

 A GRANTS OFFICE PUBLICATION

# FUNDED

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**Grants and the Federal  
Budget 2022-23**



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# G'day Australian grantseekers!

At Grants Office, we help grant seekers across the world identify funding opportunities, develop project ideas and produce high quality applications to maximise grant revenue. Here in Australia, our team on the ground have been busy supporting clients from businesses, education providers, community organisations and everyone in between.

We are very excited to bring you Volume II, Issue II of 'FUNDED Australia' – our biannual grants publication. Since our last issue in June, we've seen the severity of the cost-of-living crisis escalate, extreme weather events continue to cause devastation and to deliver some funding relief, the release of the Australian Labor Party's first Federal Budget since 2013.

As this Budget has caused quite a stir in the government grants landscape, we've decided to dedicate our issue to breaking down the details of newly announced grant programs, discontinued grant programs and those that've remained unscathed.

In this issue...

- Take a glance at the Australian Federal Government's grant funding landscape with a focus on technology-friendly funded projects.
- Review our Budget Highlights for a high-level overview of where funding is flowing and the significant areas of investment OR...
- Deep dive one of our key focus areas in Healthcare, Education, Climate Change, Regional Development and Workforce Development to discover funding opportunities in your area of interest.

Our goal for FUNDED Australia is to keep our readers informed of funding opportunities to get your projects off the ground. If there's a specific topic or grant program you'd like to see us explore in our next edition, please don't hesitate to get in touch!

If you only read one grant-focused publication, we want it to be FUNDED Australia. We'd like to thank our readers for their continued support over our second year. Get thinking about your grant seeking strategies for 2023 – we'll see you there!

Go and get funded!

Eily Fidock & Tom Bligh  
Editors



# 2022 – 23 Australian Federal Budget Grant Highlights

Tom Bligh



It had been nine years since the last Labor Federal budget was delivered in 2013 and as of October the drought is broken. After almost six months in power, the Albanese Labor government delivered its' hotly anticipated budget that will carry the country through the next seven months until our next budget in May 2023.

The Albanese Labor government budget has ushered in a number of changes to the federal grant funding landscape; some long-standing grant programs are gone; some new ones have emerged, as have areas of significant investment where the green shoots of grant funding may sprout in the future.

We expect a clearer picture of the federal grants landscape will emerge in the May 2023 budget when we will have had the opportunity to examine and better understand where a lot of the funding is flowing and how many significant areas of investment will channel their funding.

In order to adequately resource a range of new spending priorities (including new grants), the Albanese government has discontinued funding for a number of long-standing existing grants programs. Some of these funds won't experience a 'clean break', as many successful applicants are engaged in multi-year projects that the Government is obliged to provide funding to. Alas, do not expect to see further rounds of the following grant programs:

Discontinued programs:

- Building Better Regions Fund
- Community Development Grants Program
- Manufacturing Modernisation Fund
- Modern Manufacturing Initiative

At first glance, it may appear that this budget significantly cuts spending on grant programs (particularly for regional community infrastructure projects). However, a range of new programs have appeared in their place as well as areas of interest where grants may emerge. While we don't have a crystal ball for all the details yet (guidelines, release dates, eligibility criteria), here are a few areas of investment that stood out after our initial examination:



## GOVERNMENT

### Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program (\$500M)

- Investing in place-based projects that transform regional centres. The program will also be the mechanism for delivering all future regional partnerships to help regions move towards net-zero emissions, a decarbonised economy and sustained regional growth

### Growing Regions Program (\$500m)

- This program will fund local government-led infrastructure projects such as libraries and regional airport upgrades

### Investing in Our Communities Program (\$349.9M)

- deliver small scale community, sport and infrastructure projects across Australia.



## BUSINESS/ FOR-PROFIT

### National Reconstruction Fund (NRF) (\$15B)

- The establishment of the National Reconstruction Fund will transform Australian industry through targeted co-investments in 7 priority areas: resources; agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors; transport; medical science; renewables and low emission technologies; defence capability; and enabling capabilities.

### On Farm Connectivity Program (\$30M)

- This program will extend connectivity for farmers and their machinery and grow Australia's agribusiness.

### Regional Connectivity Program (\$200M)

- Funds the delivery of 'place-based' telecommunications infrastructure projects to improve digital connectivity across regional, rural and remote Australia

### Energy Efficiency Grants for Small and Medium Sizes Enterprises (\$62.6M)

- Supporting studies, planning, equipment and facility upgrade projects that will improve energy efficiency, reduce emissions or improve the management of power demand

### Forestry Plantations Grants (\$86.2M)

- Grants to private industry and state-owned forestry corporations to establish new forestry plantations



## HEALTHCARE

### Medical Research Future Fund (\$6.3B)

- Additional resourcing for health and medical research projects through the 2nd 10-year Investment Plan (the 2nd Plan) for the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF).

