

PREFACE

The Government's Social Justice Directions Statement, released in October 1996, outlined our broad approach to social justice and contained strategies to promote a fairer community in New South Wales. We said then that the fundamental test for the Government at the end of its first term was whether New South Wales had become a fairer community.

Good economic outcomes pay for and help promote good social outcomes. Employment in particular underpins social well-being. Equally, a strong economy is based on quality public and social infrastructure: quality education; quality public transport; quality health and social services and safer communities.

The 1997-98 Budget provides further tangible evidence of the Government's commitment to social justice and a fairer community. We have again provided a major increase in health funding in recognition of the critical importance of health concerns for all sections of the community. Consolidated fund contributions to health payments have now been increased by almost a quarter since we were elected.

The 1997-98 Social Justice Budget Statement includes specific initiatives which will lead to better health outcomes for Aboriginal people, young people, people with a mental illness, women and rural and regional communities.

The Government has also rightfully given a high priority to the protection of children. We have established joint Police/Community Services investigation teams to effectively investigate allegations of criminal child abuse while supporting the child sensitively and unintrusively, and have boosted the monitoring, supervision and support of children in substitute care. An Office of Children and Young People has also been created in The Cabinet Office to better tackle the issues facing children and young people and to coordinate the services they require. These initiatives anticipate the recommendations of the Wood Royal Commission relating to the protection and care of children.

The New South Wales Government has made a commitment to match Commonwealth growth funding for the Home and Community Care Program to ensure better access to home and community care services for people with disabilities and frail older people. The 1997-98 Budget also delivers closer scrutiny of the standard of care provided to people who live in institutions, better access to justice through extra funding to alleviate court delays, and funding to improve the literacy levels of disadvantaged young people.

As in previous Statements, the 1997-98 Social Justice Budget Statement reports on the outcomes from last year's Budget, which include significant achievements in terms of the Government's social justice priorities. Chief amongst these are: real increases in services for disadvantaged areas; the development of community health posts in isolated Aboriginal communities; and extra funding to enhance access to justice. The Government's emphasis on intervening early in cases of social disadvantage is evident in a number of areas and most particularly in the provision of education and training programs which improve the literacy, numeracy and self esteem of disadvantaged young people. Underlying the 1996-97 Budget outcomes is our core commitment to assist those who are most in need.

Commonwealth cuts to Specific Purpose Payments for health and housing have impacted on the New South Wales Government's capacity to build strong and viable public health and social housing systems. In this environment, it is difficult for state governments to fulfil all of the social policy obligations we would like to pursue. However, the social justice initiatives and the achievements reported in the 1997-98 Social Justice Budget Statement show how our Government is building a fairer community in New South Wales in spite of these constraints. We commend the Statement to you.

Bob Carr
Premier

Andrew Refshauge
Deputy Premier

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social Justice in New South Wales

Social justice is one of the New South Wales Labor Government's four key themes, along with its commitments to economic development, environmental protection and financial responsibility. The Government's objective is to enhance the well-being of the community through developing and implementing all of its policies in line with these four themes, as interdependent and mutually reinforcing policies.

The New South Wales Government's vision of social justice means the people of New South Wales getting a fair go at the opportunities of life that should be open to all and a fair share of the resources which the Government manages on their behalf. It also means people having a fair say, informed by accurate information, about the shape of their own and the State's future.

The Government's social justice strategy is based around the four related principles of equity, access, participation and rights. The ways and areas in which the Government acts on these principles must correspond to people's needs and aspirations, especially those who are on low incomes, new to this country, caring for children in difficult circumstances, or living with ill health or disability.

The coordination, development and implementation of the Government's social justice policies and strategies is overseen by the Cabinet Committee on Social Justice, chaired by the Deputy Premier. The Cabinet Committee is one way of building coordinated social policy across Government and monitoring its effectiveness.

The Government's main source of community advice on major and strategic social justice issues is the Social Justice Reference Group. The Reference Group reports to the Premier through the Deputy Premier on matters referred to it by the Government.

Purpose of the Social Justice Budget Statement

The Social Justice Budget Statement is produced annually with the general budget papers. It reflects the major social justice components of the Budget and is not an exhaustive description of every Government initiative relating to social justice. The Statement also contains a report on the commitments of the previous year's budget.

The initiatives and achievements described in this Social Justice Budget Statement closely relate to both the Government's social justice principles and to the central objectives of the Government's social justice strategy. These are to:

- promote a more inclusive community;
- care for families and communities;
- educate for the future; improve the justice system; and
- create an environment where everyone can take an active role.

2. SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVES FOR 1997-98

The New South Wales Government's social justice initiatives for 1997-98 are presented in sections focusing on key social justice areas. They do not form an exhaustive list of all the social justice programs undertaken by the New South Wales Government. Rather, they reflect the major social justice components of the 1997-98 Budget.

PROMOTING HEALTH

The New South Wales Government is ensuring that people have better health, fairer access to comprehensive health services and improved quality of care through a range of initiatives which both increase the quality of individual health care services and raise the health status of communities.

The total budget payment (recurrent and capital) for health in 1997-98 is **\$6.061 billion**, which represents an increase of **\$226 million** on last year's budget. This Government has increased funding on health by **\$914 million** since its election, a massive increase of **23%** in nominal terms.

The Budget will enable progress to be made in the achievement of equity of access to health services in New South Wales. All health services will benefit from the increased funding but particular emphasis will be given to the population growth areas of South Western Sydney and outer Western Sydney, the Central Coast and the North Coast.

Funding for capital works in 1997-98 will be \$471 million. Major new projects include:

- **the Macarthur Sector Strategy (\$79 million):** upgrading Campbelltown Hospital, redeveloping Camden Hospital, building two new community health centres, and other community health facilities;
- **major redevelopment of Nepean hospital (\$59 million),** including: a new Women and Children's Health building, improvements in ward accommodation, intensive care and pathology, and provision of teaching facilities;
- **improvements in the efficiency and functionality of Tweed Heads Hospital (\$25 million);** and
- **capital upgrading of State Government nursing homes** to meet contemporary standards and agreed outcomes (**\$75 million**).

Funding has also been provided in 1997-98 for ongoing projects, such as:

- redevelopment of Blacktown Hospital to provide 364 beds, and refurbishment works at Mt Druitt Hospital (\$93 million); and
- new or replacement hospitals at Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Lithgow and West Wyalong (\$102 million);
- upgrading the Blue Mountains Hospital (\$4.4 million);
- redeveloping Broken Hill Hospital to provide a new 85 bed hospital on the existing site (\$27.5 million total);
- upgrading Calvary Hospital for new aged and rehabilitation services (\$17 million);
- St Vincent's Hospital redevelopment (\$96 million); and
- redevelopment of the hospitals in the Central Sydney Area (\$26.4 million).

A **Rural Health Support Unit** has been established in Grafton to identify statewide rural health issues and develop common responses. **1997-98 funding of \$215,000** will:

- assist Rural Health Service Boards and CEOs to establish Health Councils;
- develop relevant training for Health Council members and health service staff;

- assist New South Wales Health in the development of rural health policies and plans and advise on health service delivery;
- liaise with peak rural health organisations; and
- identify grant sources for rural communities and assist with the brokering of research into specific rural health service issues.

Twelve telemedicine pilot projects are being trialed in New South Wales. The projects use a high speed digital telecommunication network to transmit audio and visual images between health facilities. The projects will enhance the exchange of information, allow for the provision of advice and second opinions and enable rural facilities to access counselling and education programs. Patients benefit from the ability to access specialists without the need to travel large distances from home. **\$700,000 will be provided in 1997-98** to support this initiative.

\$750,000 will be provided on an annual basis to pilot innovative service delivery models in community health and a further **\$1.5 million annually for community health nurses in key priority areas** including Aboriginal health, mental health and aged care.

\$1.8 million will be provided in 1997-98 as part of the five year program to achieve a **sustainable reduction in the concentration of lead** in current and future generations of children living in Broken Hill.

An additional \$1 million on an annual basis will be provided to relieve waiting times for dentures in areas of high need.

Funding for mental health was increased by \$7 million in 1996-97 (\$10 million annually thereafter) and **a further \$7 million annually will be provided in 1997-98.** Funds are being directed to program areas which address the Government's mental health policy goals in the context of social justice, including suicide prevention, adolescent depression intervention, and specialist mental health services for children and young people (including those of culturally diverse backgrounds).

STRENGTHENING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

This year's Budget again reflects the high priority the Government places on education and training, with increased funding and a broad range of initiatives to improve educational opportunities and outcomes throughout the State.

The total budget payment (recurrent and capital) for education and training in 1997-98 is \$5.435 billion, which represents an increase of \$189 million on last year's budget. With this year's increase, education and training funding since the election of the Government in 1995 has increased by \$650 million.

The number of additional teachers to be funded in 1997-98 as part of the Government's initiatives will be **249.5 effective full time (EFT) teaching staff**. This includes the technology initiative computer coordinators and computer training staff and brings the total number of additional teachers appointed since 1995 to 776.

Total current payments of **\$47.1 million** will be spent in 1997-98 through the socio-economic disadvantaged program. This includes \$21.4 million from the Commonwealth Disadvantaged Schools Program which will be utilised to improve literacy levels for disadvantaged young people in 480 targeted schools.

