



Australian Government

FIRST 100 DAYS

ACHIEVEMENTS OF
THE RUDD GOVERNMENT

FEBRUARY 2008

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Foreword

As Prime Minister, I am accountable to all Australians for the performance of the Government.

That's why I am releasing a report card that outlines the Government's achievements during its first 100 days in office.

It details the first steps we have made towards delivering on our commitments.

We believe in being upfront and keeping the Australian people informed about what the Government is doing, and how the Government is doing it.

The Government is committed to building a modern Australia equipped to meet the challenges of the future – both for the nation and working families.

During the Government's first 100 days in office, my Ministers and I have had our sleeves rolled up. We know the job ahead of us requires hard work, tough decisions and commitment to a long-term plan of action.

This report outlines our first steps – fighting inflation, taking decisive action on climate change, improving our health and hospital system, investing in education and putting fairness back into Australian workplaces.

We're realistic about the challenges we face. Many are long term problems requiring long term solutions and can't be fixed overnight. Challenges like climate change, delivering an education revolution, building 21st century infrastructure and reforming the Federation will require years of hard work.

That's why it's all the more important that we get started on these challenges now.

The Government will continue working hard – delivering on our commitments to the Australian people, and preparing Australia for the challenges of the future.

We intend to produce regular report cards of the Government's performance – and we will continue holding community cabinet meetings around Australia to ensure the Government is always listening to the community.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Rudd
Prime Minister of Australia

Overview

The Rudd Government has hit the ground running, working hard to meet the challenges of today - and tomorrow.

A lot has happened during the Rudd Government's first 100 days in office.

Global economic uncertainty deepened as the US sub prime crisis spread and credit markets responded sharply.

The United Nations held an historic conference on climate change in Bali.

Floods and bushfires hit towns and cities right across Australia – from Mackay in the North to Perth in the West.

Our close neighbour East Timor was plunged into crisis through a double assassination attempt on its President and Prime Minister.

And throughout this period Australian working families have been dealing with the impact of rising inflation – both on the cost of day to day living and on interest rates.

When the Rudd Government won office, it inherited inflation at its highest level in 16 years and the second highest interest rates among advanced economies.

The Rudd Government moved immediately to make fighting inflation a core priority. The Government is now implementing a five point plan on inflation designed to place downward pressure on interest rates through strong budget surpluses achieved by reducing waste in government spending, encouraging private savings, tackling the skills shortages and infrastructure bottlenecks, and lifting productivity and workforce participation.

Inflation is only one of many significant challenges facing working families and the nation's future. The Government has begun implementing its plans to ease the cost of living pressures on working families, end the blame game in our health and hospitals system, build a world class education system to underpin productivity growth, tackle climate change and create fair and flexible workplace laws.

The best platform for economic prosperity in the long-term is a well-educated population and a skilled workforce. This is why the Government has begun implementing its program for an Education Revolution – from early childhood learning to schools, tech colleges, universities and research and development.

A further platform for future growth is economic infrastructure. That's why, consistent with our pre-election commitment, we've established Infrastructure Australia to undertake a national audit of Australia's infrastructure needs and provide advice on our nation's infrastructure priorities.

The first act of the Rudd Government was to sign the Kyoto Protocol, putting Australia on the map in the international fight against climate change. The Government recognises the need for decisive action, both at home and abroad, to tackle this great economic and moral challenge.

The Rudd Government has established the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission to work on fundamental health and hospital reforms. The Government is committed to ending the waste, duplication and cost-shifting in our health system and replacing it with improved health services and better hospitals so working families receive the services they deserve. The Government has already invested \$150 million in an effort to fund 25,000 additional elective surgery procedures for those waiting beyond clinically recommended times.

The first piece of legislation introduced into the Federal Parliament by the Rudd Government was the Workplace Relations Amendment (Transition to Forward with Fairness) Bill. The Government is replacing the unfair WorkChoices laws with a new workplace relations system that delivers fairness for employees, flexibility for employers and long-term productivity growth for our economy.

The Rudd Government is forging a new partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, to help close the gap on key health, education and employment opportunities. The Government has honoured its commitment to provide a formal apology to the Stolen Generations in Federal Parliament, thus laying the foundation for a renewed commitment to deliver practical improvements to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

The Government understands the cost of living pressures faced by working families in a high-inflation environment. It is seeking to help make housing more affordable through a range of policies, including new First Home Saver Accounts. The Government has also initiated a White Paper on homelessness to provide options on how we address the reality that more than 100,000 Australians are homeless.

The Rudd Government has given the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission new powers to ensure that working families are getting a fair deal at the petrol pump. It has delivered on its commitment to appoint a Petrol Commissioner to the ACCC to keep a constant eye on petrol prices. It has also established a Grocery Prices Inquiry to identify unnecessary cost increases between the farm gate and the supermarket check out.

The Government is securing Australia's long-term future by strengthening Australia's position in our region and around the world. During its first 100 days in office, the Government has been busy working on trade, economic and security partnerships with our neighbours, friends and trading partners. The Rudd Government also responded quickly and effectively to the crisis in East Timor in committing more troops and 70 Federal Police officers to help restore stability after the assassination attempt on the country's leadership.

The Rudd Government has been working with rural and regional communities to provide support for those affected by the long-running drought. The Government has initiated a major review of Australia's quarantine and biosecurity systems, which is critical to protecting Australia's pest and disease status. The Government is also developing new wheat export marketing arrangements to ensure returns to growers in Australia's billion dollar wheat industry are maximised.

The Rudd Government is committed to making government more accountable and to giving Australians a greater, direct say in government decision-making. It is implementing campaign finance reform and making our democracy more transparent. The Government is enabling more Australians to have their voices heard through regular community cabinet meetings around Australia. To provide long-term focus in policy making, the Government is bringing 1000 of our best and brightest together for the Australia 2020 Summit, which will consider the big challenges shaping our nation's future.

But this is only the beginning.

There is much, much more to be done.

Responsible economic management

The Rudd Government is implementing a program of responsible economic management – building a modern economy to meet the challenges of the future, both for the nation and for working families.

The Rudd Government inherited an economy with inflation running at its highest level in 16 years, the second highest interest rates amongst advanced economies and an uncertain global economic environment.

To tackle inflation, Budget discipline is the essential first step. That's why the Government is cutting wasteful spending. At the same time, the Government has begun the job of rebuilding Australia's productive capacity, with a need to improve long-term performance on skills, infrastructure and workforce participation.

The Government has been working hard with State and Territory Governments to end the blame game and get on with the task of driving an ambitious new agenda of microeconomic reform.

In its first 100 days, the Rudd Government has:

enhanced the independence of the Reserve Bank by supporting improved transparency, including through the publication of Board minutes;

begun implementing a five point plan to fight inflation;

set a budget surplus target of at least 1.5 per cent of GDP in 2008-09, provided growth prospects remain as currently anticipated;

set up a razor gang to comprehensively review each Commonwealth Government department and cut wasteful spending;

announced \$643 million of savings, in addition to the \$10 billion of savings nominated before the election;

introduced into Parliament personal income tax reform legislation providing tax cuts to low and middle income earners, to boost participation in the labour market and reward the efforts of hard working Australians;

reinvigorated the national microeconomic reform agenda through the establishment of seven working groups with the States and Territories, each overseen by a Commonwealth Minister. These groups will drive a coherent program of reform to improve infrastructure planning, reduce the burden of red tape, tackle climate change and water challenges, improve health, education and housing partnerships, and close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes;

recommended a new framework for Commonwealth-State financial relations, which includes fewer Specific Purpose Payments (SPPs) and a shift in focus from red tape to results;

created a Cabinet Minister with responsibility for reducing the regulatory burden on business;

announced measures to make the banking system more competitive by making it easier for Australians to switch banks;

released an exposure draft of legislation and a discussion paper on criminal penalties for cartel behaviour;

appointed Dr Terry Cutler to head a team of experts to advise the Government on building Australia's national innovation system;

established a review of the Australian automotive industry, to be conducted by former Victorian Premier Steve Bracks, to help Australia's car industry adapt to the challenges of global competition and climate change;

announced the Excellence in Research for Australia initiative that will assess research quality and help universities develop centres of excellence in specified fields;

signed an historic Open Skies agreement with the United States to remove restrictions on flights between the two countries to the benefit of Australian travellers, trade and tourism; and

set out publicly the principles for assessing the national interest where foreign governments or associated agencies are seeking to invest in Australia.

Building the nation

The Rudd Government is committed to building world class infrastructure that improves the competitiveness of our businesses and quality of life across Australia's cities, regions and communities.

Modern infrastructure lays the platform for economic growth by lowering business costs and giving Australians access to high quality services and jobs.

Our priorities include a high speed National Broadband Network, infrastructure that secures reliable water and energy for all Australians, and modern, safe and efficient freight and passenger transport networks.