### Strengthening Medicare GP Grants (\$229.7M)

- Supporting GP practices to upgrade IT systems including to support telehealth consultations, upskill staff, purchase new equipment, upgrade practices to be COVID safe, and make other improvements to ensure GPs can see more patients and provide better care.

### Innovative Models of Care Program (\$24.9M)

- Funding the trial of new primary care models



## EDUCATION

### TAFE Technology Fund (\$50M)

- Funding will modernise IT infrastructure, laboratories, telehealth simulators and other facilities at TAFEs Australia-wide.

### Schools Upgrade Fund (\$270.8M)

- Funding will support capital works projects for upgrades to school equipment and to improve ventilation in classrooms to keep students and school staff safe following disruptions caused by COVID-19.

### Women in STEM and Entrepreneurship Program (\$5.8M)

- This program encourages the participation for girls and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics to enter STEM education and careers.

### Community Language Schools Grants Program (\$18.2)

- Supporting young Australians to learn a second language. Eligible community language school will receive grant funding of up to \$30,000 over three years.

## RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

### Strategic Critical Minerals Development Program (\$99.8M)

- Will provide \$50 million over 3 years for competitive grants to support early and mid-stage critical minerals projects

### Powering the Regions Fund (\$3.3M)

- Will support the decarbonisation of existing industry, as well as the creation of new industry. The program will be established in 2022-23 with an initial funding investment of \$3.3M. A \$1.9B investment expected to roll out from 2023-24.

### Disaster Ready Fund (\$200M)

- Funding will co-contribute to projects to strengthen Australia's disaster readiness and resilience. This fund will repurpose and replace the existing Emergency Response Fund.

From a grants perspective, there is nothing especially surprising about this budget; investment in areas we expected (e.g., health care and disaster relief funding) and some shifts in the makeup of the grants landscape (e.g., scrapping of old funds like Building Better Regions and introduction of new funds such as the National Reconstruction Fund).

This makes sense, as the Labor Federal Budget October 2022-23 can arguably be described as a short-term budget, particularly given that the next budget is roughly six months away.

We should expect to see a more indicative budget (grants-wise) which follows through with more of Labor's election promises in May 2023; particularly as the hangovers from the previous government's operational grants commitments begin to abate.

In the meantime, keep your eyes and ears out and be sure to visit <http://grantsoffice.com.au> often for informative monthly webinars. Also make sure to subscribe to our [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#) for regular announcements on upcoming and newly opened grants opportunities.



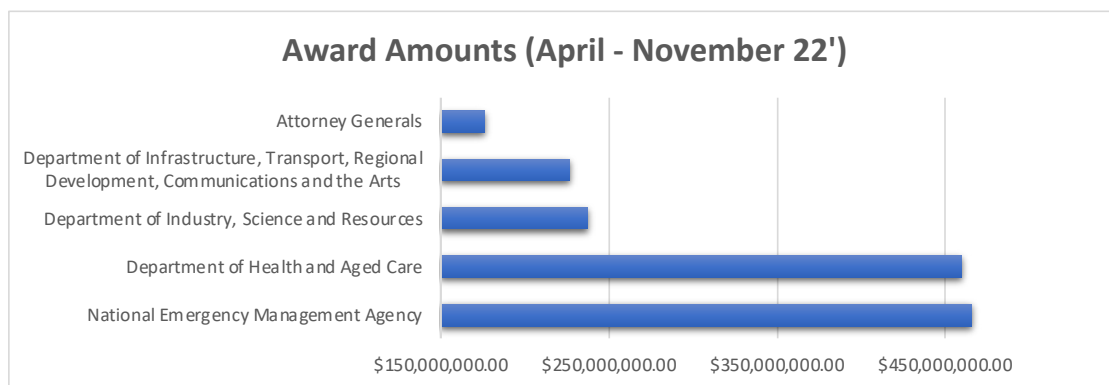
# Grant Funding in Australia: Apr '22 – Nov '22 Highlights

**Tom Bligh**

In each issue of 'FUNDED Australia', we drill down into all Federal Government grant funding awards and take a closer look at funded programs and projects with a focus on innovation in technology. In this issue, we're doing something a little different. This time, we will look at strictly open competitive Federal grant awards published from April to November 2022.