A total of **\$7.022 million has been allocated in 1997-98 to fund a range of special programs which assist disadvantaged young people** by improving their literacy, numeracy and self-esteem. The programs include the Helping Early Leavers, Circuit Breaker, Time Out and Koori Youth programs.

In 1997-98, over **\$5.1 million is being provided for the Community Languages Initiative**, which includes 18 Community Language teacher positions to be allocated in Term 1, 1998.

\$1 million has been provided for drug and alcohol education programs to strengthen drug education in schools, improve coordination for drug education services to schools and improve access to support at school for students at risk of drug abuse.

The Government's technology initiative in 1997-98 will total some **\$64.3 million**. Every school (2222) in New South Wales was connected to the Internet by the end of 1996. This year's funding will make **student access to the Internet and other technology for enhanced learning fairer**.

Some \$4.6 million will be provided for programs which promote and develop access to education and training for groups in the community which are under-represented in vocational education and training. Programs include the Mature Workers Program, which provides education, training and employment assistance to older people, and the New South Wales Apprenticeships for People with Disabilities.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

The New South Wales Government has enhanced its commitment to the protection of children from abuse and neglect and the encouragement and support of children and young people.

The total recurrent payments for the Department of Community Services in 1997-98 is estimated at \$495 million. This Government has increased spending on community services by \$78 million over the period of its term.

The establishment of an Office of Children and Young People within The Cabinet Office represents a significant commitment by this Government to improve the quality of services for children and young people. The role of the Office will be to oversee the development and coordination of Government policies for children and young people and ensure that

Government agencies work together effectively to provide the best possible services for children and young people. The Office will also be a point of access for children and young people to explain their needs to Government.

\$450,000 has been allocated to the Child Protection Council to provide training, primarily for staff of non-government organisations, to implement the Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention.

The Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service revealed inadequacies in the processes for investigating and prosecuting perpetrators of child abuse. The Government has allocated **\$6.4 million in 1997-98 to the Department of Community Services and the New South Wales Police Service to establish and operate eight Joint Investigation Teams**. The co-located Teams will work together to investigate notifications of criminal child abuse. This approach will provide a more effective investigative response and a more sensitive process for clients. Services for physically and emotionally abused or neglected children will also be established in all Area Health Services.

Additional funding of **\$20 million over three years from 1997-98 is being provided to improve the quality and level of support to children living in substitute care arrangements**. The **\$4 million allocated for 1997-98** includes \$1.5 million to provide innovative services for children with high support needs by maintaining them in their own communities and \$1 million for further development of new service models for children with high support needs throughout the State.

An additional \$103,000 per year will be provided from 1997-98 to establish a Reunion and Information Register for people separated by adoption action. A further \$123,000 will be spent in 1997-98 to research and produce an index of care records held by government and non-government agencies in New South Wales, preserve substitute care records and provide access to records for people affected by adoption.

\$250,000 per annum will be provided to fund additional staff in the Community Services Commission handling complaints and reviews, and to increase the number of visits undertaken by Community Visitors, who, as part of their role, visit and advocate for children and young people living in full-time care of a community service funded by the Minister. This increase in funding will help ensure that living conditions are maintained at an appropriate standard and that the specific needs of individuals are being properly met.

The Government is enhancing rural child protection services. **An additional \$300,000 per annum will be allocated for the appointment of four Senior Casework Specialists to work in western New South Wales**. The caseworkers, to be located in the Bourke, Broken Hill, Parkes and Griffith regions, will provide professional supervision and casework leadership to front line staff working with high need families and children at risk.

In 1997-98, \$4.75 million in capital expenditure will be provided to increase the number of child care places for children under three and to establish new child care places in rural New South Wales. An additional \$660,000 has also been allocated to the Family Initiative Fund to provide child care and pre-school services for children aged 0-5 years who are at risk.

Ongoing initiatives, announced in the 1996-97 Budget, with continuing funding in 1997-98 include:

- provision of \$300,000 per annum to assist the State-wide Network For Young People in Care to advocate for children in care and involve them in the decisions which affect them;

- \$300,000 per annum to expand health services to respond to physical and/or emotional abuse and neglect of children;
- \$60,000 to fund for a second year a Youth Officer in the Ombudsman's Office to implement programs to improve access to, and awareness of, the Ombudsman's Office among young people;
- \$300,000 annually to provide stronger peer support and improved information services for foster carers in New South Wales;
- \$2 million annually for family support initiatives, which include the piloting of Intensive Family Based Services in two Areas and a Family Initiative Fund which is used to purchase goods or services, or provide financial assistance, to families in need;
- increase in Standard Age Related Fostering Allowance for children aged 12 to 17 years (\$3.2 million per annum); and
- \$750,000 for the development of a system of service standards, monitoring and accreditation of substitute care services.

PROVIDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND A SAFE COMMUNITY

The Government continues to demonstrate its commitment to improving the administration of justice, including increasing the productivity of the court system, enhancing the standard of correctional facilities, seeking alternatives to incarceration for minor offences, finding ways to tackle the causes of crime and to protect the community from criminal activity.

Through the **\$1.156 million Safer Communities Development Program**, the New South Wales Government and local governments will cooperate in developing local crime prevention strategies.

\$1 million has been provided in 1997-98 to transfer part of the Supreme Court's backlog of personal injury matters to the District Court, which will allow these matters to be dealt with expeditiously and at a lower unit cost to the New South Wales taxpayer.

\$934,000 has been allocated in 1997-98 to continue the use of acting judges during vacations in the District Court (Civil Jurisdiction) **to reduce the backlog of cases.**

\$1.288 million has been provided to maintain the appointment of three judges and support staff to run a special program to reduce backlog matters in the Common Law Division of the Supreme Court.

An additional \$600,000 per annum has been provided for the employment of nine extra staff (including a specialist domestic violence witness assistance coordinator) to expand the Witness Assistance Service to all regional offices of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The Government will also provide **\$6.6 million over three years (1997-2000) to fund the innovative Youth Justice Conferencing Scheme.** Non-serious juvenile offenders will be brought face to face with their victim through the conferencing process so that the offender will understand the impact of their crime on the victim and be able to take responsibility for that crime. The conference will be able to impose a range of sanctions, including the offender making restitution to the victim. The Youth Justice Conferencing Scheme will also divert young offenders from court contact and juvenile detention, encouraging their reintegration into the community.

\$5.912 million will be provided for reforms to juvenile justice community based support services. The funding will consolidate recently introduced post release support schemes, the Aboriginal Mentor Scheme, a mentor scheme for juveniles of non-English speaking background including Chinese, Indo-chinese and Arabic, and the statewide expansion of the Safehaven alternative placement program for young offenders who cannot live with their parents or families.

In 1997-98 an additional \$1 million will be spent by the Department of Corrective Services on programs for indigenous inmates. This will fund the implementation of the 1996-98 Indigenous Offenders Action Plan which will involve Aboriginal people in the planning and implementation of policies and programs to reduce the rate of imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, increase the number of indigenous staff employed in the correctional system and meet the special needs of indigenous inmates in areas such as custodial health and welfare, education and vocational training, drug and alcohol programs and pre-release programs.

In 1997-98, \$1.5 million over three years has been provided for 10 additional Probation and Parole officers to handle increases in pre-sentence, parole, probation and community services work.

\$1.250 million will be provided in 1997-98 to continue the installation of Closed Circuit Television facilities in Courts throughout the State, including children's courts.

The Judicial Commission will receive an **additional \$70,000 per annum over three years (1997-2000) to enhance its capacity to investigate complaints against judicial officers.**

The Government has allocated approximately **\$21 million in 1997-98 for the development of two new juvenile detention facilities and the renovation of existing facilities** as part of its four year plan to eliminate substandard accommodation. This capital works program will cater for increased demand for detention centre accommodation, separate serious juvenile offenders from less serious offenders, and redistribute accommodation capacity more equitably across New South Wales, improving the rehabilitation prospects of offenders and reducing transport costs for families.

The redevelopment of Long Bay Correctional Complex will commence in 1997-98 and a series of specially designed intensive rehabilitation programs will commence. An amount of **\$1 million** will be made available to implement the Indigenous Action Plan. During the year, **\$2.7 million will be spent on capital works at Long Bay, while \$4.386 million will be provided to run the innovative Sex Offenders Program** which aims to alter the behaviour of sex offenders. **The Therapeutic Drug and Alcohol Program, which aims to rehabilitate drug and alcohol dependent prisoners, will start in 1997-98 with an operating budget of \$660,000.**

Periodic Detention Centres at Bathurst and Broken Hill will be completed and operational in 1997-98. These PDCs will provide alternatives to full-time incarceration for minor offenders, especially for the large indigenous communities of western New South Wales. In 1997-98, **\$780,000 will be spent on the capital program at Bathurst and \$288,000 on operating costs, while \$492,000 will be spent on the capital program at Broken Hill and \$323,000 on operating costs.**

Special crisis management centres at Bathurst, Mulawa and Cessnock correctional centres will provide special care, intensive supervision and behaviour modification programs for indigenous inmates, prisoners with mental illness and women prisoners. **In 1997-98, \$2.164 million will be spent on capital works and \$1.745 million on operating costs.**

\$1 million will be spent in 1997-98 on a capital works program at Mulawa which will dramatically improve accommodation for prisoners in segregation and inmates on protection. A special detoxification unit will also be built at Mulawa to treat alcohol and drug dependent inmates.