The Government is meeting its commitments and planning for the future. To tackle infrastructure bottlenecks in the short-term, and to support better planning and prioritisation in the long-term, the Government has, in partnership with business and State and Territory Governments, established Infrastructure Australia.

In our first 100 days, the Rudd Government has:

established Infrastructure Australia to provide advice to Australian governments about infrastructure gaps and bottlenecks that hinder economic growth and prosperity. Infrastructure Australia will now audit Australia's infrastructure – to be completed year's end;

established a Council of Australian Governments Infrastructure Working Group to set a timetable for reforming the way infrastructure is planned, financed and delivered – to assist business and begin ending the blame game between different governments about infrastructure responsibilities;

allocated up to \$100m to support high-speed fibre-to-the premises broadband connections to Australian schools to deliver download speeds of up to 100 megabits per second;

provided regulatory certainty to Telstra to upgrade 900 exchanges throughout metropolitan and regional areas to deploy ADSL2+ broadband technology – resulting in hundreds of thousands of Australians having access to faster broadband services – some up to 20 megabits per second; and

announced the establishment of a Digital Switchover Taskforce to drive the work necessary to achieve the switch-over from analogue to digital television by the end of 2013.

Education, skills and training

The Rudd Government is committed to an Education Revolution.

For Australia to be globally competitive in the future, the Government recognises that fundamental reform is required throughout the entire spectrum of our education system.

The Government understands that real and practical reform must include early childhood education, schools, tech colleges, universities, research and development.

The Government has begun implementing its long-term plans to modernise Australia's education system with a particular focus on trades training centres, opening up skills training places, computers in schools and development of a national curriculum.

In the first 100 days the Rudd Government has:

commenced the roll-out of trades training centres in all of Australia's 2,650 secondary schools with a call for applications to be launched on 7 March 2008;

commenced the implementation of a \$1 billion Computers in Schools package that will allow every Australian student in Years 9 to 12 to have access to a school computer;

appointed Professor Barry McGaw to Chair a new National Curriculum Board that will develop consistent curricula in the areas of Maths, English, Science and History;

committed to providing an additional 430,000 skilled training places from July 2008 to lift the productive capacity of Australia and launched an expression of interest for 20,000 new training places in areas of skills shortage from April 2008;

commenced negotiations with State and Territory Governments to ensure all four year olds have access to 15 hours of fun, play-based early education a week, for 40 weeks a year; and

provided \$20 million to ensure the security of children at school.

To immediately begin tackling skill shortages, the Government has:

increased the Skilled Migration program by 6,000 places in 2007-08;

changed the Working Holiday visa program to enable people who undertake at least three months work in the construction sector in regional Australia to extend their 12 month working holiday visa by another year;

initiated negotiations with other countries to expand the Working Holiday visa program for young people; and

established a panel of industry experts to examine how selected skilled migration measures can help ease labour shortages in the longer term.

Making ends meet

The Rudd Government is committed to helping working families make ends meet, and supporting their efforts to find a balance between work and family life.

The Government is delivering on its commitments to help address cost of living pressures on working families.

The Government has appointed the first ever Petrol Commissioner to ensure families pay no more than they have to at the petrol pump.

It has taken the first steps towards introducing First Home Saver Accounts to help people save a deposit for a home.

The Government is increasing the Child Care Tax Rebate for families and the telephone and utilities allowance for senior Australians.

In its first 100 days the Rudd Government has:

begun an inquiry into Grocery Prices by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to examine whether Australian families are paying more than they need to at the checkout;

announced the appointment of Pat Walker as Petrol Commissioner, to scrutinise oil companies to ensure that prices at the pump are not higher than they should be;

provided a reference to the Productivity Commission to conduct an Inquiry into paid maternity leave;

provided greater financial support to older Australians; people with disabilities and carers by increasing Utilities and Telephone Allowance from 20 March;

announced First Home Saver Accounts, to provide a simple and tax effective way for Australians to save a larger deposit for their first home;

established a Housing Working Group involving Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, to implement a cooperative approach to delivering better housing for Australians;

announced a new approach to tackling the problem of homelessness in Australia through the development of a comprehensive, long-term plan involving a green and a white paper;

established an Office of Work and Family in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to guide new policy development to assist families balance their work and caring responsibilities; and

established a Social Inclusion Unit in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to develop strategies to address poverty and social exclusion.

Fairness and flexibility in the workplace

The Rudd Government is committed to building a modern workplace relations system that rewards hard work, provides fairness for employees, flexibility for employers and boosts productivity growth.

A flexible and fair workplace relations system is crucial to building a competitive economy that delivers for Australia's working families.

The Government has moved quickly to meet its commitments, with the Workplace Relations Amendment (Transition to Forward with Fairness) Bill its very first piece of legislation in the Federal Parliament.

In its first 100 days, the Rudd Government has:

introduced into Parliament the *Workplace Relations Amendment (Transition to Forward with Fairness)* Bill, which:

- o ensures there will be no new Australian Workplace Agreements, which have been used to cut pay and conditions of working Australians;
- o assists employers who have been using AWAs by allowing for the limited use of individual transitional employment agreements during the period up to 1 January 2010, when the new workplace relations system will be fully operational. These agreements must meet a genuine no-disadvantage test against an applicable collective agreement or award in the workplace;
- o ensures that new collective agreements must meet a genuine no-disadvantage test against an applicable award;
- o begins the process of building a modern award system – a genuine safety net that is relevant to today's industries, occupations and businesses;
- o abolishes requirements for employers to provide the former Government's 'Workplace Relations Fact Sheet' to employees;

established and commenced consultation with a Business Advisory Group and a Small Business Working Group to work on the detail of the major legislation that will establish the new workplace relations system, with legislation to be introduced into Parliament this year;

released a discussion paper for public comment on the National Employment Standards, the key minimum entitlements for all employees to apply from 1 January 2010. The NES will create a strong and simple safety net of entitlements and include important family-friendly provisions that will benefit both employees and employers;

begun a review of the Comcare occupational health and safety and workers' compensation system to ensure that the system operates effectively;

met with all Australian Workplace Relations Ministers and begun work on building a single national workplace relations system for the private sector and preparation for a review to harmonise occupational health and safety laws around Australia; and

sent the remaining 436,000 Work Choices advertising booklets to be pulped for paper recycling.

Fixing our health and hospitals system

The Rudd Government is committed to building a modern health and hospitals system to prepare for the challenges of an ageing population, the rising burden of chronic disease and the rising costs of medical technologies.

To ensure that our health system delivers for all Australians, the first comprehensive review of our health system in decades has been established.

The Government has a long-term plan for health reform, which includes a \$2.5 billion commitment to improve the health and hospitals system for all Australians, and the early implementation of specific commitments in areas such as elective surgery and dental care.

In its first 100 days, the Rudd government has:

invested \$150 million to assist States and Territories to conduct an immediate national blitz on elective surgery waiting lists to ensure that elective surgery patients are treated within the clinically recommended time;

established the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission, to be chaired by Dr Christine Bennett, to develop a long-term health reform plan for the nation;

established a Health and Ageing Working Group through COAG, to ensure the effective implementation of new Commonwealth programs;

commenced implementation planning for GP Super Clinics to provide essential primary care service and reduce unnecessarily hospitalisation;

helped tackle chronic health workforce shortages, by commencing the roll-out of cash bonuses for nurses which will bring up to 1,000 nurses back into the hospital workforce by the end of this year – the first instalment of the Government's commitment to bring 7,750 extra nurses into Australia's hospitals within five years;

invested \$124 million in new medical and health research projects, with funding provided and administered through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC);

commenced negotiations on the implementation of a new Commonwealth Dental Health Program which will provide \$290 million over three years to support up to one million additional consultations;

agreed to double the \$49.3 million in funding previously provided by COAG in 2006 for substance and alcohol rehabilitation and treatment services in Indigenous communities, particularly in remote areas; and

committed \$15 million to meet local needs through an Integrated Care Centre (ICC) for Launceston, as part of a \$50 million health package for Tasmania.

Indigenous Australia

The Rudd Government is committed to building a new partnership to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

This requires a relationship built on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility. Above all, it requires a preparedness to look at new and practical ways of doing things.

The Government has reaffirmed the importance of Indigenous Australians, has made a formal apology to the Stolen Generations and has incorporated Indigenous heritage into the opening of the Australian Parliament.

The Government recognises that our goals to halve the gap in infant mortality rates and halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy for children within a decade, and to close the 17 year gap in life expectancy within a generation, will require a sustained effort, and has established a Joint Policy Commission to advance this in a bipartisan way.

