. Australia is already recognised as having an internationally competitive education and training system. In 2004, some 270,000 international students enrolled in 320,000 courses of study in Australia. Another 100,000 students are studying for Australian qualifications offshore and this provision is expanding. The challenge is to make sure our system continues to keep ahead of our competitors. The rest of the world is not standing still. If we are to protect our successful education industry and ensure that Australia’s education and training sectors remains well positioned to meet the requirements of a competitive global environment, we must engage in further reform designed to keep us at the forefront of international competition.

The Australian Government accepts the challenge of equipping all Australians with the skills necessary for the 21st Century, of developing an education, training, research and innovation system that has as its hallmarks:

- eight autonomous, high quality state and territory school systems that are tied by an unprecedented degree of national consistency;
- informed choice for parents about what is available in various schools for their children and advice on how well their children are progressing;
- a higher education system delivering excellent teaching and research that allows our universities to compete with the world’s best and at the same time cater to regional communities;
- research and innovation to create opportunities for economic growth;
- flexible approaches to recruiting and training new entrants in industries facing skills shortages and assisting industry groups to explore better ways to keep a skilled, adaptable workforce;
- addressing the needs of Indigenous Australians through a whole-of-government approach to eliminating the unacceptable education and training divide between our nation’s original inhabitants and non-Indigenous Australians;
- Encouraging all Australian students to study abroad, to study internationally relevant curriculum and to learn other languages, so as to engage in a dynamic global workforce; and
- Recognition for Australia’s status as a world leader in science and education based on its reputation for quality education, research and training.

Three broad aspirations are critical to Australia's future prosperity and social cohesion:

- High quality education: Access to a first rate education for all. A literate, and numerate populace which possesses the values and self esteem needed to contribute to society and achieve their full potential.
- Skills to meet Australia's needs: A skilled workforce, adaptable, flexible and responsive to industry's needs.
- World class innovation system: A system which harnesses the knowledge, ideas and research to keep us competitive and prosperous into the 21st Century.

Our progress as a nation depends on our progress in these three key areas. We will face obstacles and roadblocks along the way. However, if we achieve what we set out to achieve there will be benefits for everyone, including a great sense of pride in how this nation has addressed the issues, with an eye on future generations.

Attached is a fuller summary of the key initiatives being implemented across the education, science and training portfolio.

Summary of Key Initiatives across the Education, Science and Training portfolio

SCHOOLS

Implementation of new quadrennium funding arrangements

Most of the Australian Government funding for schools is legislated for four year periods. This provides financial certainty for schools. Legislation was passed late last year providing \$33.0 billion dollars for schools over the 2005-08 quadrennium. This funding represents a massive \$9.5 billion more than was provided in the previous quadrennium. Agreements are currently being negotiated with education providers about the conditions attached to the Australian Government money. Many of the conditions support the Government's national priorities as outlined below. [More information is at http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/guidelines/quadrennial/2005-08/index.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/guidelines/quadrennial/2005-08/index.htm)

\$1 billion in infrastructure funding

The Australian Government's \$1 billion Investing in Our Schools Programme is a new initiative which adds significantly to the \$1.5 billion already committed by the Australian Government for capital works in schools over the next four years. Over 2005 to 2008, \$700 million will be provided to State schools to help repair, replace or install new items critical to their school's overall needs. School communities will determine their priorities and apply directly to the Australian Government for funding. The remaining \$300 million will be provided for capital works in non-government schools. Announcements about the first projects selected for funding will be made in mid-2005. More information is at <http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/investingschools/>

Delivering \$700 tutorial vouchers

The most recently published national literacy and numeracy tests show that 1 in 12 year three primary students cannot meet the national minimum standard of reading proficiency. One of the suite of initiatives that the Government is implementing to help children who struggle to read is to provide a \$700 tutorial voucher to the parents of children who did not meet the national reading benchmark in 2003. Parents can use these vouchers to get private, one-on-one tutorial assistance for their child. The Government is progressively rolling out this pilot across Australia. Up to 24,000 students will receive direct assistance through this initiative. More information is at www.dest.gov.au/schools/tutorialvoucher/

Values Education

Australian parents more than ever are expecting schools to foster values such as tolerance, trust, mutual respect, courage, compassion, honesty, courtesy and doing one's best. Every Australian child needs to have an understanding of values as part of their schooling. Schools can support our democratic way of life by helping students to be active and informed citizens. This includes flying the Australian flag. The Australian Government is providing \$29.7 million to support values education in Australian schools and \$4.9 million for civics and citizenship education over four years. The Government's values education initiative will help make values a core part of Australian schooling by providing funding for values and drug education forums in all schools: developing best practice approaches in line with the national framework on values education and curriculum and assessment resources for all schools to teach values.