SUPPORTING RURAL AND REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

Almost a quarter of the people of New South Wales live outside the major cities in a range of regional centres, coastal cities, small towns and remote communities. The New South Wales Government recognises that rural and regional communities have complex needs, which must be properly addressed by Government.

In August 1996 the Premier announced that Government departments would be required to provide Rural Communities Impact Statements on decisions affecting rural communities. In March 1997, the Government released guidelines for the preparation of Rural Communities Impact Statements (RCIS) which must now accompany all submissions for Cabinet consideration. It is also expected that agencies will accept the RCIS process as an aspect of best practice management and adopt it as an integral part of their internal decision-making.

The Rural Communities Consultative Council, supported by New South Wales Agriculture's Office of Rural Communities has been created to strengthen the relationship between Government and the rural and regional communities. The Council is charged with developing a Rural Social Justice Strategy by August 1997.

Rural health initiatives have been noted in the Health section above.

A range of programs have been developed to assist rural and regional communities in gaining access to government services.

The **Regional Coordination Program** encourages better use of government services by reducing overlap and duplication, and so enhancing outcomes people in rural and regional areas. The Program now covers all of New South Wales apart from most of the Sydney Metropolitan area. Annual funding of **\$1.65 million has been allocated for the Program from 1997-98.**

The **Government Access Program** is a two year program to pilot the implementation of an integrated approach to service delivery in rural and remote areas. Eight Government Access Centres in Western and Northern rural New South Wales have been approved as sites to provide a "one-stop shop" for government services. **The total cost of the two year pilot (1997-1999) is estimated to be \$ 1.67 million.**

The existing Commonwealth program of agriculture business advisers is due to end in June 1997. The New South Wales Government will extend and expand the program to **assist New South Wales farmers diversify into new areas of production.** Six new export adviser positions will also be funded to **help rural businesses gain access to overseas markets.** **The total funding for these initiatives in 1997-98 is \$500,000.**

\$1.217 million will be provided in 1997-98 in special grants, technical support, research and education to support land management practices that reduce drought impacts.

The Government recognises that employment is intimately linked with social well-being. The Government has helped create an economic climate that has encouraged large scale investments in rural New South Wales with the potential to create up to 10,000 jobs.

Forestry policy remains a major challenge for the Government. Through the Resource and Conservation Assessment Council process, the Government has set out a detailed plan to balance conservation and industry needs. Under the **Structural Adjustment Package, an estimated \$32 million will be provided in 1997-98 to retrain and relocate affected timber workers and restructure the industry.** **\$21.4 million will also be provided in 1997-98 to increase the rate of expansion of native timber hardwood plantations.**

ENHANCING SOCIAL HOUSING

Housing assistance is principally funded through the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. Under the current 1996-97 Agreement, **New South Wales will contribute an estimated \$136.7 million for 1997-98.** The Commonwealth has confirmed funding only until December 1997.

The New South Wales Housing Assistance Plan for 1996-97 to 1998-99 provided the strategic framework for housing assistance for the three year period. The directions outlined in the Plan will be pursued within the constraints of funding negotiations with the Commonwealth. The Plan will be delivered through public and community housing, assistance to private renters, and assistance to special needs groups including Aboriginal people and people with a disability. If only short-term Commonwealth funding continues, some programs, headleasing in particular, will need to be substantially recast.

The Government provides a range of social housing options to ensure access to appropriate and affordable housing for those in greatest need. The 1997-98 Capital Works Program for social housing will include **\$122.8 million** to be spent through the Office on Community Housing **on commencement of 806 new dwellings.**

The Government will spend **\$27.7 million on works in progress and new works for Aboriginal housing,** involving commencements of 149 dwellings, many through community organisations. **Aboriginal housing stock will also be upgraded at a cost of \$3 million.**

Despite the difficulties imposed by the Commonwealth Government, New South Wales remains firmly committed to a strong and viable social housing system. **In 1997-98, \$180.2 million will be spent by the Department of Housing on 1,294 units of accommodation,** including 63 units of supported accommodation, and **\$141 million on upgrading of stock and improvements to large housing estates.**

The Government has continued its commitment to the Neighbourhood Improvement Program by allocating \$35 million in the 1997-98 Budget. An allocation of \$90 million will also be made to upgrade the existing public housing stock of approximately 130,000 dwellings to acceptable community standards and \$16 million, additional to Department of Housing internal revenues, has been allocated for maintenance.

The provision of supported accommodation for special needs groups remains a priority of the New South Wales Government. **The Supported Housing Program provides supported housing for people with high needs. In 1997-98 the Program will be allocated \$12.9 million.** In addition, **the Mental Health Supported Housing Program will be allocated \$3 million.**

The size and nature of the social housing stock will be expanded through headleasing from the private sector. A target of 1,000 new rental properties has been set for 1997-98, subject to continuing Commonwealth funds. **The Government will provide \$8.5 million to the Department of Housing and \$19.7 million to community housing organisations to obtain leased properties to meet this target.**

In addition to capital works programs, a total of **\$22.1 million is allocated to provide financial assistance to allow eligible low income renters, including those with special needs such as disabilities and HIV/AIDS, to secure affordable housing in the private rental market.**

MEETING THE NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

The Government has reaffirmed its commitment to the goals and processes of reconciliation with Aboriginal people. The Government acknowledges the need to redress past practices which have adversely impacted on Aboriginal people.

There are already a number of programs in place, across a wide range of portfolio areas, to respond to the particular problems facing Aboriginal people and communities. **The Government will publish, by August 1997, a statement on the overall approach it will be taking to meet its responsibilities and duties to Aboriginal people.** A new Aboriginal Reference Group will provide advice to the New South Wales Government on Aboriginal affairs matters of cross-portfolio significance including the development of the statement.

Expenditure on Aboriginal health services will increase by \$6.2 million to a projected \$18.1 million in 1997-98. The Government will continue its commitment to improving the health status of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the Partnership Agreement with the Aboriginal Health Resource Cooperative, which ensures greater community participation in the development of health services and programs. Implementation of the National Aboriginal Health Strategy will include a cultural awareness package for the New South Wales health system and an emphasis on implementing strategies to improve mental health and the range of drug and alcohol services to Aboriginal people. In addition, the Environmental Health and Ear Infection projects initiated in 1996-97 will be continued and the Aboriginal Family Health Strategy and Aboriginal Local and State Health strategic plans will be developed.

The **Aboriginal Women's Legal Advocacy Centre** has been established to represent women who are victims of violence and sexual assault. The Centre also provides community education, training, and resources to community groups to increase understanding of the impact of legal issues on Aboriginal women and children. **1997-98 funding for the Centre is \$200,000.**

To expedite the clearance of land claims under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983*, the Government has been endeavouring to finalise all new claims within a maximum of twelve months from the date of lodgment.

A program directed specifically towards clearing older claims has been implemented. **In order to further accelerate the clearance of older claims and claims generally, the Government has allocated an additional \$250,000 per annum over three years from 1997-98.**

\$400,000 per annum in recurrent funding has been allocated for additional staff in the Department of Land and Water Conservation's Native Titles Branch to deal with Aboriginal land claims lodged under the Commonwealth Native Title Act.

In 1997-98, the Land and Water Conservation portfolio will **develop protocols to facilitate effective participation of the Aboriginal community in natural resource management.** The protocols are to be completed by 30 June 1998. **Total funding for the project is \$125,000.**

The Aboriginal Environmental Health Infrastructure project co-ordinates funds for relevant communities under programs such as the Tripartite Housing and Infrastructure (TRIP) Program. TRIP is a tripartite initiative over three years between the New South Wales Government, ATSIC and the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council designed to respond to the housing needs of 45 former reserves in New South Wales, as well as providing training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.

The Aboriginal education budget for 1997-98 will total almost **\$20 million in recurrent payments**. Included within the Aboriginal education budget is **the Indigenous Educational Strategic Initiatives Plan amounting to \$10.3 million**. Under this program, support will be maintained for the implementation of the Aboriginal Education Policy. Over five hundred schools will participate in intensive training to address the priority areas of literacy, numeracy, indigenous employment, educational outcomes and culturally inclusive curricula. The Policy promotes the achievements of Aboriginal students and educates all students about Aboriginal Australia.

A total of **\$3.15 million** will be spent by the Department of Training and Education Coordination in 1997-98 **to improve access of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to education and training through employment**.

The introduction of the Youth Justice Conferencing Scheme will divert Aboriginal juvenile offenders accused of less serious offences from court contact and juvenile detention and allow for the handling of their cases to take place in a more culturally sensitive manner. A respected member of the Aboriginal community may attend, and give relevant cultural and other advice to the conference. Likewise, a respected member of the Aboriginal community will be able to attend the cautioning of Aboriginal juvenile offenders and may, where appropriate, issue the caution in place of a police officer.

CARING FOR OLDER PEOPLE AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Government created the Ageing and Disability Department in 1995 to provide a clear focus to the Government's commitment to assist, accommodate and support people with disabilities and older people, and to maintain their independence and participation in the community.

Payments by the Ageing and Disability Department in 1997-98 are estimated to total \$643 million, which represents an increase of \$13 million on 1996-97.