In its first 100 days the Rudd Government has:

delivered a national Apology on behalf of the Australian Parliament to Indigenous Australians, particularly the Stolen Generations;

announced the proposed establishment of a Joint Policy Commission to be chaired by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to develop remote Indigenous housing solutions;

established the Indigenous Australian Early Development Index, which will enable national assessment of key aspects of children's early development which are central to their readiness for learning at school;

introduced legislation to Parliament on 14 February 2008 to target improvements to Indigenous education, including a commitment to an additional 200 teachers in the Northern Territory;

committed funding in January 2008 for 18 additional classrooms in the Northern Territory this year;

announced an additional \$49.3 million for Substance and Alcohol rehabilitation and treatment services for Indigenous communities, particularly in remote areas;

announced the introduction of Income Management for Indigenous communities to ensure welfare payments are spent in the interests of children, in order to strengthen community safety and improve the protection of children;

delivered \$2.6 million for 30 youth activity projects aimed at young people living in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory;

introduced legislation to ban R18+ content in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory;

commenced the roll out of a Joint Australian and Queensland Government welfare reform trial, involving increased funding for health, education, policing justice and child safety resources in Cape York communities; and

committed an extra \$15 million towards counselling and helping the Stolen Generations reconnect with loved ones.

Tackling climate change, securing our water supplies and protecting rural Australia

The Rudd Government is taking decisive action on climate change. The Government has ratified the Kyoto Protocol and put Australia on the map in the international negotiations for a new global climate change agreement.

The Government has set a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60 percent by 2050 because we recognise that the cost of doing nothing will be much higher than if we act now.

The Government's priorities include establishing an emissions trading scheme, reducing energy and water waste, expanding Australia's use of renewable energy, helping businesses become energy efficient, helping farmers adapt, securing our water supplies and restoring the health of our rivers.

New official projections released by the Department of Climate Change confirm that the Rudd Government's policies have put Australia on track to meet its Kyoto target.

In its first 100 days, the Rudd Government has:

ratified the Kyoto Protocol as the first official act of the Government – to be part of the global solution on climate change;

appointed a Minister for Climate Change and Water and established a new Department of Climate Change within the Prime Minister's portfolio;

helped forge the "Bali Roadmap" in December that launched negotiations towards a post 2012 global agreement aiming to see all countries contribute towards fighting climate change;

set out the initial design principles for a comprehensive and effective emissions trading scheme that puts Australia on a least cost path to a low emissions future;

established a Working Group on Climate Change and Water involving Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, to work towards a national renewable energy target, a streamlined set of climate change measures across jurisdictions, accelerated energy efficiency measures, adaptation measures and water market reform;

launched a \$50m tender to purchase water from willing sellers to return to rivers in the Murray Darling Basin – the first direct water purchase by the Federal Government;

announced \$4.6 million in grants to irrigation groups to plan for modernising infrastructure, allowing farmers to do more with less water;

launched the single largest rooftop mounted solar system in NSW as part of the Blacktown Solar City;

announced \$3.55 million in funding for Australia's largest off-grid solar power station to be built in Coober Pedy in South Australia;

commenced discussions with Murray-Darling Basin Governments to settle a plan for the Murray-Darling Basin;

secured a commitment from Victoria to work with the Government on the arrangements for a merged authority as part of the process of reaching agreement with Victoria and other Basin States on a more cooperative approach to managing the Basin;

expanded the terms of reference of the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce to include broader economic development opportunities for Northern Australia beyond its current agricultural focus to create economic, social and environmental benefits for Northern Australia; and

nominated 11 convict sites for World Heritage listing and accelerated the preparation of the nomination of Ningaloo Reef.

In rural Australia, the Government has:

supported those farmers still struggling with the worst drought in 100 years;

helped farmers in areas of NSW and Queensland hit by severe flooding;

committed to help farmers deal with the impact of climate change;

announced a major review of Australia's quarantine system; and

committed to a major reform of Australia's bulk wheat export marketing arrangements.

National security, foreign policy and international affairs

The Rudd Government is committed to ensuring the security of the Australian people, the defence of our country and the protection and promotion of our interests abroad.

This requires strong defence and national security policies, and a strategy to work with our international partners to meet common challenges to security, prosperity and sustainability.

The Government has acted decisively to meet its key defence and foreign policy commitments, and is actively engaging with our partners around the world.

In its first 100 days, the Rudd Government has:

directed the Department of Defence to begin withdrawing Australia's combat forces from Iraq at the completion of their current rotation in mid-2008;

been consulting with our allies – the United States and the United Kingdom – and the Government of Iraq, on the withdrawal of our troops to ensure a smooth transition;

reaffirmed with the United States and Afghanistan Governments, Australia's military commitment to Afghanistan;

through the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, demonstrate our support for the international role of Australia's military forces, by visiting the Australian troops in Iraq and Afghanistan in late December;

commenced the development of a comprehensive National Security Statement to clearly articulate the strategic rationale for all our security, intelligence and related agencies;

commissioned the preparation of a new Defence White Paper, to provide the blueprint for Australia's future Defence capabilities;

commenced a wide-ranging Review of Homeland and Border Security arrangements in Australia to look at ways of better coordinating our national security, counter-terrorism and border control efforts and maximising their effectiveness;

announced the details of the government's promised review into the adequacy of current planning for Australia's Air Combat Capability to 2045, which is to deliver its findings by the end of April 2008;

moved to close the offshore processing centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea effectively ending the Pacific Solution; and

announced new initiatives to strengthen immigration cooperation between Australia and the Republic of Indonesia.

To promote Australia's wider foreign policy, in its first 100 days, the Rudd Government has:

reaffirmed its commitment to ending commercial whaling by taking a leading role in international diplomatic efforts against whaling;

dispatched the Oceanic Viking to the Southern Ocean to monitor Japanese whaling and collect evidence for possible international legal action against Japan, with the intent of bringing an end to commercial whaling;

agreed to develop an integrated, seamless development assistance strategy between Australia and New Zealand for the South Pacific;

agreed to support a joint multilateral diplomatic strategy with New Zealand on climate change to give effect to the Bali Road Map; and

begun work with the Football Federation of Australia, and State and Territory Governments, to support an Australian bid to host the soccer World Cup in 2018 - the world's largest sporting event.

The Government is committed to improving the well-being of Australia's veterans and the wider ex-service community.

In its first 100 days, the Rudd Government has:

introduced legislation to boost allowances paid to veterans on low incomes;

confirmed funding of \$160,000 to help preserve the Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial in Ballarat; and

increased financial assistance for ex-service organisations to purchase computers and other equipment, to support their role helping veterans.

Beyond our first hundred days: a vision for Australia 2020

Australia faces major long term challenges. Whether it is climate change, the rising burden of chronic disease, the ageing of our population, long-term skill shortages, infrastructure bottlenecks, or the rise of China and India, how we prepare for these challenges will play a large part in shaping Australia's future prosperity.

These long-term challenges demand long-term planning – long-term planning that rises above traditional divides to help prepare for the challenges of the future.

We recognise that governments do not have a monopoly on good ideas. That is why the Rudd Government is holding regular community cabinets – so that we get out of Canberra to hear directly the views of local communities.

This is also why, on April 19-20, one thousand of our best and brightest Australians will gather in Canberra for the *Australia 2020* Summit, to work together on the great challenges that will affect Australia's future.

Globalisation, new technologies, demographic change, climate change and changes in the global power balance mean that what has made Australia successful in the past cannot be relied upon to deliver success in the future.

If we don't prepare for Australia's long term challenges in an orderly and strategic way, we risk missing out on our best opportunities, and being unprepared for future challenges.

Governments have access to excellent advice and information from government departments and key public institutions.

But to achieve our potential, we need to pull together the best resources and the best ideas from everywhere in the nation.

That is why the Government has called the Australia 2020 Summit, to be held in Parliament House on the weekend of April 19-20.

This is an important initiative to harness the best ideas from people in business, in community organisations, in research institutions and elsewhere across the country.

Many of these people don't normally have a voice in the nation's capital or in the Parliament.

The Summit will provide ideas and options for the nation's future – topics including the future economy, the nation's infrastructure, our environment, our farmers, health care, indigenous Australians, the arts, national security, how we improve our system of

government, and how we strengthen our communities and ensure nobody is left out of Australia's future.

The Summit will be co-chaired by the Prime Minister and Professor Glyn Davis, AO, the Vice Chancellor of Melbourne University, who will be supported by a steering panel of ten eminent Australians. Summit sessions will be co-chaired by the Steering Committee members and Ministers.

Premiers and all Opposition Leaders from around the nation have been invited.

Submissions for the 2020 Summit can be made through an online form, or by post, and will be received until close of business Wednesday 9 April 2008.

In addition to the major Summit there will be a 2020 Youth Summit, held on 12 and 13 April 2008, the weekend before the major Summit. 100 young people (from 15 to 24 years of age) from around Australia will discuss the ten critical areas on the agenda for the Australia 2020 summit, as well as options for the establishment of an ongoing Australian Youth Forum; and

Australian primary and secondary schools will also conduct a series of School Summits in the lead-up to the Australia 2020 summit – to encourage ideas from those Australians who will be the adults of 2020, whose lives will most be shaped by the policies that emerge from the summit.