More information is at <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/values/>

The National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy

Too many children struggle with reading and there is some evidence that suggests that the way in which children are taught to read is part of the problem. The Government has established an independent inquiry that will examine how children are taught to read, how our universities prepare teachers for reading instruction and how reading skills are assessed. The inquiry will be informed by national and international research on reading methods, including those used to help students with reading difficulties. A report will be provided in the second half of 2005, and will offer best practice in literacy teaching and the implications of this for teacher preparation, classroom teaching practice and supporting teacher professional learning. More information is at <http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/literacyinquiry/>

Greater National Consistency in Schooling across Australia

State education systems are the equivalent of the national “rail gauge” problem – there is little or no consistency between States and Territories on critical issues such as starting ages, school structures, curriculum and final year certificates. The Australian Government strongly believes that a student’s state of residence should not dictate education standards and experiences, nor prejudice a potential employer against them. To address these issues a plan has been developed to provide greater national consistency. This will be rolled out over the next four years. It includes:

- implementing a common school starting age by 2010;
- developing statements of learning in key subjects to build more consistency in curriculum outcomes;
- introducing national tests in key subject areas; and
- development of a national system for the transmission of student information for when students move from one jurisdiction to another.

More information is at <http://www.dest.gov.au/ministers/media/nelson/2005/02/tran080205.asp> and <http://www.dest.gov.au/ministers/media/nelson/2004/06/n723030604.asp>

Australian Certificate of Education

A key part of the Australian Government’s effort to achieve greater national consistency in schooling is to begin the work of developing an Australian Certificate of Education as the key year 12 certificate. At present each state and territory offers its own senior secondary certificate. The requirements and standards of each certificate differ considerably. This has educational and employment consequences for students moving interstate. We will soon be commissioning a consultant to analyse and assess a range of options for introducing a national senior secondary certificate and propose implementation steps. The consultant will report to the Minister by the year’s end.

Improving the teaching of boys

The Government has made a \$6 million investment in boys’ education in response to growing concern that boys are significantly underperforming in key educational areas. It is unacceptable that 14 year old boys are doing worse in literacy tests than they were 25 years ago. Boys are lagging behind girls in operational literacy right across the school curriculum from early primary to secondary school. They are also represented two to one in the lowest 25% of educational outcomes.

The Government’s measures include innovative lighthouse school programmes which cater for different learning styles generally preferred by boys and which adopt a flexible, whole-school approach. These projects recognise that gender matters and stereotypes should be challenged; and provide opportunities for boys to benefit from positive male role models from within and beyond the school. To attract more male teachers the Government intends to amend the Sex Discrimination Act to allow for positive discrimination in this area.

The Government will also invest a further \$19.4 million commitment towards the Success for Boys initiative. Stage One of this initiative will build on the great work undertaken by the Boys Education Lighthouse initiative and develop trial learning resources for boys in key areas. Stage 2 of Success for Boys will take the form of a grants programme in the 2006-07 school years so that schools can implement strategies proven to assist boys and improve their educational outcomes. More information is at www.dest.gov.au/schools/boyseducation/

Plain English Report Cards

Many student report cards are written in inaccessible or meaningless language that provides no guidance to parents as to how their child is actually progressing. Some report cards rate a student’s level of achievement as “almost achieving”, “working towards” or “developing”. These do not provide the information that parents need and want. The Australian Government is determined to change this. As a condition of funding, report cards must be written in plain English and teachers will inform parents of their child’s achievement against the standard expected of that year and relative to the child’s peer group at school. Additionally, national numeracy and literacy tests will have to be reported to parents against national standards. [For an example of the Australian Government’s ‘Plain English Report Card’, see http://www.dest.gov.au/ministers/nelson/main.asp](http://www.dest.gov.au/ministers/nelson/main.asp)

Making school performance information publicly available

Information about a school's performance is frequently poor or inaccessible. If parents are not aware of a school's performance, how can they make meaningful choices about where to send their child and how can schools be held to account? As a condition of funding, the Australian Government will require schools to become more transparent by publishing a range of information, including the percentage of students achieving national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy, average year 12 results, school leaver destinations, staff and student retention and absentee rates, teacher qualifications, and value-added measures of student performance. The precise requirements will be documented in regulations which are currently being developed in consultation with school authorities.

Review of Teacher Education

There are problems in the training of teachers in some universities. Some pieces of research suggest that standards are poor and anecdotal evidence from principals, academics and teachers themselves indicate that improvements can be made. The Minister has asked the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education to inquire into the quality and adequacy of teacher education faculties with broad terms of reference. It is expected that the Committee will report within 18 months. [More information is at http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/evt/teachereduc/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/evt/teachereduc/index.htm)

National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (NIQTSL)

The NIQTSL is a key professional organisation for teachers and school leaders. The Australian Government established the Institute and has provided an initial \$10 million in funding. The Institute is to be run by the profession for the profession and will have a key role in developing professional standards and raising the quality and status of the teaching profession. [More information is at www.niqtsl.edu.au](http://www.niqtsl.edu.au)

Devolution of power to school principals

The Australian Government recognises that it can be a prescription for mediocrity when principals have no say over who teaches in their schools. The *Schools Assistance (Learning Together - Achievement through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004* ensures that principals have more control over their budget and teacher appointments, while recognising the particular needs of regional and rural schools.