The Home and Community Care (HACC) program provides a range of home and community care services to frail older people, people with disabilities and their carers. These services include home nursing, home care, delivered meals, day and respite care, transport services and carer information and counselling services. **In 1997-98, an additional \$12.3 million per annum has been provided for maintenance and growth in the HACC program.**

\$250,000 per annum will be provided to fund additional staff in the Community Services Commission handling complaints and reviews, and to increase the number of visits undertaken by Community Visitors. Community Visitors, as part of their role, visit and advocate for older people and people with disabilities who are living in Government or non-government services funded by the Minister. This increase in funding will help ensure that living conditions are maintained and that people's needs are being properly met.

In 1997-98, \$200,000 will be provided to the Centre for Developmental Disability Studies, which provides leadership in research, teaching and practice that will inform and improve the provision of services to people who have a developmental disability and their families and carers. The Centre has an emphasis on the practical application of information with technical assistance and advice, covering health, community support, accommodation and employment given directly to organisations and individuals.

From 1997-98, recurrent funding of \$4.5 million will be provided to expand services focusing on children with a disability, including respite care, early intervention services, out of school hours projects and therapy services. There will also be \$1.6 million in capital grants provided for this purpose in 1997-98.

The following initiatives will be funded in 1997-98 to promote the participation in sport for people with disabilities:

- **\$200,000 will be provided in 1997-98** to enable elite athletes with disabilities to increase their participation in sporting activities through the provision of grants **under the High Performance Disabled Sport Support Program and Disabled Talented Athlete Program;**
- **17 scholarships will be funded for athletes with disabilities to attend the New South Wales Institute of Sport (\$70,000); and**
- **\$150,000 will be provided to support the Sports Council for the Disabled.**

Funding of \$40,000 has been allocated for New South Wales Fisheries to run fishing clinics for people with disabilities in 1997-98. The clinics allow people with disabilities to take part in fishing activities and to learn about the stewardship of resources.

\$4 million was allocated over three years (1996-1999) to fund a range of aged care initiatives, including demonstration projects providing improved access for older people to public transport (and hence to health, recreational and other services) and community care demonstration projects which operate to improve the links between health and community services.

PROMOTING DIVERSITY

The New South Wales Government recognises the diversity of the New South Wales population as the State's greatest asset and has worked to promote harmony within the community and assist those who experience disadvantage because of their ethnicity.

Carnivale is a significant occasion for the New South Wales community to celebrate its cultural diversity. In 1997-98, the Government has allocated **an additional \$600,000 over three years for Carnivale.**

Community grants are one of the principal mechanisms by which the Government supports ethnic communities. From 1997-98, \$300,000 in additional funding over three years will provide a boost to these community grants.

Access to services relies upon the ability to communicate effectively. **\$4.6 million will be provided in 1997-98 for interpreter and translation services.** In addition, the Government has specifically provided **\$1.8 million over three years for the 24 hour emergency interpreter and translation service.**

Total current payments of **\$70.2 million will be included in the Department of School Education's 1997-98 budget under the Non English Speaking Background program.** In addition, funding of **\$3.3 million will be provided in 1997-98 to implement the Multicultural Education Plan 1998-2001.** These programs include support for non-English speaking background students in English language and literacy; assistance to schools in communicating with students' parents and communities; and support for teachers in their efforts to counter racism through training and development opportunities.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF WOMEN

The Department for Women has focussed on a whole of Government approach to women's issues and has developed a New South Wales Government Action Plan for Women which focuses on six major areas which are to be tackled across Government. These are:

- reducing violence against women;
- promoting workplaces that are equitable, safe and responsive to all aspects of women's lives;
- maximising the interests of women in micro-economic reform;
- promoting the position of women in all aspects of society;
- promoting access to and successful outcomes for women in all parts of the education and training system; and
- improving the health and quality of life of women in New South Wales.

In July 1996 the Premier announced the establishment of the New South Wales Council on Violence Against Women to provide advice to the Government on strategies to reduce violence against women. The Council will have nine community representatives as well as senior representatives from New South Wales Government agencies.

The Council will be supported by the **Violence Against Women Unit**, established in the Attorney General's Department, and a network of 17 Regional Coordinators located across the State. In 1997-98, **\$1.658 million in funding will be provided for this initiative.**

The Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program provides support, legal representation, information and referrals to women subjected to domestic violence. **\$4.2 million was provided in 1996-97 over three years (1996-1999) to expand and improve the program, with \$1.44 million to be provided in 1997-98.**

The Government funds many programs of interest to women. A number of major examples are listed below.

Enhanced programs will be provided in 1997-98 for **cervical cancer screening (\$1.7 million)** and **breast cancer screening (\$12.4 million).**

\$550,000 will be allocated to improve the planning, management and delivery of services which address violence against women.

The Government will commit **\$250,000 to support further implementation of the Department of School Education Gender Equity Strategy** through a pilot program to integrate gender equity in mainstream school planning processes.

The Government has provided \$100,000 in 1997-98 for grants to the Working Women's Centre to fund advisory and advocacy services. Assistance will be directed to issues such as unfair dismissal, workers' compensation and service delivery to women from non-English speaking backgrounds and women in rural areas.

Nearly \$5 million will be spent on capital works at Emu Plains Correctional Centre in 1997-98. A budget of \$4 million has been allocated to construct facilities to cater for mothers with babies. In addition, \$831,000 will be spent on construction of a women's **Periodic Detention Centre** at Emu Plains which will provide alternatives to full-time incarceration for minor offenders.

In 1997-98 additional funding of \$250,000 per annum has been provided to the Women's Sports Unit to enhance the opportunities for women to participate in sport and recreation. **\$100,000 has also been allocated for a Sports Administration and Travel Scholarship** to enable talented women to become senior sports administrators. **The Role Model Program for the Girls in Schools program will receive \$75,000 per annum from 1997-98** to encourage young women to participate in sport and recreational activities.

3. OUTCOMES OF 1996-97 BUDGET INITIATIVES

Reporting on social justice outcomes from the previous year's budget commitments is an important feature of the Social Justice Budget Statement. It enables the New South Wales community to assess the Government's delivery of past budget announcements.

The 1996-97 Social Justice Budget Statement contained a wide range of initiatives, each of which is listed in the following tables in the order they appeared in the 1996-97 Statement.

In almost all cases the Government has implemented, or is well into the process of implementing, the initiatives outlined in the 1996-97 Social Justice Budget Statement.

One of the key initiatives in that Statement was the development of the Government's Social Justice Directions Statement, *Fair Go, Fair Share, Fair Say*, which was released in October 1996.

The Social Justice Directions Statement outlines programs and policies designed to achieve greater equity, better access, wider participation and strengthened individual rights across the New South Wales Government. Progress on the initiatives contained in the Social Justice Directions Statement is being monitored by the Cabinet Committee on Social Justice and the Social Justice Reference Group and it is expected that a public report on outcomes will be released in early to mid 1998. While there is some overlap, this present report on budget outcomes does not, in the main, deal with Social Justice Directions Statement initiatives.

The Government's 1996-97 Budget allocations have resourced significant capital works projects, including the commencement of a new hospital at Coffs Harbour, redevelopment and upgrading of hospitals at Broken Hill, Blue Mountains and Calvary, redevelopment of the Long Bay Correctional Complex, the construction of over 1400 new public housing dwellings, upgrades to existing public housing stock and the connection of every public school to the internet.

A fairer distribution of health resources was achieved through the allocation of additional funding to Area Health Services with the fewest resources and the provision of additional and growth funding for rural Area Health Services. Measures to help overcome the problems caused by child abuse have included the establishment of the Child Protection Enforcement Agency within the Police Service in July 1996, the installation of closed circuit television in 23 court houses in the first year of a three year program and increased field staff for child protection services.

Educational outcomes were enhanced in 1996-97 through the assistance provided to disadvantaged young people through education and training programs such as the Helping Early Leavers, Circuit Breaker and Disadvantaged Schools Program. Educational opportunities for Aboriginal students were also enhanced through the employment of 20 Aboriginal teachers, 126 Aboriginal education assistants and 3 Aboriginal education consultants under the Aboriginal Education Policy.

Recognising that poverty and financial crises can expose children to risk, the Government has provided funding for the purchase of services for, and the provision of material assistance to, families in need. This should reduce the need for later intervention. The review of the recruitment and screening of staff of the Department of Community Services, its funded services and other agencies involved in the care of children will help ensure that children are cared for in a safe and supportive environment. Screening of other Government staff with significant contact with children, including teachers, is also under review.

Rural communities have benefited from the funding provided by the New South Wales Government for regional drought initiatives under the joint Commonwealth-State Rural Partnership Program, additional allocations to rural Area Health Services and the establishment of 12 telemedicine pilot projects to enhance the exchange of information, allow for the provision of advice and second opinions and enable rural facilities to access counselling and education programs.

Increases in funding for the Home and Community Care Program will enhance home and community services for frail older people and people with disabilities and security has been upgraded with the recruitment of additional police officers in locations of highest need.

These achievements highlight the Government's commitment to its social justice aims. The following tables provide information on progress and outcomes for all initiatives outlined in the 1996-97 Social Justice Budget Statement.