All Australians will have the opportunity to have their say on how we as a nation meet our future challenges.

Our Commitments and Achievements

Responsible economic management

Commitment	Achievements
A disciplined and fiscally conservative approach to budgetary process and decision making	On 23 January 2008, the Prime Minister announced the Government will target a Budget surplus of at least 1.5 per cent of GDP in 2008-09, provided growth prospects remain as currently anticipated.
'Razor Gang' to comprehensively review each Commonwealth Government Department and cut wasteful spending	On 6 February 2008, the Government announced a modest down payment on the savings effort. The savings will result in a \$643 million reduction in government spending over the next four years including \$243 million in 2007-08. These savings are in addition to the initial \$10 billion – with further savings to be announced on Budget night.
Income Tax Reform The Rudd Government's tax reform will provide tax relief in each of the next three years, and enhance incentives for workforce participation.	Legislation introduced into the Parliament on 14 February 2008 for personal income tax reform to boost participation in the labour market and reward the efforts of hard working Australians. Labour shortages are consistently cited by business as one of the greatest constraints on expanding their output. The tax reforms in this Bill are being progressively phased in. They take effect in three stages: from 1 July 2008, 1 July 2009 and 1 July 2010.
Cutting red tape: an agenda to reduce the regulatory burden on business	Created a Cabinet Minister and a Minister Assisting with responsibility for driving an agenda – across governments - to reduce the regulatory burden on business. Introduced a one-in-one-out principle for new regulation, when Ministers bring forward new regulatory proposals, they will be required to also identify other areas where regulation can be modified or removed to reduce compliance costs for business. Established a Commonwealth, State and Territory Business Regulation and Competition Working Group to drive the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agenda for the reduction of the regulatory burden on businesses.
Cutting red tape in financial services The Rudd Government is committed to introducing a simple, standard disclosure form for financial services products, to help consumers make informed investment decisions.	On 5 February 2008, the Government announced the formation of a Financial Services Working Group dedicated to looking at the current key issues associated with financial services advice and disclosure. The Working Group will work to slash the lengthy, complex and unreadable disclosure documentation in financial services. The Working Group will carry out its work with industry and consumer groups.

Commitment

Achievements

Criminal penalties for cartel behaviour

The Rudd Government is committed to introducing laws to criminalise serious cartel behaviour within 12 months of coming into office. The Government intends to send a very clear message to the business people who engage in such behaviour: cartel activity is theft; it's a form of stealing from consumers.

Exposure draft of Trade Practices Amendment (Cartel Conduct and Other Measures) Bill 2008 and a discussion paper to criminalise serious cartel conduct was released on 11 January 2008.

Under the draft legislation those found guilty of serious cartel conduct will face up to 5 years imprisonment and/or fines of up to \$220,000 for individuals and \$10 million for corporations.

Strengthening the independence of the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA)

On 6 December 2007, the Government released a new [Statement on the Conduct of Monetary Policy](#) between the new Government and the RBA. The Statement included enhancing the independence of the positions of Governor and Deputy Governor, measures to improve the transparency of future Reserve Bank Board appointments and a range of transparency measures including the publication of Board minutes, and a statement of reasons for the decision.

Making the banking system more competitive

The Rudd Government wants to make the banking system work for Australian families, and address the administrative and other obstacles to changing banks.

On the 9 February 2008, the Rudd Government announced a package of measures to make it easier for Australians to switch banks. This includes:

- a listing and switching service that requires banks to provide their customers with accurate information on all direct debits and credits to take to a new bank for easier transferral;

- one single consumer complaints hotline 1300 300 630 providing a first contact point for all consumer complaints about basic banking products – to be provided and maintained by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission;

- comprehensive consumer education resources, including a detailed and informative web site providing advice on how to switch through the www.understandingmoney.gov.au site;

- an ASIC-led industry review of entry and exit fees that apply to mortgage accounts.

The package was developed in consultation with the Australian Bankers' Association (ABA), the Association of Building Societies and Credit Unions (ABACUS) and the Australian Payments Clearing Association (APCA) and the major banks.

Improving the transparency of the foreign investment screening process

On 17 February 2008, the Government released a set of principles to enhance the transparency of Australia's foreign investment screening regime. The principles set out the main factors that are considered in determining, on a case-by-case basis, whether particular investments by foreign governments and their agencies are consistent with Australia's national interest.

Commitment

Achievements

Review of the National Innovation System

Australia's innovation system is weakened by a cultural divide between public research and private business, and a lack of national policy coordination. A Rudd Government will build a truly national innovation system. The Government will work with the States and Territories to review the bewildering agglomeration of innovation programs to ensure that support for innovation is well targeted and easy to access, with the aim of reducing the fragmentation and duplication.

On 22 January 2008, the Government announced a wide ranging review of Australia's national innovation system to be conducted by an expert panel chaired by Dr Terry Cutler.

Review of the Australian Automotive Industry

The Government has announced a comprehensive review of Australia's automotive industry. This dynamic industry faces challenges, including stronger international competition, changing consumer tastes for fuel efficient vehicles and the need to respond to climate change.

On 16 February 2008, the Government announced a comprehensive review of Australia's automotive industry to be conducted by Mr Steve Bracks.

Improve university research quality assessment

The Rudd Government is committed to replacing the Research Quality Framework with a rigorous research quality assessment system that is fair, transparent and clearly defined. It will employ a rigorous methodology applying verifiable measures appropriate to each discipline.

On 26 February 2008, the Government announced the establishment of the *Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA)* initiative, which will be developed by the Australian Research Council (ARC) in conjunction with the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. It will assess research quality using a combination of metrics and expert review by committees comprising experienced, internationally-recognised experts.

Open Skies Agreement with the United States

The Australian and United States governments agreed terms of the 'open skies agreement' on 15 February 2008. The agreement removes restrictions on the number of flights between the two countries and on operation of cargo flights from third countries.

Commitment

Achievements

Making superannuation lump sum payments tax free for Australians with Terminal Medical Conditions

Introduced into the Parliament on 13 February 2008, laws to make superannuation lump sum payments tax free where paid to persons suffering from terminal medical conditions.

This was followed by the release of regulations which introduce a new condition of release for persons suffering from terminal medical conditions on 15 February 2008.

Australia's Tax Treaty Negotiation Policy

The Rudd Government is committed to ensuring Australia's tax treaties remain relevant to evolving business directions.

On 25 January 2008, the Government announced it was inviting public comment and submissions on Australia's future tax treaty negotiation programme and policy.

Reducing the delays and improving the quality of tax law changes

The Rudd Government made an election commitment to streamline the process of introducing tax legislation and provide certainty for businesses through the timely implementation of changes to taxation law.

On 8 February 2008, the Government announced the appointment of a Tax Design Review Panel that will be charged with examining how to reduce delays in the enactment of tax legislation and improve the quality of tax law changes.

Removing the tax deductibility of political donations

Introduced into the Parliament on 13 February 2008, laws to remove the tax deductibility of political donations and save taxpayers' money.

Making Australia the Financial Services Hub of Asia

The Rudd Government is committed to implementing reforms to enhance the international competitiveness of Australian managed funds, and boost financial services exports.

On 22 February 2008, the Government asked the Board of Taxation to review the taxation arrangements that apply to managed funds.

The Government also released a consultation paper on interim changes to trading trust rules which apply to real estate investment trusts.

Building the nation

Commitment

Achievements

Infrastructure Australia

The Rudd Government has a longstanding commitment to providing national leadership for our infrastructure needs by establishing Infrastructure Australia.

On 21 January 2008, the Government announced the establishment of Infrastructure Australia.

On 21 February 2008, the Government introduced legislation into the Parliament.

On 26 February 2008, the Government appointed Sir Rod Eddington as the inaugural chair of Infrastructure Australia.

National Broadband Network

The Government will invest up to \$4.7 billion in the National Broadband Network that will deliver for 98 per cent of Australians a broadband service which is 40 times faster than most current speeds.

On 13 February 2008, the Government commenced the implementation of the National Broadband Network by introducing legislation into the Parliament so \$2 billion of Communications Fund capital can be used for the project.

Digital Television Switchover

The Government will achieve the switchover to digital television by the end of 2013.

On 18 December 2007, the Government announced the establishment of a Digital Switchover Taskforce to drive the work necessary to achieve the switchover from analogue to digital television by the end of 2013.

Quarantine Reform

The Government has announced a major review of Australia's quarantine system.

On 19 February 2008, the Government announced a comprehensive, independent review of Australia's quarantine and biosecurity systems. The purpose of the review is to ensure that Australia's pest and disease status is protected, consistent with community expectations and international obligations.

A former secretary of the Department of Environment and Heritage, Roger Beale AO, will head the review.