Creating Safer Schools

On average one child in six is bullied at school each week. The Australian Government is determined to ensure that every school has protocols in place that all teachers and parents are aware of and are able to follow in order to prevent incidences of bullying occurring. The National Safe Schools Framework, implemented in accordance with the *Schools Assistance (Learning Together - Achievement through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004*, is an Australian Government initiative which aims to assist schools to implement safe school environments. A \$4.5 million package has been developed which includes a set of agreed guiding principles so that every school can provide a safe learning environment, and for handling incidents involving bullying, violence, or any form of child abuse. More information is available at www.bullyingnoway.com.au

Tackling Obesity

The Australian Government recognises the link between healthy and active students and positive educational outcomes. Accordingly, the *Schools Assistance (Learning Together - Achievement through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004* provides that all students in primary and junior secondary school will have to participate in at least two hours of physical education each week. This forms part of a government-wide \$116 million package to combat obesity by increasing the level of physical activity among Australian children and promoting healthy eating. More information is available at www.healthyactive.gov.au

Review of Music Education

The Australian Government has committed some \$315,000 to a Review of Music Education to investigate the quality and status of music education in our schools and how we can improve both for the benefit of all students. The review is currently underway and being led by Murdoch University's Centre for Learning, Change and Development together with the University of Western Australia, the University of Sydney and the University of Queensland. The Review's report is expected to be finalised later this year. More information is available at www.schoolmusicreview.edu.au

Boosting Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics in schools

The Australian Government is providing funding of \$38.8 million over seven years to 2010-11 for the *Boosting Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics Teaching Programme*. The Programme has three elements:

- National schools projects in science and innovation – to forge school partnerships with science organisations, tertiary education institutions, industry and the broader community;
- Teacher associates - tertiary students, researchers and other specialists in science, technology and mathematics to provide support, act as role models and excite students interest
- Data collection and research – to support future workforce planning and help advance professional practice in schools.

More information is at <http://www.asistm.edu.au>

HIGHER EDUCATION

Implementation of the \$2.6 billion higher education reform package

The Australian Government has invested significantly in improving higher education in Australia. Its package of reforms, *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future*, released in 2003 will give universities access to the funding they need to deliver world-class higher education, with a focus on quality learning outcomes. Laying the foundation for this will be an increase in public investment in the sector of around \$2.6 billion over five years. Over ten years, the Commonwealth will provide some \$11 billion in new support for higher education.

The reforms will enable universities and students to make informed choices, supported by new co-financing arrangements underpinned by public financing, increased funding, new subsidised loans and scholarships for students. There will be almost 36,000 new Commonwealth supported student places and more funding for each Commonwealth supported student, linked to improvements in how universities are managed. In addition, there are extra funds for regional universities and new schemes and funding to encourage excellence in teaching, more collaboration between institutions and a renewed focus on equity.

National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes

In November 2004, the Australian Government released a report by Gus Guthrie Consulting Pty Ltd which reviewed the National Protocols for Higher Education Approval Processes. In releasing this report the Government called for a national debate on the need for more diverse criteria to define Australian universities and govern the entry of new higher education providers into the higher education sector, so that Australian higher education remains internationally competitive.

Issues under consideration include how much research should be undertaken in order for an institution to be approved as a university and whether the creation of 'specialist' institutions should be allowed. A discussion paper on these and related issues *Building University Diversity: Australia's Future Approval and Accreditation Processes* was released on 2 March 2005. Consultations will take place in 2005, prior to any revision of the National Protocols being considered and agreed by the State and Territory and Commonwealth governments. A copy of the paper is at http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/pubs/building_diversity/default.htm

Rationalising Responsibility

On 20 December 2004, the Minister released an issues paper, *Rationalising Responsibility for Higher Education in Australia*, to provide the basis for informed debate around the implications of the current division of responsibilities for higher education between the Australian Government and the State and Territory governments. The paper of 20 December is available at http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/pubs/papers/responsibility/rationalising_responsibilities.pdf

The Australian Government currently has significant financial and policy responsibility for higher education, while State and Territory governments retain legislative responsibilities. This has created complex arrangements which lack national consistency and transparency in key areas, and may constrain Australia's capacity to meet the requirements of a competitive global environment.

The Minister has released a further discussion paper which explores the issues raised in the previous paper in more detail, taking into account the findings of reports expressly commissioned by the Australian

Government. It suggests that, on the evidence currently available, there may be benefits in the Australian Government having a greater role in three key regulatory functions currently the responsibility of State and Territory governments: governance of public universities; powers of public universities to undertake commercial activities; and accreditation of new courses and providers. The paper seeks stakeholders' views on these issues. This paper is available at <http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/pubs/papers/responsibility/>

Learning and Teaching Performance Fund

The Australian Government is committed to enhancing the status of teaching in Australian higher education institutions. The new Learning and Teaching Performance Fund will provide funding of around \$250 million between 2006 and 2008 to reward those universities that best demonstrate excellence in learning and teaching. Allocation will be determined in two stages, with the focus of the first stage being evidence of institutional commitment to teaching and learning and the focus of the second stage being demonstration of learning and teaching performance. Universities' performance in learning and teaching will be assessed using a range of methods, which may include performance indicators such as student progress and graduate satisfaction.