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|--|---|
| <p><u>IMPLEMENTING HEALTH PRIORITIES</u></p> <p>\$42 million for major capital projects to commence in 1996-97.</p> | <p>Projects commenced include a new Coffs Harbour Hospital and redevelopment or upgrading at Broken Hill and the Blue Mountains. In addition, \$22m has been spent to expand information technology, \$9m on new medical technology and \$7.2m on upgrading and reorganising services in the Central Sydney area.</p> |
| <p>Additional funding to all Areas to ensure hospitals across New South Wales comply with benchmarks on waiting times for elective surgery and in emergency departments.</p> | <p>\$8.5 million was allocated in 1996-97 to 45 hospitals for initiatives to ensure compliance with benchmarks in emergency departments. Patients are assessed and a clinical judgement made on the optimal treatment time for their condition.</p> <p>The Department of Health monitors performance against agreed benchmarks. As at February 1997, 16 of the 20 Areas and hospitals were achieving over 90% of their target levels for timely admission of (booked) urgent and high priority patients.</p> |
| <p><u>Rural and Community Health</u></p> <p>New funding arrangements to achieve a more equitable distribution of health resources around the State.</p> | <p>Additional resources have been allocated towards Health Services in growth areas to build up their capacity. 1996-97 allocations and percentage increases in real terms over 1994-95 in key services are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Western AHS \$335 million (11.9%) • Illawarra AHS \$170 million (11.9%) • Hunter AHS \$351 million (6.9%) • Rural Areas \$876 million (5.5%) |
| <p>Develop a policy statement on community health during 1996-97.</p> | <p>The policy statement will be released for public comment in mid-1997.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|--|---|
| \$15 million additional funding during 1996-97 for rural Area Health Services. | Rural Areas were allocated an additional \$4 million in State-wide Services and \$11 million in growth funding. |
| Additional multi-purpose services will be established in rural centres. | Subject to final agreement with the Commonwealth an additional four services will be established at Warren, Tumbarumba, Dorrigo and Delegate. |
| Enhancement funding of \$2 million has been allocated to 12 trial telemedicine pilot projects. | <p>New South Wales Health has established 12 regionally-based telemedicine facilities on a trial basis. The projects enhance the exchange of information, allow for the provision of advice and second opinions and enable rural facilities to access counselling and education programs.</p> <p>The telemedicine services will also be trialed in two Aboriginal Medical Services and three New South Wales Correctional Centres. An interim evaluation of the trials is expected to be completed by the end of 1997, with a full evaluation by August 1998.</p> |
| \$2.153 million in 1996-97 as part of a 5 year program to achieve a sustainable reduction in the concentration of lead in current and future generations of children living in Broken Hill. | Regular blood lead monitoring of children under 5 revealed a lower number of children with a very high blood level. However, a much higher proportion of children had moderate levels. As a result a \$1.75 million program has focused on home visits to establish management strategies and public land remediation, and an audit of lead contamination has been conducted for all preschools and primary schools, nurseries and play centres. Average blood lead concentrations in Broken Hill children have fallen from 20 mcgr/dL in 1991 to 10.7 mcgr/dL in 1997. |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|---|---|
| <p><u>Aboriginal health</u></p> <p>Additional \$1 million will be provided in 1996-97 to key areas of Aboriginal health.</p> | <p>Three projects were undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the development of new approaches to the prevention, detection and treatment of otitis media (ear infection); • the development of a computerised information system to collect statistics on the health status of Aboriginal people; and • a Health Infrastructure Program to coordinate programs at community level. |
| <p>\$1.8 million in 1996-97 for capital projects, including the development of community health posts (CHP) in isolated Aboriginal communities.</p> | <p>Community health posts provide a range of services such as health education, self-help groups, accommodation for health workers, dentists and visiting doctors. Four projects have been completed: Awabakal, Tabulam Children's Centre, Orana Haven CHP and Griffith CHP.</p> |
| <p><u>Mental Health</u></p> <p>Additional funding of \$10 million will be provided to reduce the gaps and inadequacies in services for people with a mental illness.</p> | <p>\$7m recurrent funding was provided from December for 1996-97 with \$10m to be provided annually. Funds are being directed to suicide prevention, adolescent depression intervention, specialist mental health services for children and young people (including those of culturally diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds).</p> <p>Initiatives include the 'green card' scheme which guarantees direct access to support and help by the Mental Health Service for anyone who has been assessed to be at direct risk of suicide; the employment of a senior Aboriginal psychologist to develop and implement programs to improve mental health status for Aboriginal and young people in the New England area; and the establishment of mental health specialist support services for mentally ill former boarding house residents in the Hunter, Illawarra and Western Sydney areas.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|---|--|
| <p>The Government's suicide prevention strategy will be completed in 1996.</p> | <p>The draft strategy will be released for comment by the end of April 1997 and a final strategy completed by the end of June 1997.</p> <p>Major elements of the strategy, such as a stocktake of current programs and a newly revised Suicide Prevention Policy Circular are to be released by 30 June 1997.</p> |
| <p><u>SUPPORTING CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES</u></p> <p>Install closed circuit television systems over the next three years, at a cost of \$2.5 million, in courts in all major locations across New South Wales and in the Children's Courts.</p> | <p>CCTV will be installed in 23 Court Houses by June 1997. Through CCTV, children can give evidence without having to face people accused of crimes against them.</p> |
| <p>Establish a Child Protection Enforcement Agency within the Police Service.</p> | <p>Agency established in July 1996, staffed by 53 people. In its first seven months of operation, the Agency has arrested 32 people involving 283 charges. Extraditions of 50 alleged offenders have been initiated involving a further 100 charges.</p> |
| <p>Expand the Physical and/or emotional Abuse and Neglect of Children (PANOC) service by \$300,000 per annum.</p> | <p>The expansion will occur from 1997-98.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|--|---|
| <p>\$3.6 million three-year package to establish an After-Care Centre and appoint Leaving Care Workers.</p> | <p>A State-wide Leaving Care Resource Centre located at Parramatta will be launched in May 1997.</p> <p>Six separate services are being established. 7.5 specialist workers will provide casework and consultancy services to young people in the Illawarra, Southern Highlands, Central Coast and Sydney Metropolitan areas.</p> |
| <p>Government to fund an independent information, referral and counselling service for the six months from May 1996 for people who have experienced abuse while previously in care. Once established, this service will be incorporated into the After-Care Centre.</p> | <p>A toll free number was established and both phone counselling and referral and direct counselling were offered. 198 calls were received.</p> <p>A toll free number will be a component of the Leaving Care Resource Centre, into which the referral and counselling service will be incorporated.</p> |
| <p>\$300,000 per annum will be provided to the State-wide Network For Young People In Care (SNYPIC).</p> | <p>SNYPIC delivers improved advocacy services for young people in care by people who have been in care themselves.</p> <p>New staff have been appointed, regular newsletters to young people in care are being distributed, and area support groups which involve young people are being developed.</p> |
| <p>Establish a Substitute Care Ministerial Advisory Committee.</p> | <p>The Interim Substitute Care Ministerial Advisory Committee, chaired by Father John Usher, has provided advice to the Minister for Community Services and the Government on substitute care service development, policy and future directions.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|---|---|
| <p>Undertake review of the recruitment and screening of staff of the Department of Community Services, its funded services and other agencies involved in the care of children.</p> <p>The circumstances of all children in foster and residential care will also be reviewed.</p> | <p>The "Who Cares?" report was published in August 1996. It recommended a range of measures to improve the recruitment and screening of people who care for children and other vulnerable clients in the Departments of Community Services, Juvenile Justice and Ageing and Disability, as well as services funded by these Departments. A new approach to public service-wide recruitment and screening of staff is currently being considered by the Government.</p> <p>\$1.65 million was spent in 1996-97 on reviews which are to be completed for all children in care by June 1998.</p> |
| <p>Appoint a Youth Liaison Officer to the Ombudsman's Office (\$60,000 per annum for two years).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Officer appointed and Access Plan being implemented. • Youth oriented resource material distributed to key gatekeeper organisations. • Complaint procedures for youth issues currently under review. |
| <p>Provide \$300,000 annually to provide stronger peer support and improved information services to foster carers.</p> | <p>Training in peer support, grief counselling and complaints mechanisms was provided for 23 carers who are Area Representatives and provide support to their fellow carers. The inaugural Statewide Conference of Carers was held on 26 and 27 April 1997. Financial support was provided to enable 35 foster carers from across New South Wales to attend the national conference in Melbourne in late 1996.</p> |
| <p>Increase the Standard Age Related Fostering Allowance for children aged 12 to 17 years (\$3.2 million per annum).</p> | <p>Allowances for different ages have been raised by between 26% and 54%.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|---|--|
| <p>Appoint 45 additional field staff in 1996-97 to provide child protection services at the point of notification of abuse. Create 51 new District Officer positions to improve the Department's response to substitute care in line with the strategic directions for the substitute care program. \$4 million has been allocated in 1996-97 for the 96 new staff (\$6 million per annum in a full year).</p> | <p>The Department of Community Services continues actively to recruit appropriately skilled people for these specialist positions. Over forty additional staff, both generalist and specialist, were in place by April. A reduction in relevant staff turnover has also increased the number of front line staff available.</p> |
| <p>\$2 million per annum for family initiatives to develop individual service packages to strengthen families, thus reducing the risks to children and the likelihood of statutory intervention.</p> | <p>Funds have been used to enable field staff to respond to the individual needs of their clients by purchasing support services or providing material assistance to prevent neglect of children and to enhance family support.</p> |