Wheat export reform

The Government will undertake a major reform of Australia's bulk wheat export marketing arrangements.

The Government has taken the first steps to reforming Australia's wheat export marketing arrangements by appointing an expert advisory group. The Wheat Industry Expert Group, which is chaired by South Australian grain grower, John Crosby, will advise the Government on industry development functions.

Education, skills and training

Commitment

Achievements

The Government committed to the establishment of a National Curriculum – for all students from Kindergarten to Year 12

A Rudd Labor Government will set up a National Curriculum Board to develop a rigorous, consistent and quality curriculum for all Australian students – from Kindergarten to Year 12.

The Government committed to establish a program to build Trade Training Centres in all secondary schools

To bring trade training centres into every secondary school in the country, opens up technical and trades training facilities for up to 1.2 million Australian students who are in Years 9, 10, 11 and 12.

The Government committed to the establishment of a National Secondary Schools Computer Fund

Federal Labor's National Secondary School Computer Fund will allow every Australian student in Years 9 to 12 to have access to a computer at school. Under the Rudd Government's plan, every secondary school in Australia, Government, Catholic and Independent will be equipped with the education tools of the 21st Century to teach the lessons of tomorrow.

Professor Barry McGaw was appointed as Chair of the new National Curriculum Board on 30 January 2008.

The Government is collaborating with the States and Territories, initially through consideration of this matter at COAG in December, and through the joint development of an implementation plan for this measure to establish a high quality, national curriculum in key subjects.

Commitment to provide resourcing to Create Trades Training centres in all of Australia's 2,650 secondary schools.

The Government is collaborating with the States and Territories, initially through consideration of this matter at COAG in December, and through the joint development of an implementation plan for this measure to create Trades Training Centres in all of Australia's 2,650 secondary schools.

The Government has demonstrated its commitment to investment in education through the Computers in Schools package that will allow every Australian student in Years 9 to 12 to have access to a computer at school.

The Government is collaborating with the States and Territories, initially through consideration of this matter at COAG in December, and through the joint development of an implementation plan for this measure to ensure every Australian student in Years 9 to 12 to have access to a computer at school. On 6 December the Government announced the commitment of \$1 billion to the program. The Government also announced that it would immediately commence an audit of the provision of ICT resources and broadband access in all Australian secondary schools.

Commitment

Achievements

The Government committed to the establishment of a National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Program

The \$68.6 million National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Program will work with the States and Territories to promote the study of languages such as Japanese, Indonesian, Mandarin and Korean in high schools. Under the plan the Rudd Government's National Curriculum Board will oversee the teaching of languages in schools and work with the States and Territories to increase the number of qualified language teachers across Australia.

The Government is collaborating with the States and Territories, initially through consideration of this matter at COAG in December, and through the joint development of an implementation plan for this measure to ensure that its objective of increasing the participation of high school students in Asian languages is achieved.

The Government committed to meeting the security needs of at risk schools

The Government will provide funding of up to \$20 million which will be available for the special security needs of schools that are assessed to be at risk.

The Government has committed \$20 million to ensure the security of children attending at risk schools.

The Government committed to the establishment of a Family-School and Community Partnership Bureau to help develop partnerships between parents, schools and the community

On 18 February 2008, the Minister for Education announced funding of \$800,000 for a unique Family-School and Community Partnership Bureau will be delivered to help develop partnerships between parents, schools and the community. The Government will provide \$800,000 over four years to two key national parent bodies, the Australian Council of State Schools Organisation (ACSSO) and the Australian Parents Council (APC), to conduct research and develop pilot programs to ensure schools are more welcoming to parents and the broader community.

The Government committed to hold 2020 School Summits

On 24 February 2008, the Deputy Prime Minister announced that Australian school children will have a voice at the Australia 2020 Summit. All Australian primary and secondary schools will be invited to host their own Schools Summits in the lead up to the Australia 2020 Summit in April. The Schools Summits will offer a unique opportunity for students right around the country to make their views heard on the ten key themes of Australia 2020. The ideas, issues and questions raised through the Schools Summit will be taken forward to the Youth Summit announced last week, and from there to Australia 2020.

Commitment

Achievements

The Government committed to establish universal Access to Early Childhood Education for all 4 year olds

All Australian 4 year olds will have enshrined in a new Commonwealth Early Childhood Education Act a universal right to access early play-based learning and development programs delivered by degree-qualified teachers; these programs will be funded for 15 hours per week, and delivered across a diversity of early childhood settings – public and private – as the Government is concerned with the quality of the learning, not where it takes place.

The Government is collaborating with the States and Territories, initially through consideration of this matter at COAG in December, and through the joint development of an implementation plan for this measure to ensure that its objective of providing universal access to early childhood education for all 4 year olds is achieved. A focus will be on increasing the quality and availability of child care.

The Government committed to establish Scholarships for a Competitive Future

The Rudd Government's \$202 million Scholarships for a Competitive Future policy will significantly boost the research and development capacity of Australia's universities.

On 20 February, in an interview with AM (ABC), the Deputy Prime Minister advised that the Government "has got a huge new scholarship program, doubling the number of scholarships; making sure that more students are supported in their studies. We want to work with the higher education sector to keep rebuilding our universities and we understand that it is going to be a big job. Increasing the research capacity in our universities will ensure Australia can stay ahead in an increasingly competitive global economy."

The Government committed to provide 450,000 new training places to tackle the skills crisis

On 28 February 2008 the Prime Minister announced an Expression of Interest process had commenced for the first 20,000 training places to be delivered from April 2008 and that the further 430,000 training places would be available from 1 July 2008 to tackle skills shortages.

The Government committed to the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Education and Training between Australia and Vietnam

On 26 February the Deputy Prime Minister announced that education and training ties between Australia and Vietnam will be strengthened following the signing of a cooperative agreement by the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Training, Professor Nguyen Thien Nhan. The renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Education and Training between Australia and Vietnam coincides with the 35th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries by the Whitlam Government on this day in 1973.

Commitment

Achievements

Removal of the Higher Education Workplace Relations Requirements (HEWRRs) as a condition of university funding

On 14 February the Government introduced to Parliament legislation to remove the requirement that universities offer Australian Workplace Agreements to employees, a key element of the HEWRRs. Under the previous Liberal government, Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding was made conditional on meeting the HEWRRs and offering AWAs.

Under the requirements of the current legislation, all eligible higher education providers were formally compliant with the HEWRRs as at 31 August 2007. This ensures that they retain all their Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding for 2008.

Labour agreements covering business visas subject to a more transparent process

On 20 February the Government confirmed that labour agreements covering business visas will be subject to a more transparent process. Employers can negotiate a labour agreement with the Commonwealth which sets out the numbers and occupations of overseas skilled workers to be covered and provides for variations to the standard requirements under the temporary business Subclass 457 visa program. Labour agreements provide flexibility to vary standard requirements for Subclass 457 visas which include language skills, occupational skill levels and salary levels.

A package of migration measures designed to address Australia's skills and labour shortages

On 17 February the Government unveiled a package of migration measures designed to address Australia's skills and labour shortages. These measures have the potential to provide thousands of additional workers in the short term, especially for the labour-strapped mining and construction industries.

An External Reference Group made up of industry experts will also examine how selected temporary skilled migration measures can help ease labour shortages in the medium to long term.

Making ends meet

Commitment

Achievements

The Government committed to the establishment of an Office of Work and Family in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

The Office of Work and Family commenced operation on 13 December 2007.

The Government committed to making more Regular and more Generous Allowance Payments (Increase Utilities Allowance for Aged Pensioners and Extend it to Carers and DSP Recipients)

The Government introduced legislation on 14 February 2008 to deliver the election commitment. Legislation has passed the House of Representatives and subject to passage through the Senate, the first payment of the increased utilities and seniors' concession allowances will be made from 20 March 2008.

The Government made a commitment to request that the Productivity Commission investigate paid maternity leave

On 17 February 2008 the government announced that it will ask the Productivity Commission to examine ways the Government can provide improved support to parents with newborn children. The Productivity Commission will be asked to look at the economic and social costs and benefits of paid maternity, paternity and parental leave. There will be an opportunity for public participation and the Commission will be asked to report by February 2009.

The Government committed to establish a Social Inclusion Unit in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

By the end of November 2007 a Social Inclusion Unit was established in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Expressions of Interest to serve on the Social Inclusion Board were called via national advertisements on 26 January 2008.

The Government committed to develop a White Paper on Homelessness by August 2008

On 27 January 2008, the Government commissioned a White Paper to set out a new approach to addressing homelessness in Australia. Tony Nicholson was announced as the Chair of a steering group to develop the White Paper.

The Government committed to create First Home Saver Accounts to make it easier to save a deposit for a home

On 4 February 2008, the Government announced the creation of First Home Saver Accounts and released a discussion paper outlining the proposed features of the accounts and how they would operate.