More information is at http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/learning_teaching/p_fund_default.htm

Quality Assurance

The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), a company owned by the States and Territories and the Commonwealth, will be conducting a strategic assessment of its role in Australia's quality assurance framework during the first half of 2005, followed by an internal self-review in the second half of 2005. An independent review of the Agency is scheduled for 2006. As part owner of the AUQA, and through its representation on the Board, the Australian Government will be participating in the review. The higher education reform package *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* included an initiative, underpinned by funding of \$590,000 in 2005 to AUQA, to improve higher education offshore quality assurance. This initiative is commencing in 2005.

In May 2004, the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee was contracted by the Australian Government to award grants to individual universities/groups of universities on a competitive basis to develop best practice models for off-shore delivery. The projects are due for completion in late 2005 and will be show-cased in a national seminar. Further information can be found at <http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/quality/partners.html>

Strategic Principles for Higher Education Provision

The Australian Government is developing a set of national strategic principles which will be used to inform the Government in its decisions and investment in relation to funding university places. The principles will inform decisions in relation to the allocation of new Commonwealth supported places, the movement of existing places between campuses and the protection of discipline areas of national importance to address skills shortages and ensure that the higher education sector is best meeting the social, economic, diplomatic, scientific and strategic needs of the nation. The principles will provide a policy framework within which the Government will consider national, state and broader regional needs, workforce shortages and priorities, supply and student demand, demographic changes and institutional sustainability.

The Collaboration and Structural Reform Fund

Collaboration between individual higher education institutions can promote the survival of low-demand but nationally or regionally important courses, and can enhance efficiency of operations for the institutions concerned. Cross-sectoral collaboration between sectors of the education and training system can result in more efficient delivery of education, for example, through shared facilities, and seamless pathways for students.

The Australian Government's new Collaboration and Structural Reform Fund will commence in 2005 to assist the sector with sustainable reform in course structures and delivery modes in higher education and enhance collaboration between higher education institutions and other institutions, business and industry. Over \$37 million will be allocated between 2005 and 2008 to foster collaboration between universities and

other education providers, business, industry, professional associations, community groups or other relevant organisations; and to encourage innovation within the higher education sector.

The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

Under the Coalition Government's reforms, an increased focus on learning and teaching will foster diversity and help to ensure the ongoing high quality of Australia's higher education sector. Along with the new Teaching and Learning Performance Fund, the Australian Government has established the new Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education to provide a national focus for the enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching in Australian higher education institutions. The Institute will, among a number of things, be responsible for managing the Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT) which reward excellence in learning and teaching. The Government will provide \$22 million per year from 2006 to support the Institute.

INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

Backing Australia's Ability: Building our Future through Science and Innovation

The Australian Government's belief in the potential of Australians was demonstrated through its five year \$3 billion Backing Australia's Ability strategy announced in 2001. Now, Backing Australia's Ability – Building our Future through Science and Innovation is investing a further \$5.3 billion in funding to establish an unprecedented \$8.3 billion 10 year commitment - the largest ever investment in science and innovation made by any Australian Government. The Government's total investment in science and innovation over 10 the year period is \$52 billion. More information on the Government's overall strategy for innovation and science is at the website <http://backingaus.innovation.gov.au/>

National Research Priorities

The National Research Priorities, announced by the Prime Minister in late 2002, provide a mechanism that focuses the national research effort squarely on the economic, environmental and social challenges that we face. Implementation of the *National Research Priorities* by Commonwealth departments and agencies is underway and their performance is currently being assessed by a Committee headed by the Chief Scientist to ensure appropriate focussing of activities is occurring. More information is at <http://www.dest.gov.au/priorities/>

Research Quality and Accessibility Frameworks

The Government is committed to developing Quality and Accessibility Frameworks for publicly-funded research to ensure that research funding goes to those researchers and institutions who can use it to the best effect, and to ensure that the research that is produced can be easily found and accessed by other researchers and the wider community. The Government has released the *Research Quality Framework: Assessing the quality and impact of research in Australia Issues Paper*. Written responses are being sought by 2 May 2005. More information is at www.dest.gov.au/resqual/default.htm

National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Initiative

The National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy is providing \$542 million over seven years to provide researchers with major research facilities, supporting infrastructure and networks necessary for world-class research. It will follow the major programme of investments provided under *Backing Australia's Ability* through the Systemic Infrastructure Initiative and Major National Research Facilities (MNRF) programme. More information is at <http://www.dest.gov.au/ncris/default.htm>

CRC Programme

Australia is successful at generating new ideas but can do more to turn them into valuable products and services. The CRC Programme has done much to create research collaborations between the public and private sectors. From the 2004 selection round, there is a stronger focus on CRCs that will contribute to Australia's industrial, commercial and economic growth. The CRC Programme has been given a long-term funding commitment, with selection rounds to be conducted in 2006 and 2008. Total funding for the CRC programme from 2001 to 2011 is \$1.8 billion. Further information is at <https://www.crc.gov.au/Information/default.aspx>