| <p>Under the Commonwealth/State Expanded National Child Care Program, 1,009 long day care places will be provided in 1996-97 at a recurrent cost of \$1 million and a \$9 million capital cost.</p> | <p>This initiative could not continue after the Federal Government cut funding to child care centres in the August 1996 Federal Budget. Even though the Federal Government has broken its agreement with New South Wales, the Premier announced in September 1996 that the \$20 million in State funds committed to this initiative will be retained in the program.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|--|---|
| <p>Develop a new framework for children's services in New South Wales which will focus on achieving greater fairness in the distribution of available child care places and resources.</p> | <p>Policy under development in 1997.</p> |
| <p><u>REBUILDING EDUCATION AND TRAINING</u></p> <p>\$167 million over the three years from 1996-97 for the Government's school technology program (\$29.6 million in 1996-97).</p> | <p>Almost 16,000 leased computers have been distributed to schools in terms one and two 1997.</p> <p>Every school has been connected to the Internet. Training has commenced for 15,000 teachers. There are 40 Technology Advisers in district offices.</p> |
| <p>Release a White Paper in 1997 as part of a major review of the HSC.</p> | <p>The McGaw report, released in March 1997, detailed the outcome of public consultations on the Government's Green Paper on options for reform to the HSC. The White Paper is to be released in mid-1997.</p> |
| <p>\$2.5 million over four years, and over \$500,000 in 1996-97 for language fellowships in foreign countries.</p> | <p>In the 1996 school year funding enabled 140 students to receive grants for intensive study overseas.</p> |
| <p>18 Community Language Teacher positions will be allocated each year from 1997 to 1999.</p> | <p>In Term 1, 1997, 18.2 full time equivalent community language positions were allocated to schools for K-8 support for first language access. Approximately 40,000 students in 172 primary schools and 4 high schools participate in languages development through this program.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|--|---|
| <p>The Aboriginal Education Policy will be implemented during 1996-97. The Department of School Education will commit \$5.7 million to support the implementation of the policy in 1996-97.</p> | <p>The funding improved educational outcomes by enabling 20 Aboriginal teachers, 126 Aboriginal education assistants and 3 State Office Aboriginal education consultants to be employed to support implementation. A training and development package was also published and distributed to selected schools.</p> |
| <p>Additional funding for drug and alcohol education programs (\$1 million per year over 5 years).</p> | <p>A Drug and Alcohol Help Card providing crisis information and sources of help was distributed to all Year 12 students. Additional funding was provided to primary and secondary schools for the purchase of drug and alcohol education resources to support teaching and learning programs. A database of resources has been provided on disk and hard copy for every school.</p> <p>In consultation with the New South Wales Aboriginal Consultative Group, a culturally adapted pilot program has commenced to address Aboriginal drug and alcohol issues.</p> |
| <p>Institute a study into the integration of students with disabilities in Government Schools.</p> | <p>The Minister released for public consultation the Integration/Inclusion Feasibility Study undertaken by David McRae on behalf of the Government in October 1996. In order to allow full consideration of the recommendations contained within the report the consultation period was extended until 27 March 1997. The Minister will receive a report on consultation outcomes by June 1997.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|---|---|
| <p>A total of \$6.862 million will be provided in 1996-97 to fund programs which assist disadvantaged young people by improving their literacy, numeracy and self esteem.</p> | <p>An estimated 6,700 disadvantaged young people will have received assistance through programs such as Helping Early Leavers, Circuit Breaker, Time Out, Koori Youth Program and ARTSTART programs in 1996-97. \$7.022 million was allocated across all programs.</p> |
| <p>The Government is progressing towards its target of 5,000 additional State funded TAFE student places in 1997.</p> | <p>All places will be filled by the end of 1997, including expected increases in student places in Information Technology (1255), Tourism and Hospitality (800), Personal and Community Services (585), Rural and Mining (210), Arts and Media (120), Access and Foundation Skills (100), Building and Construction (75), and Transport.</p> <p>This initiative is strongly influenced by industry growth and demand for student training places.</p> |
| <p>Develop a charter for equity in education and training.</p> | <p>A Charter of Principles for Equity in Education and Training has been developed and will be released by June 1997, with a clear implementation strategy.</p> |
| <p><u>CARING FOR OLDER PEOPLE</u></p> <p>The Ageing and Disability Department will develop a comprehensive policy, primarily in conjunction with the Department of Health, to promote the health and well-being of older people.</p> | <p>A Paper on a New South Wales Healthy Ageing Strategy will be submitted for Government consideration by June 1997.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|--|---|
| <p>\$4 million has been allocated over 3 years from 1996-97 for a range of aged care initiatives.</p> | <p>Improvements in the lives of people with dementia and their carers will flow from the Dementia Action Plan initiated this year. Increased awareness and understanding among service providers about ways of dealing with elder abuse will result from community education. Improved delivery of health and community services to older people to better meet their needs will be promoted through Community Care Demonstration Projects. Innovative ways of improving access to public transport for older people in rural and outer suburban areas will be trialed in Transport Demonstration Projects.</p> |
| <p>\$350,000 will be provided for the Seniors' Information Line in 1996-97.</p> | <p>The Seniors' Information Line was established in July 1996. It has greatly improved access to information for the State's older people. The Service is averaging over 2000 calls per month, including a significant number from rural areas.</p> |
| <p>Funding for the Home and Community Care (HACC) program will be increased by \$7.3 million in 1996-97.</p> | <p>All HACC services have been given a 3% increase in funding to assist them with management responses to increased costs.</p> |
| <p>The Accommodation Taskforce will recommend options for a long term plan for accommodating older people and people with a disability.</p> | <p>The Taskforce will present its final report to the Minister in July 1997.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|--|---|
| <p><u>IMPROVING ACCOMMODATION</u></p> <p>\$142.4 million will be allocated in 1996-97 under the new Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA).</p> | <p>The New South Wales contribution has provided for growth in the supply of social housing, upgrading and capital improvements and a range of other initiatives. Details are given below.</p> |
| <p>The New South Wales Housing Assistance Plan for 1996-97 to 1998-99 will be delivered through public and community housing, assistance to private renters and assistance to special needs groups.</p> | <p>Within the constraints of one year Commonwealth funding, the Plan's strategies for housing assistance have been delivered through a range of programs: capital/leasing to provide housing to be managed by public, community and Aboriginal housing providers (detailed below); asset management strategies to improve the existing public housing stock (detailed below); about 41,000 assistances to renters in the private market; about 1,100 assistances to special needs groups such as HIV/AIDS sufferers and the disabled; mortgage assistance to about 500 households; and a range of other initiatives including upgrading the fire safety of boarding houses.</p> |
| <p>\$237.4 million to be spent on works in progress and new works for the Department of Housing, involving commencement of 1,787 units of accommodation, including 103 for supported housing.</p> | <p>By the end of June 1997, work is expected to commence on 1,417 dwellings (\$231 million), including 113 for special needs supported housing initiatives (\$14 million). Numbers are reduced due to limitations on the carrying forward of works into 1997-98 because of the short-term Commonwealth funding commitment.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|---|---|
| <p>\$87 million to be spent on upgrading of stock and estate improvement.</p> | <p>\$62 million on capital upgrading of existing housing including the provision of new kitchens and bathrooms, replacement of appliances and wall coverings. Fire safety has been a particular focus with about a third of the existing public housing stock (40,000) being fitted with hard wired smoke detectors and the remainder to be fitted over the next two years. \$25 million was allocated to the Neighbourhood Improvement Program, details below.</p> |
| <p>\$122.7 million to be spent on works in progress and new works in the community housing sector, involving commencement of 823 new dwellings and the commencement of 246 dwellings targeted mainly at young people through the Social Housing Subsidy program.</p> | <p>By 30 June 1997 it is expected that: 508 dwellings will be commenced including 65 for crisis accommodation. 184 dwellings will be purchased for Housing Associations at a cost of \$28.1m. 99 dwellings will be made available through partnerships with non-government organisations in the Housing Partnerships Program. The youth targeted Social Housing Subsidy Program has not proceeded because the Commonwealth withdrew new funding under this program in the 1996 Budget.</p> |
| <p>\$25.7 million to be spent on works in progress and new works for Aboriginal housing, involving commencement of 122 dwellings, mainly through community-based organisations.</p> | <p>\$27.4 million has been provided. 186 new dwellings to commence by 30 June.</p> <p>About 90% of new dwellings have been allocated to Aboriginal housing providers.</p> <p>Nearly 40% of funding in an approved two-year Aboriginal Housing Plan 1996-98 is targeted to rural and remote communities.</p> |
| <p>The Supported Housing Initiatives Program (SHIP) will be allocated at least 5% of the total Department of Housing capital works funds.</p> | <p>The SHIP was allocated 6% of Department of Housing capital works funds with 89 dwellings expected to be commenced by the end of June 1997, an increase from 80 in the previous year.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|--|---|
| <p>\$10 million for the Mental Health Supported Housing Initiatives Program over the next three financial years.</p> | <p>\$3.6 million spent and 24 dwelling units to be commenced in 1996-97. These units will provide about 50 bed spaces. The Department of Health will provide agreed mental health support services.</p> |