In the period from 23rd of March to the 15th of November 2022, approximately \$2 billion worth of open competitive grant funding was awarded from Federal Government Agencies in Australia.

## TOP 5 FEDERAL DEPARTMENT GRANT GIVERS (AWARD AMOUNTS): APRIL –NOVEMBER 2022



## TOP 5 LARGEST AWARD AMOUNTS

1. Sovereign Manufacturing Automation for Composites (SoMAC)
  - Grant Program: Cooperative Research Centres Programme
  - Award: \$76,890,000
2. Elevate: Boosting Women in STEM Scholarships Program “Elevate Scholarships” (Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering)
  - Grant Program: Inspiring all Australians in STEM
  - Award: \$45,320,000
3. Parenting Education and Support (Triple P International PTY LTD)
  - Grant Program: Parenting Education and Support
  - Award: \$44,406,571
4. Lumsden Point & Port Kembla Diesel Storage Projects (QUBE Holdings LTD)
  - Grant Program: Boosting Australia’s Fuel Security
  - Award(s): \$36,000,000 each
5. Improving access to innovative healthcare in NSW and ACT (NSW Ministry of Health)
  - Grant Program: Medical Research Futures Fund – Rural, Regional & remote Clinical Trial Enabling Infrastructure
  - Award: \$30,548,184



## FEDERAL FUNDING: TECHNOLOGY PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Let's take a closer look at some of the highest awarded technology-focused projects that received federal funding over the last six months:

### DART AE Multi-mission Hypersonic Drone Technology Demonstrator

- **Funder:** Department of Industry, Science and Resources
- **Funding Program:** Modern Manufacturing Initiative (discontinued)
- **Recipient:** Hypersonix Launch Systems PTY
- **Funding Amount:** \$8,880,327.50
- **Project Details:** As part of the Modern Manufacturing Initiative's Defence Translation Stream, Hypersonix Launch systems (in partnership with Kratos Defense & Security Solutions) was funded to develop their DART AE Multi-mission Hypersonic Drone Technology Demonstrator using 3D printing from high-temperature resistant materials. This funding will also allow Hypersonix to expedite the development of their core scramjet technology that powers the drone. The team is planning to launch the first test flight of the drone in 2023.

### Integrating Quantum Tech into Space Manufacturing for Defence & Agriculture

- **Funder:** Department of Industry, Science and Resources
- **Funding Program:** Cooperative Research Centres Programme (CRCP)
- **Recipient:** Q-CTRL PTY LTD
- **Funding Amount:** \$3,245,000.00
- **Project Details:** This project brings together two leading Australian SMEs and a top-tier research institute to address critical industry-identified challenges in the space sector. It will produce novel technology for geospatial intelligence, enabled through advances in domestic precision manufacturing. By focusing on underground water detection as a key application, the project will drive innovation in the Australian agriculture sector, our advanced manufacturing capabilities, and soil and water sciences.

### Building Bushfire Resilience Through Tech Innovation

- **Funder:** National Emergency Management Agency
- **Funding Program:** Black Summer Bushfire Recovery Grants
- **Recipient:** Noosa Shire Council
- **Funding Amount:** \$979,875
- **Project Details:** This project accelerates promising bushfire technology solutions into active duty to build resilience in Australia's regional communities. Funding will support the delivery of a series of critical technology pilot trials for bushfire preparedness, prediction, detection and intelligence at Noosa's Living Laboratory; a set of purpose-built facilities that simulate real-world bushfire environments.

### Prevention of Blindness using Digital Technologies at Primary care centres

- **Funder:** Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
- **Funding Program:** Global Science and Technology Diplomacy Fund
- **Recipient:** University of Notre Dame Australia
- **Funding Amount:** \$912,000
- **Project Details:** This project will facilitate the development of a diagnostic device and software to guide and empower medical practitioners in rural and remote areas to refer patients with identified and preventable diseases that cause blindness in a timely manner to specialists for treatment and surgery.

### Shaping Blockchain Technology

- **Funder:** Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- **Funding Program:** Australia-India Cyber and Critical Technology Partnership- Grant Round 2
- **Recipient:** Australian National University (Tech Policy Design Centre and College of Law)
- **Funding Amount:** \$748,730
- **Project Details:** This project supports the development of blockchain technical standards consistent with Australia and India's shared vision of an open, free, rules-based Indo-Pacific.



