

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Within a tight fiscal environment, the Commonwealth is continuing to work in partnership with the States and Territories to implement broad-ranging reforms driven by the overarching goal of enhancing the wellbeing of all Australians. This is seen in an agenda which currently embraces areas such as healthcare, disabilities, skills, education, Indigenous support in the Northern Territory and the adequacy of Australia's economic and social infrastructure.
- The Commonwealth will continue to invest in healthcare across a range of initiatives including major investments to support the implementation of the *National Health Reform Agreement*, contributions to support mental health and funding for regional areas from the Health and Hospitals Fund.
- As part of this Budget, the Commonwealth will provide funding to the States and Territories to provide treatment for those on public dental waiting lists, forming part of the Commonwealth's dental health package.
- To achieve a highly skilled and productive workforce, the Commonwealth, in partnership with the States and Territories, will be implementing key reforms within the vocational and education training system, to enhance training outcomes.
- The Commonwealth will also continue to provide substantial financial support to the States and Territories for improved outcomes in education. This includes support for new initiatives that will reward quality teachers and school leaders in Australia, increase the capacity of schools to make decisions at a local level, and reward jurisdictions for the achievement of nationally significant reforms.
- The Commonwealth is also continuing its commitment to support Indigenous Australians with the announcement of the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory initiative. As part of this Budget, substantial funding will be provided over ten years to address significant levels of Indigenous disadvantage and drive fundamental change over a sustained period.
- Continuing to invest in critical infrastructure will remain a key priority in this Budget, with substantial contributions from the Commonwealth to the States and Territories, to enhance Australia's future productivity and prosperity, and spread the benefits of the mining boom into regional Australia. Funding to reward jurisdictions for regulatory reforms and support for communities affected by natural disasters in recent years are also priorities in this Budget.
- In 2012-13, the Commonwealth will provide the States with \$90.4 billion in payments for specific purposes and general revenue assistance. This contribution represents approximately 24.0 per cent of total Commonwealth expenditure.