| <p>Expand the size and nature of the social housing stock through head-leasing from the private sector: target of 1800 new rental properties has been established for 1996-97. \$12.5 million will be devoted to properties head-leased by the Department of Housing and a further \$17.2 million will be provided to community housing associations for head-leasing.</p> | <p>Initiative restricted in the absence of Commonwealth commitment to the long-term funding necessary for longer term head-leasing.</p> <p>The Department of Housing has head-leased 150 new dwellings in 1996-97, mostly for priority housing purposes (\$6.3 million for all head-leasing). Community housing associations maintained leases on 2312 properties in 1996-97 with up to 100 new leases likely to be taken up by housing associations before the end of 1996-97 (\$14.2 million).</p> |
| <p>\$25 million in 1996-97 and \$45 million in 1997-98 to the Neighbourhood Improvement Program.</p> | <p>\$25 million has been spent on capital works linked to community development strategies and employment initiatives. The Neighbourhood Improvement Program has continued a focus on large estates in Waterloo, Airs and Macquarie Fields. Social and physical amenity problems in estates at Bonnyrigg and Riverwood and in the Hunter and Illawarra Regions are also being addressed.</p> |
| <p>\$81.3 million in 1996-97 for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) which provides accommodation assistance for people in crisis.</p> | <p>\$80 million was used to assist 409 accommodation and support services throughout New South Wales.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|--|---|
| <p><u>INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY</u></p> <p>State-wide enhancement of disability services for children (\$3.5 million in 1996-97 and \$4.5 million recurrent from 1997-98, plus capital grants of \$2 million in 1996-97 and \$1.6 million in 1997-98) will be used to expand respite care services focusing on children with a disability, early intervention services, out-of-school hours projects for children with a disability, and therapy services.</p> | <p>78 agencies were selected to provide a range of services across the State. Almost 2,900 children and families will receive new services and/or enhanced services with these funds (804 Early Intervention, 353 Respite Care; 1531 Therapy, 159 Outside School Hours Support, 20 Intensive Family Support).</p> |
| <p>The Centre for Developmental Disability Studies has been allocated funding of \$200,000 per annum, indexed over 5 years.</p> | <p>This amount will be fully expended in 1996-97. The Centre was opened on 3 April 1997. The aim of the Centre is to provide leadership in research, teaching and practice that will inform and improve the provision of services to people with developmental disabilities, their families and carers.</p> |
| <p>\$1 million has been allocated in 1996-97 for the program of appliances for people with a disability.</p> | <p>Expended. The Program provides wheelchairs, oxygen equipment and similar appliances to people with disabilities living in the community who are financially disadvantaged. The enhancement funding has allowed an increased number of clients to obtain access to services under the Program.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
|---|--|
| <p>The Government is playing a leading role in the development of national accessible public transport standards by the Australian Transport Council. The Government is funding the project team which services the national taskforce (\$120, 000 to date).</p> | <p>Draft national standards were prepared by the Project Team for the national taskforce and endorsed by the Australian Transport Council in June 1996. The draft standards are currently being reviewed by the Federal Attorney-General and a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) is being prepared. The New South Wales Government provided input to the RIS for the draft national standards.</p> |
| <p>Ministerial Local Government Reform Taskforce to develop a charter of rights for people with a disability.</p> | <p>This charter will be developed in the context of a wider social policy framework to assist councils in the planning and delivery of services and facilities. A report on the framework will be considered in June 1997.</p> |
| <p><u>IMPROVING THE JUSTICE SYSTEM</u></p> <p>\$934,000 per annum for 1996-97 and 1997-98 for a trial of variable vacations in the District Court (Civil Jurisdiction) to reduce the backlog of civil cases.</p> | <p>The traditional four week July Court Vacation was abolished in 1996. The District Court maintained its operations during that period and reduced its December Vacation from 6 to 4 weeks. An additional 162 "judge weeks" were provided for civil cases, an increase of 78.3% above that normally available.</p> <p>As at December 1996 there had been a 64.4% reduction in pre-1996 pending civil cases, and a 21.8% reduction in pending civil cases overall.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
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| <p>Four Acting Judges and support staff will be appointed for a 5 month period to run a Special Program for the disposal of backlog matters in the Civil Division of the Supreme Court (\$1 million over the next two years).</p> | <p>This initiative is now targeted to run from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998.</p> |
| <p>\$1.3 million over the next two years to enable the appointment of three Judges and support staff to a third Court of Appeal bench in the Supreme Court in 1996-97 to eliminate old matters.</p> | <p>To 31 December 1996 there had been a 90% reduction in pre-1995 pending standard appeals. Appeals filed from 1995 onwards are being targeted from 1 January 1997 to 30 June 1997.</p> |
| <p>Three Acting Magistrates and support staff will be appointed to alleviate delays in Special Fixture matters in Local Courts (\$645 000 in 1996-97).</p> | <p>An additional 337 cases had been disposed of by December and delays in matters requiring several days hearing were contained.</p> |
| <p>An extra \$100,000 will be provided in 1996-97 to Community Legal Centres.</p> | <p>Community Legal Centres provide accessible legal assistance in local communities.</p> <p>This additional funding, which will be expended by June 1997, will improve the capacity of these services to meet the needs of local communities.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
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| <p>\$4.5 million over the next three years to expand and improve the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program.</p> | <p>The \$1.3 million expenditure for 1996-97 has enabled significant improvements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 Court Support Schemes have been funded across the State. • 3 Aboriginal court support workers and 1 Vietnamese court support worker have been employed. • The Domestic Violence Advocacy Service has been funded to provide training for both funded and unfunded schemes. • A number of one-off projects have been initiated, including a resource kit for court support workers on assisting women with intellectual disabilities, a training workshop for court support schemes on working with women with psychiatric disabilities, the production of multi-lingual pamphlets and information posters and development of an evaluation and data collection program. |
| <p>The Aboriginal Women's Legal and Advocacy Centre's inner city base will be fully operational by the end of June 1996, and over the next year satellite centres staffed by field and case workers will be established in rural areas.</p> | <p>There have been delays in the implementation of this initiative due to management issues.</p> <p>In December 1996, the Attorney-General approved the proposal to re-establish the Centre subject to stricter financial controls.</p> |
| <p>Building on the 10 Aboriginal Police Liaison Officers, four additional officers will be appointed in 1996-97.</p> | <p>Two Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers recruited by April 1997. Recruitment action is continuing.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
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| <p>The Department of Juvenile Justice's 1996-97 capital program (\$11.5 million).</p> <p>New juvenile justice centres are to be built at Dubbo, and in the northern area of the State. Centres at St Mary's and Mount Penang and in metropolitan Sydney are to be upgraded.</p> <p>A review by the Ombudsman of accommodation standards and the administration of the centres will assist the planning of the reconstruction program.</p> | <p>The Department of Juvenile Justice is currently implementing over 240 recommendations in the Ombudsman's report, completed in December 1996.</p> <p>Capital works projects have been delayed, generally by site selection and planning process difficulties, but all are proceeding.</p> <p>The building of the new centres and the upgrading of standards and the major renovation of existing facilities will bring the Department's centres into line with the recommendations of the Ombudsman's report. Centres at Wollongong, Newcastle, Kariong and in the Sydney metropolitan area are to be upgraded.</p> <p>Funds were also allocated to the construction of a juvenile justice centre in the Newcastle/Hunter region, to replace Worimi Juvenile Justice Centre, the design of which was criticised in the Ombudsman's report. Worimi will be refurbished in the interim.</p> |
| <p>\$250,000 in 1996-97 for the Nardoola Project.</p> | <p>An increased allocation of \$325,000 has established the Nardoola Farm Program near Moree to accommodate young Aborigines on remand or conditional discharge.</p> |
| <p>An additional \$266,000 has been set aside for post-release programs.</p> | <p>Six community youth support organisations have been funded to provide post-release support services in 9 areas across the State. These services offer assistance with accommodation, job skills, training, education, income support, health and family support. Some services cater specifically for juvenile offenders from Arabic-speaking, Indo-Chinese, Aboriginal and Pacific Islander communities. In the 1996-97 financial year (until 1 March), 141 juveniles had received post-release support from funded community organisations.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
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| <p>The Long Bay Correctional Complex will be redeveloped to offer special therapeutic treatment units for sexual and violent offenders and inmates with drug and alcohol dependence.</p> | <p>Planning for the redevelopment has commenced and capital works funding will be provided in 1997-98.</p> |
| <p>\$1.2 million in 1996-97 for sex offenders programs to help create a safer community.</p> | <p>\$80,000 was spent on recruitment of specialised staff. It is expected that a further 17 appointments will be made.</p> |
| <p>Specially designed programs will allow low security female inmates to be held at Parramatta Transitional Centre and the Emu Plains Correctional Centre and provide for some women to keep their young children with them.</p> | <p>The Parramatta Transitional Centre opened on 21 June 1996 to provide placements for up to 21 women and up to 6 children to be cared for by their inmate mothers. In March 1997, 97 female inmates were accommodated at Emu Plains Correctional Centre. \$1.725 million was spent on the facilities.</p> |
| <p>\$5.7 million in capital funding to construct a 70-bed minimum security facility at Emu Plains over two years, with \$1 million committed in 1996-97.</p> | <p>Only \$500,000 was spent in 1996-97 due to an extended planning process relating to flood mitigation works.</p> |
| <p>Periodic detention centres will be built in Bathurst (\$1 million in 1996-97) and Broken Hill (\$1.1 million in 1996-97).</p> | <p>As a result of planning constraints, works commenced at Bathurst and Broken Hill in April 1997. Expenditure in 1996/97 was Bathurst \$350,000; Broken Hill \$450,000.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