Collaboration in the Commercialisation of Research

Commercialisation is one of the three major themes of the Government's investment in science and innovation - it constitutes almost one third of the overall expenditure on BAA programmes. An important aspect of commercialisation in the Australian innovation system is the commercial application of research generated by Australia's universities and publicly funded research agencies (PFRAs). The Australian Government actively encourages universities and PFRAs to pursue the commercialisation of their research, including through patenting and licensing ideas and inventions. More information on the Australian Government's commercialisation programmes is at <http://www.ausindustry.gov.au/> More information on the performance of Australia's universities and publicly funded research agencies is published in the *National Survey of Research Commercialisation*, available at <http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/commercialisation/nsrc.htm>

Collaboration Between Universities and Research Agencies

The Australian Government is committed to enhancing collaborations between universities and publicly-funded research agencies. Examples of Government initiatives and programmes that encourage and enhance collaboration including:

- The National Research Priorities address many challenges that require a multidisciplinary approach and the contributions from multiple agencies to find appropriate solutions.
- The CSIRO National Flagship Initiative (\$305 million over 2004-05 to 2010-11). The flagships are large-scale collaborative partnerships which link CSIRO with organisations across Australia to research areas of national need.
- The CRC Programme supports research partnerships between the public sector and the private sector.

Questacon: The National Science and Technology Centre

Questacon's Smart Moves programme aims to raise awareness of science and innovation among secondary students, particularly in rural and regional areas and to inspire them to pursue careers in science, maths, engineering, and technology. The Australian Government is providing \$11.4 million over seven years to continue and expand this programme. The Smart Moves programme includes a website that is a catalyst for students and teachers to become involved in programs, competitions, events and courses. It is being continually expanded and updated. More information is at http://smartmoves.questacon.edu.au/index_flash.asp

Commissioning of OPAL – Australia's new research reactor managed by ANSTO

The OPAL research reactor, being developed by the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO), is Australia's largest single science investment at \$330 million. It will become one of the world's top three research reactors. It will ensure that Sydney remains one of the premier nuclear science research centres in the Asia-Pacific region.

The performance of OPAL will be substantially greater than the performance of the existing HIFAR research reactor. OPAL will:

- deliver health-care benefits, mainly in the form of radiopharmaceuticals;
- maintain Australia's nuclear expertise;
- confirm Australia as a regional centre of scientific excellence for neutron beam research;
- provide education and training opportunities for science and engineering; and
- provide industrial radioisotopes and related services to agriculture and industry.

Work on the construction of OPAL is well advanced. It is intended that the reactor be operational in the latter half of 2006. More information on OPAL, including pictures, is on the ANSTO website at <http://www.ansto.gov.au/opal/>

VOCATIONAL SKILLS

‘Skilling Australia’ – Reform of the Vocational Education and Training Sector

Vocational education and training makes an enormous contribution to economic growth by providing Australian businesses with the highly skilled, productive workforce they need to compete in the global market. Reforms to the vocational education sector will build on its strengths to ensure it continues to respond to emerging pressures such as skill shortages, demographics and changing industry and occupational structures.

Consultation with industry over the past month will ensure that from 1 July 2005, the new national training system will support their needs by providing industry leadership, better quality training and accelerated pathways and processes that are simplified and streamlined. The transfer of functions currently performed by the Australian National Training Authority to the Department of Education, Science and Training will consolidate the Australian Government’s presence in the vocational education and training sector.

More information on Skilling Australia and the ANTA Transition is available at

http://www.dest.gov.au/ty/skilling_au/default.htm and http://www.dest.gov.au/anta_transition/default.htm

Australian Technical Colleges

The Australian Government will establish 24 new technical colleges as specialist secondary schools enabling students to undertake vocational and academic education. The first Colleges will commence in 2006. Each College will have up to 300 year 11 and 12 students, each undertaking a School Based New Apprenticeship in a traditional trade. Each College will be governed by an industry-led governing body chaired by a representative of local business or industry. Students will graduate with a year 12 certificate and progress towards a nationally recognised vocational qualification under the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Proposals were called for on 30 March 2005 and are due by mid-May 2005. More information is at

<http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/investingschools/>

Addressing skill shortages

Increasingly we hear of skill shortages in particular industries, and especially in the traditional trades. Our challenge is to change outdated views about trade occupations and recognise a career in the trades as highly valued professions that are both challenging and lucrative and which can lead to exciting career opportunities. The Government has announced a suite of initiatives designed to specifically encourage greater participation in the trades.

- **Tools for Your Trade**

Under this initiative, \$91.2 million over three years will enable New Apprentices starting their apprenticeship from 1 July 2005 and who complete their first three months in a specific trade to be provided with a tool kit worth up to \$800.