The Government established a Housing Working Group to implement a cooperative approach to delivering better housing for Australians

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) held its 20th meeting in Melbourne on 20 December 2007. COAG agreed to a new model of cooperation underpinned by more effective working arrangements, and identified seven areas for its 2008 work agenda, including housing.

Five Commonwealth/State Implementation Plans are to be delivered to the March 2008 COAG Meeting. They cover the establishment of a \$500 million Housing Affordability Fund, a National Rental Affordability Scheme, a plan to build new houses and units for the homeless, an audit of public land for possible release for housing development, and a work program for the new National Housing Supply Council.

Commitment

The Government committed to appointing a Petrol Commissioner to be a 'cop on the beat' with responsibility to formally monitor and investigate price gouging and collusion, and ensure motorists are getting a fair go

The Government committed the ACCC to undertake a formal inquiry into grocery prices, to ensure families are getting a fair deal at the supermarket

Achievements

On 16 February 2008, the Government announced Mr Pat Walker as the Rudd Government's nominee for the new Petrol Commissioner. The proposed appointment of Mr Walker as an ACCC Commissioner is subject to the approval of the Governor-General and requires acceptance of at least four States and Territories.

On 22 January 2008, the Government directed the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to commence a formal inquiry into grocery prices.

The inquiry will consider the current structure of the grocery industry at the supply, wholesale and retail levels including: mergers and acquisitions by the national retailers; the nature of competition and the pricing practices in the grocery industry; and factors influencing efficient pricing of inputs along the supply chain.

The ACCC is required to report to the Government by 31 July 2008.

Fairness and flexibility in the workplace

Commitment

Achievements

Abolishing Australian Workplace Agreements

The Government committed to implementing legislation that would stop the creation of further Australian Workplace Agreements.

The Workplace Relations (Transition to Forward with Fairness) Bill 2008 was introduced into Parliament on 13 February. The legislation:

ensures that there will be no new Australian Workplace Agreements from the time that the legislation comes into effect;

allows for existing AWAs to remain in operation for their full term;

provides for Individual Transitional Employment Agreements (ITEAs) for use in limited circumstances to assist employers and employees transition from AWAs.

Build a genuine safety net for workplace agreements

The Government committed to building a genuine safety net of minimum wages and conditions in legislation and modern awards with the safety net coming into effect from January 2010.

The Bill will abolish the so-called fairness test for workplace agreements and establish a new genuine no disadvantage test that applies to ITEAs and to collective agreements. The no disadvantage test provides that a workplace agreement cannot disadvantage an employee in comparison to the underlying industrial instrument in a workplace, for example an applicable collective agreement (for ITEAs only) or award. The Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard will continue to apply in the transition period.

The Government has released a discussion paper for public comment on the proposed ten legislated National Employment Standards (see below).

Establishment of National Employment Standards

On 14 February 2008, the Government released a discussion paper on ten National Employment Standards (NES) which contain the key minimum entitlements for all Australian employees to apply from 1 January 2010. The expanded safety net of entitlements will benefit the employees who rely on it, and will be better for employers who will have a simple, straightforward set of minimum conditions that are easy to apply and comply with.

Review Comcare and OHS

The Government committed to reviewing the Comcare occupational health and safety and workers' compensation arrangements, to ensure that all employees have adequate cover.

On 23 January 2008 the Government announced the terms of reference for the review of Comcare. The review is to be finalised by July 2008.

The Minister for Employment & Workplace Relations met with State and Territory Workplace Relations Ministers on 1 February to discuss the creation of a national workplace relations system for the private sector and how to commence the harmonisation of OHS laws.

The Government committed to working with the States and Territories to harmonise OHS legislation within 5 years.

Fixing our health and hospitals system

Commitment

Achievements

Establishing the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission

The Government committed to establish – through COAG – a National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission to develop a long-term national health reform plan.

The Terms of Reference for the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission were agreed by COAG in December 2007. The Commission was formally announced by the Government on 25 February 2008. The Commission will be chaired by Dr Christine Bennett, Chief Medical Officer for MBF. Dr Bennett will be supported by nine members of the Commission with a wide range of experiences and expertise. The Commission will deliver an Interim Report by December 2008 and a Final Report by mid-2009.

Obesity - Community Collaboration

The Government committed to provide \$1.7m over four years to evaluate best practice in community-based obesity prevention programs around the country.

This measure has been significantly progressed, with the funding negotiations between the Government and Deakin University underway.

National Health and Hospitals Reform Plan

The Government committed to rolling out a \$2.5 billion National Health Reform Plan over four years to improve Australia's health system and ensure better health services for patients in hospitals.

Implementation of the Government's key initiatives under this plan was considered by COAG in December 2007. Detailed implementation plans for relevant initiatives will be considered by COAG in March 2008.

Elective Surgery Waiting Lists

The Government committed to provide \$100 million for an additional 25,000 elective surgery procedures, to be followed with a further \$200 million to support system-wide changes to lock in those benefits and \$300 million in performance-based incentive payments for States and Territories that reduce elective surgery waiting lists.

On 14 January 2008, the Commonwealth and States and Territories agreed on an immediate national blitz on elective waiting lists. Following discussions with State and Territory Governments at COAG in December 2007, the Government agreed to increase support for a national blitz on elective surgery waiting lists from \$100 million to \$150 million in order to conduct more than 25,000 additional elective surgery procedures for those who have waited longer than clinically recommended times. This national blitz has commenced. A further \$150 million will be provided for systemic improvements to the hospital system. In addition, up to \$300 million in dividend payments will be made available to States and Territories who dramatically increase the number of elective surgeries completed on time by the end of the four year plan.

Stage Two of support is proceeding as scheduled.

Performance measures for Stage Three funding were agreed by COAG in December 2007.

Commitment

Achievements

GP Super Clinics

The Government committed to invest \$220 million to establish GP Super Clinics in local communities – bolstering frontline health care for Australian families.

This measure was considered by COAG in December 2007, with a detailed implementation plan to be considered by COAG in March 2008. It is currently envisaged that funding will be provided to early priority sites from mid-2008.

Health and hospitals reform - Tasmanian package

The Government committed to invest more than \$50 million in additional health services in Tasmania, particularly in the North and North-West where people suffer from very high rates of chronic diseases like cancer, diabetes and kidney disease.

The Government has allocated \$50 million to invest in Tasmanian Health Services, including providing \$15 million for an Integrated Care Centre (ICC) in Launceston. The ICC will employ an innovative model of patient care that enables health professionals to work in a team environment – better linking hospitals, community health services and doctors, with the services provided by the new Launceston ICC to reflect the specific health care needs of the local community. Other commitments from the Government for Tasmania include:

\$15 million to establish GP Super Clinics at: Devonport, Burnie and Bellerive and Sorrell;

\$10 million for the Tasmanian Patient Transport Initiative;

\$7.7 million towards an additional radiation oncology unit in the North or North-West; and

\$3.5 million for a PET cancer scanner at the Royal Hobart Hospital – the first in Tasmania.

Medical and health research projects, with funding provided and administered through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)

On 4 February, the Health Minister Nicola Roxon announced that more than \$124 million would be invested by the Government in new medical and health research projects. The Government is committed to ensuring that Australia's best and brightest researchers have sufficient support and financial assistance to continue to work at the forefront of their fields. The funding, provided and administered through the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), includes:

\$74.8 million for 133 fellowships, 171 scholarships and 75 career development and training awards to help Australian researchers further their careers;

\$48.4 million for four program grants, allowing leading Australian researchers to pursue collaborative work into cardiovascular disease, colon cancer, HIV/AIDS, and Hepatitis C and contribute at an international level; and

\$0.83 million to facilitate international collaboration with research institutions and researchers in the European Union, France and China.

Listing Altima on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme for the treatment of mesothelioma

In January 2008, Alimta was listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme to support the treatment of mesothelioma. About 300 people with mesothelioma are expected to benefit per year. This announcement followed the tireless campaigning of Bernie Banton who passed away in late 2007.

Commitment

Achievements

Nursing Package: Extra nurses to take pressure of Australia's hospitals

Within five years, the Government committed to provide around 1,500 new graduate nurses and cash bonuses for 7,750 trained nurses to attract them to return to work in our hospitals.

Implementation of this measure was considered by COAG in December 2007, with a detailed implementation plan to be considered by COAG in March 2008.

Healthy Kids Checks

The Government committed to implement a Healthy Kids Check for every child when they start school.

Engagement with stakeholders – including State and Territory governments, as well as health professionals – has commenced. This will ensure consistency across jurisdictions.

Healthy Habits for Life Guide

The Government committed to a *Healthy Habits for Life* guide for parents, provided when they enrol their children at school, which will include advice and practical information for parents to help their children develop healthy habits to last them a lifetime.