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| <p>\$2 million to implement programs for Aboriginal offenders, and \$200,000 to create full-time indigenous teaching positions.</p> | <p>A Welfare Officer and 3 psychologists have been employed to assist Aboriginal inmates. The Indigenous Services Unit has been upgraded and has assumed responsibility for post-release programs. Drug and alcohol programs were designed and implemented. Recruitment of 5 full-time Aboriginal teachers or their part-time equivalent has commenced. Specially designed TAFE courses were run in 17 correctional centres with 60% of inmates enrolling.</p> |
| <p>\$225,000 to establish an Aboriginal Complaints Unit within the Ombudsman's Office to focus on complaints of police misconduct, monitor relations between police and Aboriginal communities, and establish better liaison in remote areas.</p> | <p>Aboriginal Complaints Unit operational from September 1996.</p> |
| <p>Enhance the Police Complaints System in the Ombudsman's Office (\$175,000 for 1996-97) to provide additional resources for direct investigations and to audit police achievements in serving minority groups.</p> | <p>Three extra investigation officers employed, enabling the Ombudsman to quadruple the number of direct investigations initiated and increase those finalised.</p> |
| <p>Establish an Administrative Appeals Tribunal.</p> | <p>Legislation to establish an Administrative Decisions Tribunal is to be put to Parliament this year.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
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| <p><u>SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL, ETHNIC, RURAL AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES</u></p> <p>\$2.5 million in 1996-97 for Western Sydney Regional Park (1000 hectares) and Rouse Hill Regional Park (150 hectares).</p> | <p>Stage 1 construction for both projects commenced mid-March 1997. Access roads, picnic and barbecue facilities and shelter will be completed by June 30 1997. The parks provide essential open space and recreation areas for residents of Western Sydney. Unspent funds, due to difficulties in recruiting specialists, will be carried forward into 1997-98.</p> |
| <p>Lead Reference centre (\$841,000 in 1996-97) to coordinate a cross-government response to managing lead hazards.</p> | <p>Educational resources have been developed for professionals and the community, with 7 publications being released. A local government reference group has been established; a major cost-benefit analysis of lead hazard reduction strategies commenced; resources developed for Public Health Units to use in assessing elevated lead levels; and work commenced with TAFE to develop training programs on lead hazards.</p> <p>Unspent funds, due to difficulties in recruiting specialists, will be carried forward into 1997-98.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
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| <p>Implement a number of major social justice initiatives at the local government level to improve outcomes for communities, including the proposed amendment of the Local Government (General) Regulation to require local government authorities to prepare and publish statements of their Access and Equity Policies within their annual reports (from 1996-97) and within their management plans (from 1997-98).</p> | <p>Amendments made to the <i>Local Government (General) Regulation</i> require councils to report on programs undertaken during the year to promote services and access to services for residents and other service users. Further amendments are anticipated to require council management plans to cover social policy issues such as access and equity. This will be considered as part of a wider social policy framework to assist councils in the planning and delivery of services and facilities. A report on the framework is to be prepared by May 1997. The necessary amendments are expected later in 1997.</p> |
| <p>Provide 650 Police over four years from 1996-97 in locations of highest need (\$32 million per annum).</p> | <p>300 new recruits funded since 1995. The emphasis has been on increasing police operational presence.</p> <p>Part of the Government's commitment to increase the number of available police by 650 is being achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the recruitment of General Support Officers to replace police doing administrative work; and • the transfer of prisoner escort and court security duties in rural areas to the Department of Corrective Services. <p>By the end of 1996-97, this initiative will result in a return of 162 officers to policing duties.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
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| <p>\$200,000 will be provided for additional staff and other purposes to develop a Strategic Crime Prevention framework for the State.</p> | <p>Development of the framework commenced in February 1997. \$130,000 has been spent on: rural crime problems in Bourke; training seminars in partnership with the local training seminars in partnership with the Local Government and Shires Association; production of community education material; and the successful coordinated handling of celebrations at Bondi for Christmas and New Year.</p> |
| <p>Establish a Victims of Crime Bureau by the end of 1996 (estimated at \$600,000 per annum).</p> | <p>Bureau operational from April 1997, following the passage of the <i>Victims Rights Act</i> in December 1996.</p> |
| <p>\$67,000 to support Local Domestic Violence Committees over the 1996-97 financial year.</p> | <p>The funds have assisted 75 Local Committees and will also be used to support community education and liaison with regional specialists in violence issues.</p> |
| <p>Improve the protection available to women in domestic violence situations through the <i>Crimes Amendment (Apprehended Violence Orders) Bill</i>.</p> | <p>Legislation commenced on 1 March 1997. This will provide an Apprehended Violence Order system that better protects complainants, especially children.</p> |
| <p>\$1.2 million recurrent funding to improve rail security.</p> | <p>An additional 136 shifts per month are being provided by private security guards.</p> <p>This provides an average of 1300 train and station security patrols across the CityRail network each week. The patrols are designed to improve safety from 7.00 pm to 1.00 am, seven days a week (particularly on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights). The majority of patrols are conducted in the Sydney metropolitan area.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
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| <p>\$1.6 million in 1996-97 to improve the frequency of off-peak train services along a range of major train lines.</p> | <p>The availability of public transport has been extended through provision of additional late night and off-peak services. This provides about 9,200 train services annually. About 1,300 additional train services are provided to regional areas such as Wollongong, Kiama, Bomaderry, Gosford and Newcastle. About 7,900 additional train services are also provided on CityRail's suburban network.</p> |
| <p>\$1.8 million for new services on the Western suburbs Y-link line.</p> | <p>The project was opened in November 1996, providing a direct link between the south western and western suburbs of Sydney.</p> <p>It is estimated that 3.6 million passenger journeys per annum will benefit from the Y-link.</p> |
| <p>Develop a landmark statement on the Government's approach and commitments to Aboriginal people.</p> | <p>The Landmark Statement is planned for release by the end of August 1997.</p> |
| <p>\$13.5 million over three years from 1995-96 to ensure a co-ordinated and staged approach to improving infrastructure in Aboriginal communities.</p> | <p>This is a tripartite initiative between the New South Wales Government, ATSIC and the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council to address the housing needs of 45 former reserves in New South Wales and to provide employment and training opportunities. Nineteen former reserves, including Wilcannia, Walgett and Muli Muli, received infrastructure improvements, new housing and/or repairs and maintenance in 1996-97. Anticipated 1996-97 expenditure is \$4.5 million.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
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| <p>Review the Ethnic Affairs Commission Act .</p> <p>The Ethnic Affairs Action Plan 2000 will focus on providing whole-of-government service delivery and program development for people from culturally diverse backgrounds.</p> | <p>Implemented. Three monitoring and reporting arrangements will ensure the timely and efficient implementation of the Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statements (EAPS) to be prepared by all agencies; • Ethnic Affairs Agreements to be entered into by some agencies with the Ethnic Affairs Commission; and • an Ethnic Affairs Report to be submitted to Parliament annually from 1998. |
| <p>The Women’s Information and Referral Service (WIRS) is undertaking a special promotional campaign aimed at raising the awareness of the Service and the Department for Women with women of non-English speaking background.</p> | <p>Implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally appropriate promotion materials such as posters, brochures and language cards incorporating 16 community languages have been produced. • 151 new ethno-specific service providers have been added to an updated WIRS referral service database. • A radio and print promotional campaign targeting the Vietnamese and Thai communities was conducted in August 1996, resulting in a significant increase in callers from both communities (60 callers). A second campaign will target the Chinese community between March and June 1997. |
| <p>Establish an Office of Rural Communities and a Rural Communities Consultative Council.</p> | <p>The Office, established in 1996, has made major contributions to rural policy development including input into 17 reviews of agriculture legislation within the National Competition Policy, and coordination of the State’s involvement in reviews of the National Drought Policy and Rural Adjustment Scheme. Among its rural communities development work it has managed the Drought Support Worker Program, providing counselling, information and referral services and distributing \$0.6 million to drought affected farmers.</p> <p>The Council was established in August 1996 with the objective of ensuring that rural communities have equitable access to government services and programs. It has coordinated several major forums and provided community input to reviews of the Rural Adjustment Scheme and the Rural Partnership Program.</p> |

| 1996-97 Initiative | Outcome |
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| <p>Provide \$2.8 million in 1996-97 for regional drought initiatives under the joint Commonwealth/State Rural Partnership Program.</p> | <p>The commencement of the program was delayed until 1 March 1997 due to ongoing negotiations with the Commonwealth. This program will now run over three years (1996-99) with the State and Commonwealth providing matching funds. New South Wales will contribute \$0.4 million in 1996-97, \$1.2 million in 1997-98 and \$0.8 million in 1998-99.</p> |
| <p>Improve access to Government services for the rural and regional areas of Western Division and the North Coast through the Regional Coordination Pilot Program.</p> | <p>Following evaluation in July 1996 the Regional Co-ordination Program was confirmed and progressively expanded into the Northern Tablelands, the Riverina/South-west, and the Illawarra/Southern Tablelands/South Coast regions from November 1996, and the Hunter/Newcastle/Central Coast region from January 1997. The Program now covers all of New South Wales except for the Sydney metropolitan area.</p> |