- **15,000 More Places in the New Apprenticeships Access Programme**

This initiative provides an additional 5,000 places each year in the New Apprenticeships Access Programme (NAAP) at a cost of \$35.5 million over three years. NAAP assists job seekers who experience barriers to skilled employment to obtain and maintain a New Apprenticeship. Other employment and further education and training are also successful outcomes. Participants receive nationally recognised vocational training that is linked to a New Apprenticeship pathway, job search assistance and support once placed in employment.

- **Getting Young People Ready for Work – Pre Vocational Training in the Trades and School-Based New Apprenticeships in the Trades**

These initiatives will provide an additional 7,000 School-Based New Apprenticeship opportunities (at a cost of \$17.9 million over three years) and up to 4,500 pre-vocational training places (\$13.6 million over three years) in the trades through group training arrangements.

- **Commonwealth Trade Learning Scholarship**

This initiative provides \$75.8 million over three years to provide two tax exempt \$500 payments to New Apprentices who successfully complete the first and second year of a New Apprenticeship in a skill shortage trade with a small to medium sized business.

- **Opening up Eligibility for Incentives**

From 1 July 2005 eligible young people who have obtained a Certificate I-IV qualification at their own expense after leaving school will be eligible to attract incentives for their employer. Currently they can not. Funding of \$1.8 million over three years is available to support the initiative.

- **Increased Residential Support for New Apprentices**

This initiative provides \$5 million over three years to extend entitlement to Living Away From Home Allowance to third year New Apprentices at the rate of \$25 per week – the Allowance is currently only payable to New Apprentices in first and second years.

- **Eliminating New Apprentice Poaching**

This initiative will minimise the practice of poaching New Apprentices nearing the completion of their apprenticeship by recognising the contribution of each employer. Each employer who provided more than 25% of the training for a New Apprentice will be eligible to apply for a portion of the completion payment after the New Apprentice has successfully completed.

- **Australian Network of Industry Careers Advisers (ANICA)**

Under this initiative, funding of \$103.9 million over 3 years will ensure that all young people aged 13-19 years have access to professional career advice to achieve a successful transition through school and from school to further education, training and work. A regional network of industry careers advisers will increase access to and promote vocational education and training opportunities particularly in skills shortages areas.

- **Australian Technical Colleges**

Under this initiative, the Australian Government will provide \$289.1 million over three years to fund the establishment of 24 Australian Technical Colleges in regional and metropolitan locations nationwide. The Colleges will provide high quality education and trade training for up to 7,200 senior secondary students each year in regions suffering skills shortages across Australia.

Institute for Trade Skill Excellence

The Australian Government will provide funding of \$18.3 million over three years to establish the new Institute for Trade Skill Excellence which will elevate the status of trades and trades education by endorsing qualifications provided by private and public training providers identifying excellence and 'preferred providers' of high quality and industry relevant training. The Institute will be industry led with direction provided by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Australian Industry Group, Business Council of Australia and the National Farmers' Federation.

National Skills Shortages Strategy

These new initiatives will complement the existing National Skills Shortages Strategy, a cooperative approach between Government and industry to tackle industry skill shortages. The Strategy was launched in April 2004 and has been testing fresh approaches to New Apprenticeships in key trade occupations in skill shortage. Further information is available at www.getatrade.gov.au

New Apprenticeships

This year the Australian Government will provide more than \$500 million in incentives to employers of New Apprentices across more than 1500 qualifications ranging from plumbing to aeroskills. As a result of the Government's generous incentive scheme, there are currently more than 390,000 New Apprentices in training, almost tripling the number of New Apprentices in training since 1995. In addition, the number of New Apprentices in traditional trades has increased by 20 percent since 1995. In the last 12 months alone, the number of commencements in traditional trades has increased by 19 percent.

More information on New Apprenticeships is available at www.newpprenticeships.gov.au

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE FROM SCHOOL TO WORK OR FURTHER STUDY

A Network of Local Community Partnerships building opportunities for young Australians

The Australian Government has developed a network of 216 local community partnerships, made up of alliances of schools, local industry and community organisations. Each community partnership organises structured workplace experience for secondary school students, assisting them to flesh out their career aspirations. Each year the Australian Government provides over \$14 million to support this network.

The Australian Network of Industry Careers Advisors (ANICA)

In late 2004 the Australian Government committed \$103.9 million to create a comprehensive national careers and transition support network for all young Australians. This initiative will build on existing programs to further improve the career choices of young people and increase levels of student engagement and school retention. The ANICA will:

- enhance career and transition capacity for Local Community Partnerships (LCPs);
- increase business participation through Adopt a School projects in each LCP;
- extend industry leadership through Regional Industry Careers Advisers; and
- provide scholarships for careers advisers to undertake study and industry placements; support careers advisers' and principals' forums; fund career education lighthouse schools projects; and expand professional development opportunities for career advisers.

Professional Career Advice

Development of professional standards for careers practitioners - Over the past two years, the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) has received \$400,000 to develop national professional standards for career practitioners. In the next six months an interim model of standards will be issued. These standards will include a code of ethics, continuing professional development and core competency standards. Following a period of review and consultation, the standards will be implemented.