Development of the *Healthy Habits for Life Guide* has commenced, with a focus to ensure that it is consistent with the Healthy Kids Checks.

Commonwealth Dental Health Program

The Government committed to working with State and Territory governments to help tackle public dental waiting lists by delivering one million additional public dental consultations.

Consultation with the States and Territories on this matter is underway, with the Commonwealth Dental Health Program having been discussed at COAG in December. The Government has committed to providing \$290 million over three years to State and Territory governments so that they can deliver one million additional public dental consultations and help clear the backlog of people waiting for public dental treatment. In return the Government will require the States and Territories to meet new national standards in dental care.

Medicare Teen Dental Plan

The Government is committed to a Teen Dental Plan that will provide \$150 towards an annual preventative check for teenagers aged 12 to 17 in families receiving Family Tax Benefit (FTB) A or who are eligible for Youth Allowance or Abstudy. The Government is currently discussing implementation arrangements with State and Territory Governments.

Doubling the \$49.3 million provided by COAG in 2006 for substance and alcohol rehabilitation

The Commonwealth agreed to double the \$49.3 million in funding previously provided by COAG in 2006 for substance and alcohol rehabilitation and treatment services, particularly in remote areas, at the COAG meeting in December 2007.

Commitment

Establish COAG Health and Ageing Working Group

Achievements

The Health and Ageing Working group was established following the COAG meeting in December 2007. The objective of the Working Group is to improve health outcomes for all Australians and the sustainability of the Australian health system. This will involve the consistent effort of all governments, as well as active engagement with Australians, healthcare workers, business and the broader community.

Indigenous Australia

Commitment

Achievements

The Government committed to an apology to the Stolen Generations

The Prime Minister delivered a formal apology on behalf of the Parliament to Indigenous Australians, particularly the Stolen Generations, on 13 February 2008.

The Government committed to fund an additional 200 teaching positions in the Northern Territory to improve Indigenous education

The Deputy Prime Minister introduced the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment (2008 Measures No. 1) Bill 2008* on 14 February 2008 appropriating additional funding of \$7.162 million over the 2008 school year for the recruitment of 50 additional teachers.

Additional funding of \$56.8 million will also be provided through subsequent Acts for the remaining 150 teachers over the years 2009-2011.

The Government has committed funding for 18 additional classrooms in the Northern Territory this year

As part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response, on 16 January the Deputy Prime Minister approved funding of \$7.66 million in 2007-08 for 18 additional classrooms in the Northern Territory.

The Government committed to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and in particular to:

close the life expectancy gap within a generation;

halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade;

halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements within a decade;

in a partnership between all levels of government and with Indigenous communities;

The pathway to closing the gap is inextricably linked to economic development and improved education outcomes.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) held its 20th meeting in Melbourne on 20 December 2007.

COAG agreed to a new model of cooperation underpinned by more effective working arrangements. COAG identified seven areas for its 2008 work agenda, one of which focuses on closing the Indigenous disadvantage gap.

Commonwealth/State Implementation Plans, which are to be delivered to the March 2008 COAG Meeting, will ensure that the implementation of other Commonwealth election commitments in health, education and housing address Indigenous disadvantage where appropriate.

The Government committed to a Combined Action Cabinet Meeting:

Proposal of a Joint Policy Commission, to be led by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

On 13 February 2008, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of a Joint Policy Commission, to be co-chaired by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. Negotiations are underway between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

The Commission's mandate is to develop and implement—to begin with—an effective housing strategy for remote communities over the next five years. It will be consistent with the Government's policy framework, a new partnership for closing the gap.

Commitment

Achievements

The Government committed to fund an additional \$50 million for drug and alcohol treatment and rehabilitation

On 17 February 2008, the Government announced \$50 million in funding to each State and Territory to provide additional drug and alcohol rehabilitation services to indigenous communities. The allocations to each state are:

Queensland – up to \$20 million

Northern Territory – up to \$8 million

Western Australia – up to \$8 million

South Australia - \$7 million

NSW – up to \$4 million

Victoria, Tasmania, ACT – up to \$1 million each.

The Government committed to the establishment of an Indigenous Australian Early Development Index which will enable national assessment of key aspects of children's early development

On 20 January 2008, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Macklin, together with Professor Fiona Stanley, announced that an Indigenous Australian Early Development Index will be established.

It will establish a culturally appropriate and nationally consistent means of assessing key aspects of Indigenous children's early child development which are central to their readiness for learning at school.

The Government committed to roll out of Income Management for Indigenous communities to ensure welfare payments are spent in the interests of children, in order to strengthen community safety and improve the protection of children

Income Management commenced on 11 December 2007 in Mt Leibig, Papunya, Kintore and Kaltukatjara (Docker River).

Income Management commenced on 12 December 2007 in Weemol, Bulman, Beswick, Barunga, Manyalluk (Eva Valley), Binjari and Katherine Town Camps; and

Income Management commenced on 13 December 2007 in Acacia Larrakia and Nauiya (Daly River).

On 14 January 2008, income management commenced in Wadeye and its outstations, on the western edge of the Daly River Reserve in the Northern Territory (NT).

On 25 February 2008, the government commenced quarantining welfare payments in town camps in Darwin, Palmerston and Adelaide River and the Belyuen community.

On 27 February 2008, Jenny Macklin announced the introduction of targeted income management trial in the Kimberley region of Western Australia in families where child protection concerns exist.

The Government committed to deliver \$2.6 million for 30 youth activity projects aimed at young people living in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory

On 29 January 2008, Jenny Macklin announced funding totalling \$2.6 million for 30 youth activity projects aimed at young people living in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. All 30 projects support activities for young Indigenous people in the Northern Territory. This will enable up to 230 young people to participate in positive recreational experiences.

The Government committed to reform rather than abolish the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program

On 10 December 2007, Jenny Macklin announced a moratorium on the dismantling of CDEP in the Northern Territory. This means that no more Indigenous people will be transferred off the program during the consultations on reforming CDEP which are now underway.

Commitment

Achievements

The Government committed to supporting the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER)

The Prime Minister and Minister Macklin met with Indigenous leaders in the Northern Territory and committed to ongoing quarterly meetings.

On 21 February 2008, the Minister introduced a NTER Consolidation Bill which included reinstatement of the permit system on Aboriginal land.

Planning is underway for an independent review of the NTER.

The Government committed to the Cape York welfare reform trial

On 24 December 2007, Jenny Macklin and the Queensland Premier Anna Bligh met to finalise an historic agreement to work together to help improve the lives of Queenslanders living in remote Indigenous communities. Both Governments committed to moving ahead as quickly as possible with the welfare reform trials in four Cape York communities - Aurukun, Hopevale, Coen and Mossman Gorge.

The Commonwealth agreed to support the Queensland Government as it drafts the legislation necessary to establish the Family Responsibilities Commission. The Queensland Government introduced this legislation on 26 February 2008.

The Commonwealth Government has committed \$48 million to support the welfare reform trial.

The Government committed to the Introduction of legislation to ban R18+ content in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory

On 21 February 2008 a Bill was introduced into Parliament to amend the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*, the *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007* and the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976*.

The Bill addresses concerns expressed by Indigenous people to the *Little Children are Sacred* inquiry about exposure of children to R-rated material available on pay television. When implemented, there will be provision to prevent pay television licensees providing television channels which contain R-rated programming into prescribed areas.

The Government committed to provide an extra \$15 million towards counselling and helping the Stolen Generations reconnect with loved ones

Implementation of additional funding totalling \$15 million for counselling programs to assist members of the Stolen Generations has begun.

The Government has facilitated the buy-back of commercial line fishing entitlements in the Torres Strait

On 18 December 2007, the Government announced that it had facilitated the buy-back of commercial line fishing entitlements in the Torres Strait Island Fishery. The buy-back was funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Torres Strait Regional Authority.

The buy-back of these entitlements has given the Torres Strait Island community greater ownership and increased role in the management of the region's fisheries.