Scholarships for school career advisers to participate in study or industry placements - The Australian Government will provide \$480,000 for 54 scholarships for school career advisers to participate in study or industry placements. For those undertaking study, \$5,000 will be made available to contribute to the costs of tuition; and, for those undertaking a short-term industry placement, \$10,000 will be made available to contribute to the costs.

Professional Development for careers advisers - The Australian Government has supported development of a comprehensive professional development package consisting of: ReCaP, a hard copy resource for career practitioners in schools which has been distributed to over 3,700 practitioners since its launch at the 2004 AACC Conference; Australian Career Development Studies which consists of an introductory programme for those wishing to learn the basics of career development; three creditable units at AQF Certification level IV for DEST contractors and other career practitioners and an creditable unit, at Post-Graduate Certificate level, which could be counted towards any Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma course in Career Development (or similar) at any participating university level.

In addition, a career education elective for pre-service teachers which will provide university students studying to be teachers with an understanding of career development for school students. The career education elective is being developed by Victoria University (VU). The content of the elective will be available online and will be suitable for delivery in a range of modes: on campus, by distance education or a mix of both. The elective will be available for all universities in 2006.

Engaging school principals in career education

School and Industry Leaders Forums - The Australian Government is funding ten School and Industry Leaders forums to be held in conjunction with major career expos across Australia, giving school principals and careers advisers an opportunity to develop their career education programmes by engaging with local business and industry representatives to discuss job prospects, local area skill needs and shortages and career opportunities in a range of industries and professions.

Career Education Lighthouse Schools Project - \$600,000 funding has been provided for the Career Education Lighthouse Schools project as one of a number of initiatives which aim to highlight and reinforce

high quality career education as an essential part of schooling in Australia. The Career Education Lighthouse Schools Project recognises best practice and encourages innovation in school career education programmes through providing funding grants to schools. As part of the funding, schools are required to document and share the experiences and learning from their projects with other schools. 33 projects encompassing 70 schools have been funded under the project. These first Career Education Lighthouse Schools projects have commenced and will operate in the 2005 school year.

Engaging parents in career decisions

Job Guide 2005 – Parents’ ‘tear-out pack’ - A tear-out career information pack for parents will be provided in each 2005 Job Guide. The pack outlines a range of career resources to assist parents take advantage of the wealth of information in the Job Guide. The pack describes the range of job prospects and opportunities open to students through both the vocational education and training and higher education sectors. The additional information in the Job Guide acknowledges the importance of the support and guidance parents provide to their children and offers ideas and strategies for them to help their teenager navigate the wide range of possible jobs pathways.

Feasibility study for the establishment of a National Institute for Career Development – The Minister recently approved expenditure of \$200,000 for a feasibility study to establish a National Institute for Career Leadership. An institute would provide significant benefits for the implementation of the Australian Network of Industry Careers Advisers, and provide a credible means to finalise and promote adoption of professional standards; accredit career development practitioners; act as a clearinghouse for research and best practice careers advice models; support LCP practitioners, industry bodies and community organisations delivering ANICA initiatives; and undertake career education research, particularly into quantifying the benefits of career development interventions.

In the longer term, it is expected that an institute could become at least partly self-funding by contracting with government, industry and other bodies to undertake projects and deliver services on their behalf.

Extension of Youth Allowance, Austudy and Abstudy to New Apprentices

The Government will provide \$410 million to further assist apprentices and trainees in the initial years of their training. The measure will help ease their financial burden faced by New Apprentices in the initial years of training by extending these payments to up to 75,000 more people in 2005-06, increasing to up to approximately 93,000 by 2008-09.

Partnership Outreach Education Models (POEMs)

POEMs provide a full-time education and personal development programme targeting young people (aged 13–19) who are disconnected from mainstream schooling. In certain circumstances, POEMs projects might also provide assistance to young people who have a tenuous connection to school.

Across Australia, 21 projects are delivering accredited education, life skills and employability skills training as they help young people to deal with personal issues and build self-esteem and resilience. The holistic and flexible approaches taken by POEMs projects provide POEMs students with the foundations they need to have every chance of reaching their full potential.

Partnerships and positive relationships between young people and their families and communities, community service agencies, schools, governments at all levels and business underpin all POEMs projects. Each year, the Australian Government provides \$2.6 million to support these essential projects.

Enterprise Learning for the 21st Century Initiative

The Australian Government is committed to building an enterprise culture and to fostering an entrepreneurial spirit amongst our young people. The Government has initiated a number of projects to ensure our young people have access to enterprise education and can pursue vocational learning pathways.

The Enterprise Learning for the 21st Century Initiative recently invited proposals from organisations to develop enterprising and entrepreneurial skills and attitudes amongst young Australians. My Department has received approximately 240 proposals – a strong testimony to the interest the community has in developing an enterprising culture in our young people. Successful applications will be those that provide young people

with innovative ways to develop enterprising skills and attitudes; that involve the local community; and that are transferable to other communities.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Australian Students Studying Abroad: OS-HELP Loans

Less than one percent of Australian students in higher education study for a semester or more abroad. To reap the benefits of the global economy we need to create an interest amongst Australian students to have a global perspective and the tools to engage in international trade, diplomacy, industry and research. The Australian Government has established the new OS-HELP programme to assist eligible students to undertake some of their study overseas. Students may receive loans of up to \$5,000 per six-month study period for one or two overseas study periods, to assist with a range of expenses such as airfares and accommodation. Individuals accessing OS-HELP will be able to make repayments in the same ways as HECS students. Further information is at <http://www.goingtouni.gov.au/Main/Quickfind/StudyOverseas/OSHELP.htm>

Quality International Education

Australia is seen as a world leader in the quality of its education. With over 320,000 international student course enrolments in Australia and around 100,000 international students studying Australian courses in their home country, maintaining Australia's reputation for quality education is paramount. The Australian Government is supporting our quality reputation by:

- continuing to enhance our onshore quality and consumer protection for international students in Australia by improvements to our *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* based on the recommendations of its current independent evaluation; and
- investing \$10.6 million over four years to create a quality framework for Australian education delivered in other countries. A discussion paper proposing approaches for enhancing the quality of Australian offshore courses will be released shortly.

Further information is available at www.aei.dest.gov.au

INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Implementation of new four year funding agreements

Indigenous education funding is appropriated for a four year period. Over 2005-08, the Australian Government will provide \$2.1 billion in additional targeted assistance for indigenous education. This represents a 22.3% increase over the previous four year funding period. Agreements are currently being negotiated with education providers to implement the new funding arrangements. Further information can be found at http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/indigenous/iet_2005_2008.htm

Murdi Paaki (COAG trial)

As lead agency for the Council of Australian Government (COAG) trial in Murdi Paaki region in NSW, our approach will be to develop flexible and innovative learning from the trial to inform further improvements to its Indigenous service delivery, including Indigenous education and training outcomes. Further information can be found at http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/indigenous/Murdi_Paaki.htm

Parent School Partnership Initiative

A new \$62.5 million programme is being introduced this year to fund innovative projects that engage Indigenous parents and tackle entrenched localised problems. At least 50% of this funding will be targeted at remote schools. This programme will replace the current formula-based funding of the Aboriginal parent committees. The first round of grants has already been announced. Grants will be progressively delivered over the next four years. Information about the programme, application forms and guidelines are available at http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/indigenous/iet_2005_2008.htm

Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme

As part of the new quadrennium funding arrangements, additional funds are being invested in the successful tutorial assistance scheme which provides one-on-one tutorial assistance to Indigenous students who are struggling to achieve adequate educational outcomes. More than \$105 million will be provided over the next four years targeting school children in numeracy and literacy, later year students to help them with school completion and tertiary students. [Information about ITAS, application forms and guidelines are available at http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/indigenous/iet_2005_2008.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/indigenous/iet_2005_2008.htm)

Indigenous Youth Mobility Program (IYMP)

The Australian Government will provide the opportunity for 600 young Indigenous people in remote areas over the next four years to relocate to major provincial centres and capital cities to take up employment and training opportunities. The program (\$19 m over four years) will target apprenticeships and other occupations in particular areas of community needs such as nursing, accountancy, business management and teaching. Further information will be available soon at http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/indigenous/Indigenous_Training_Programmes.htm

The Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (IYLP)

The Indigenous Youth Leadership Program will provide \$10 million over four years to identify and develop future Indigenous leaders. Over 250 school and university scholarships of two, three and four years' duration will focus on Indigenous young people in remote communities. School based scholarships will be offered at the best Australian schools. The program will be supported by an Elders Advisory Group which will ensure the cultural integrity of the programme and design an appropriate mentoring strategy. An appropriate main metropolitan higher education institution will administer the programme. Further information will be available soon at http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/indigenous/Indigenous_Training_Programmes.htm

Dare to Lead and What Works

In addition to Scaffolding Literacy, the Australian Government has supported continued funding for the 2005-2008 quadrennium for the Dare to Lead and What Works projects. The aim of the Dare to Lead project is to bring about sustained, systemic change through engaging school principals from around Australia to form an ongoing Coalition of schools which commit to improving educational outcomes for their Indigenous students. The target is to achieve a 10 percent improvement in Year 5 literacy and year 12 completion rates. The principals also commit to revising their academic curricula and other school programmes with a view to ensuring that students develop an understanding of Indigenous culture. The What Works project delivers professional development workshops to teachers in order to initiative change in teaching practices at the school level and to accelerate improved educational outcomes for Indigenous students. The workshops 'roll-out' What Works – The Work Programme, a professional development package which comprises a CD-ROM, guidebook and workbook. The workshops are supported by the What Works website which includes a teacher discussion forum and case studies of best practice in Indigenous education.

Scaffolding

One of the flagship initiatives that the Australian Government is funding is the Scaffolding Literacy programme. This programme utilises a structured approach to teaching and has proved to be especially effective in assisting students in remote areas. The Australian Council of Educational Research describes the result of Scaffolding as "little short of sensational". \$14 million is being provided to support the implementation of this initiative.