Tackling climate change, securing our water supplies and protecting rural Australia

Commitment	Achievements
Ratifying the Kyoto Protocol: The Rudd Government will immediately ratify the Kyoto Protocol as part our priority in tackling the challenges of climate change.	<p>The Prime Minister signed the instrument of ratification of the Kyoto Protocol on 3 December 2007. Under United Nations guidelines, ratification of the Kyoto Protocol enters into force 90 days after the Instrument of Ratification is received by the United Nations. Australia will become a full member of the Kyoto Protocol on 11 March 2008.</p> <p>The Rudd Government helped forge the agreement at Bali in December that has launched a two year negotiation to reach a post-2012 outcome aiming to see all countries contribute towards fighting climate change.</p>
Appointing a Minister for Climate Change and Establishing a Department of Climate Change	<p>Senator Penny Wong was appointed the Minister for Climate Change and Water on 3 December 2007. The Department of Climate Change was established on 3 December 2007 as part of the Prime Minister and Cabinet portfolio.</p>
Implementing an emissions trading scheme An effective framework for climate change must include an effective emissions trading scheme. Work should progress on developing a national emissions trading scheme starting no later than 2010 with the detailed design finalised by the end of 2008.	<p>On 6 February, Senator Penny Wong set out the Government's initial design principles for an emissions trading scheme and careful and deliberate approach to the scheme's design.</p> <p>The Minister is committed to consulting widely with stakeholders and State and Territory Governments, and considering the work underway in Treasury, the Garnaut Climate Change review and work undertaken by the National Emissions Trading Taskforce and the Taskgroup on Emissions Trading.</p>
COAG agreed climate change and water as a national priority	<p>COAG established a number of working groups, including the Working Group on Climate Change and Water, which on 25 January, agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Design work for a national renewable energy target being completed this year and legislation being in place by 2009.Proposals being developed this year for a streamlined set of complementary policies across all jurisdictions.Proposals to accelerate the uptake of energy efficiency measures.Accelerated action on long-term adaptation to climate change.Consultation with States and Territories on the emissions trading scheme.

Commitment

Achievements

The Murray-Darling Basin

Investing in water infrastructure in the Murray Darling Basin.

Accelerating water reform in the Murray Darling Basin.

Consulting farmers and respecting their important role in land and water management.

Ensuring a fair water market and fair adjustment.

Ensuring a sustainable cap for the Murray Darling Basin.

The Government has:

Held productive discussions with States and Territories with a view to agreeing a plan for the Murray-Darling Basin.

Secured commitment from Victoria to work with the Federal Government on the arrangements for a merged authority as part of the process of reaching agreement with Victoria and other Basin States on a more cooperative approach to managing the Basin.

Announced a \$50m tender on 26 February to purchase water from willing sellers to return to rivers in the Murray Darling Basin – the first direct water purchase by the Federal Government.

Announced \$4.6m in grants to irrigation groups to plan for modernising infrastructure, allowing farmers to do more with less water.

Northern Australia

Expand the terms of reference of the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce to include broader economic development opportunities for Northern Australia beyond its current agricultural focus to create economic, social and environmental benefits for Northern Australia.

On 25 January, Senator Wong announced that new Terms of Reference for the Taskforce are currently being developed, with input for northern States, industry and stakeholder groups. Political appointments to the Taskforce have been removed to make it more skills based and independent.

Kimberley Strategic Assessment

On 6 February 2008, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts signed an agreement with the Western Australian Government to undertake a strategic assessment under the EPBC Act of the impacts of actions under a plan for a proposed common-user liquefied natural gas (LNG) Hub precinct in the West Kimberley Region.

Blacktown Solar City - Rooftop mounted solar system

On 1 February 2008, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts opened the rooftop 'solar highway' at the Cadbury Schweppes factory in Blacktown. The factory is the first business to take up the commercial solar power offer under the Blacktown Solar City Project.

World Heritage Listing - Convict sites and Ningaloo Reef

On 30 January 2008 the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts announced the nomination of 11 convict sites in NSW, Tasmania, WA and Norfolk Island for World Heritage Listing.

The Government is working to accelerate the processes necessary to nominate the Ningaloo Reef in WA for World Heritage Listing.

Australia's largest off-grid solar power station

On 19 February 2008 the Minister for Environment, Heritage and the Arts announced \$3.55m in funding for Australia's largest off-grid solar power station to be built in Coober Pedy in South Australia.

National security, foreign policy and international affairs

Commitment	Achievements
Withdraw Australian Combat Troops from Iraq	<p>The Rudd Government has directed Defence to begin withdrawing our combat forces from Iraq at the completion of their current rotation in mid-2008.</p> <p>The Government is actively consulting with our allies – the United States and the United Kingdom – and with the Government of Iraq on the withdrawal of our troops to ensure a smooth transition.</p>
Maintain Troop Commitment in Afghanistan	<p>The Government has announced it will maintain the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) substantial force commitments in Afghanistan, with an increased focus on training of the Afghanistan National Army. The Government's strategy seeks to strengthen Afghanistan's institutions, particularly the Afghan National Security Forces, improve living conditions and fight the narcotics trade.</p>
Support the international role of Australia's military forces	<p>The Prime Minister and Defence Minister demonstrated the Government's support for the international role of Australia's military forces by visiting troops in Iraq and Afghanistan in late December.</p>
Production of a new Defence White Paper	<p>On 22 February 2008, the Government announced it had commissioned a new Defence White Paper, to provide the blueprint for Australia's future Defence capabilities. The White Paper will assist the Government to make fully-informed and cost-effective decisions about the military capabilities needed to defend Australia and promote our interests. The Paper will be completed by the end of the year.</p>
Review of Australia's Air Combat Capability	<p>On 18 February 2008 the Government announced the details and structure of its promised review into the adequacy of current planning for Australia's Air Combat Capability to 2045. The Review will provide the Government with an opportunity to assess the strengths of our current plans and inform consideration of our future air combat capability, in the context of the new Defence White Paper. The Review will be conducted in two stages, with public submissions called for in Stage 2. The Review is to deliver its findings by the end of April 2008.</p>
Commence preliminary work on the next generation of submarines	<p>The Government has tasked the Department of Defence to commence preliminary studies on Australia's future submarine requirements.</p>
Enhance cooperation and joint training with the United States	<p>The Government agreed to enhance cooperation and training with the United States at the Australia-US Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN) in Canberra on 23 February.</p>
Implement the recommendations from the Proust Review into Defence management	<p>The Government has taken steps to implement further recommendations from the Proust Review on Defence management reform.</p>

Commitment

Achievements

Development of a National Security Statement

Development of a comprehensive National Security Statement has commenced. The document will clearly state the strategic rationale for each of Australia's security, intelligence and related agencies.

Homeland and Border Security Review

A Homeland and Border Security Review was announced by the Prime Minister on 22 February 2008. The review is part of the Government's commitment to carefully examine the need for change in Australia's counter-terrorism, homeland and border security arrangements. The Review will consider the roles, responsibilities and functions of departments and agencies and consider possible changes to optimise the coordination and effectiveness of our counter-terrorism, homeland and border security efforts. Mr Ric Smith AO PSM will conduct the Review, which will report by 30 June 2008.

Closure of the offshore processing centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea

There are no more people being processed at the Offshore Processing Centre (OPC) in Nauru following the arrival in Australia on 8 February 2008 of the last of the refugees held on Nauru. The Government is in discussions with the Nauruan Government regarding the closure of the centre. Discussions regarding closure of the Manus OPC have also commenced.

The asylum claims of future unauthorised boat arrivals will be processed on Christmas Island. With the opening of a new immigration detention centre built by the previous government, Christmas Island will soon have an increased capacity for offshore processing. Australia will continue to honour its commitment to a generous aid and capacity development program for Nauru and Papua New Guinea.

New initiatives aimed at strengthening immigration cooperation between Australia and the Republic of Indonesia

On 17 January the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator the Hon Chris Evans, and the Minister of Law and Human Rights for Indonesia, Mr Andi Mattalatta, held talks in Jakarta. Following the meeting, the Ministers jointly announced new initiatives aimed at strengthening immigration cooperation between Australia and Indonesia. The initiatives include English language training for Indonesian immigration officers, the placement of a native English language speaker from Australia at the Ministry for Law and Human Rights training academy and a program of immigration data analysis and reporting training.

Action to counter Japanese 'scientific whaling'

Australia led the largest international diplomatic protest of its kind against Japan's 'scientific whaling' programme in Tokyo on 21 December 2007. The Government has been monitoring Japan's whaling fleet using the Customs vessel, the Oceanic Viking. The purpose of the surveillance has been to obtain photographic and video material for use in potential international legal action to bring an end to Japan's 'scientific whaling' program.

Comprehensive review of Australia's export policies and programs

The Government announced the review on 21 February 2008. The review will assist the Government to assess the challenges facing export and trade policy and to develop a strategic, whole of government approach to advancing Australia's international economic and commercial interests. The review is being chaired by Dr David Mortimer AO.

Commitment

Achievements

Increase financial support for Veterans

The Government introduced legislation on 14 February 2008, to deliver the election commitment to increase the utilities allowance and the seniors' concession allowance to \$500 a year and the telephone allowance from \$88 to \$132 a year for those with a home internet connection. Subject to passage of the legislation, the first payment of the increased utilities and seniors' concession allowances will be made from 20 March 2008.

Provide \$160,000 to help preserve the Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial in Ballarat

The Government announced the \$160,000 funding on 3 February 2008.

Provide \$5 million to ex-service organisations to purchase computers and other equipment, to support their role helping veterans

The Government announced on 11 February 2008, that the extra \$5 million had been made available to ex-service organisations through the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) program administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The funds are for capital purchases such as computers, software, printers and internet access.