# What's in the Budget for Healthcare

Tom Bligh

The 2022-23 Federal Budget includes over \$135 billion in expenditure for health, aged care and sport. This represents roughly 17% of total government spending. Despite a significant decrease in triage funding measures for COVID response and relief (which has over inflated healthcare budgets for the last two years), this figure is up 5.7% on the previous Morrison Government's healthcare spend in the 2021-22 budget.

Approximately \$910 million in this budget has been allocated to grant programs supporting research, infrastructure and capacity building in the health and aged care sectors in Australia in 2022-23. Let's take a closer look:

## MEDICAL RESEARCH FUTURE FUND (EXISTING): \$3B ALLOCATED FROM 2022-23 TO 2024-25 (\$650 MILLION PER YEAR)

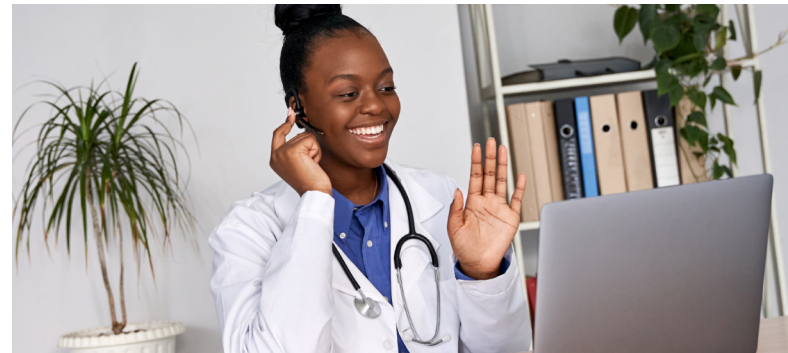
The Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) is a \$20 billion long-term investment supporting Australian health and medical research. The MRFF aims to transform health and medical research and innovation to improve lives, build the economy and contribute to health system sustainability.

There are approximately 20 separate rounds of MRFF funding per year with individual priority areas under each (e.g., Cardiovascular health, Stem Cell Therapies, etc.) and significant variation in award sizes (\$100k up to \$75 million).

Most grant streams under the MRFF are 'targeted or restricted competitive' (approx. 76% of all awards) available to Publicly Funded Research Organisations and Universities to fund cutting edge medical research.

There are several rounds of the MRFF open and upcoming, including the [Research Data Infrastructure](#) stream and [Indigenous Health Research](#).

Check out our [December webinar](#) dedicated to the MRFF for a more detailed look into how to access this grant funding, including upcoming streams, application tips, successful projects and more.



## STRENGTHENING MEDICARE GP GRANTS PROGRAM (NEW): \$229.7M FROM 2023-24

The Department of Health and Aged Care will administer the Strengthening Medicare GP Grants Program, which is intended to improve General Practice infrastructure including upgrades to IT systems to support telehealth consultations, 'upskilling' staff, and new equipment, infection control and other improvements so that GPs can see more patients and provide a higher standard of care to all. \$229.7 million has been allocated to this program, with the majority allocated in 2023 (\$201.5 million).

Awards will be based on size of the applicant practice and merit-based (i.e., 'urgency' and 'need' for the upgrades) and will range from \$25k to \$50k.

Let's do some quick math...

According to the Grattan Institute, there are approximately 7,000 GP clinics in Australia. Now, we don't have exact details on eligibility at time of publication, but if we divide the total pool of funding (\$229.7 million), over that 7,000 figure, we get ~\$33k (about half-way between \$25k and \$50k).

To us, this says that **almost every GP Clinic in Australia will have an opportunity to access this funding.**

It is rare to see such a large allocation for a grant program that is largely intended to support the outright purchase of technology and/or equipment that is independent of any specific project from the applicant. In other words, if you are a GP clinic in Australia and your technology is in need of a glow up, don't miss out on these grants. Subscribe to alerts on Grant Connect and, of course, to our [Grants Office](#) newsletters and webcasts. We will be watching these grants very closely.

The Department of Health and Aged care have it in black and white on their website that they prefer not to open grant rounds in the lead up to the Christmas shutdown in Australia. With the Majority of this funding committed in the 2023 financial year, we estimate this grant will open some time in Q1 of 2023, likely February or March.



## WELLBEING AND RESILIENCE GRANTS (NEW): \$4.4M

\$4.4 million has been allocated for a suite of new programs to provide additional urgent mental health support to impacted communities through emergency response coordinators, wellbeing and resilience grants, and supports targeted to First Nations people. Details are very light at this stage, with no program page, guidelines or announcements around the release of funding. Funding has been committed from 2022-23 to 2024-25.

## INNOVATIVE MODELS OF CARE PROGRAM (EXISTING): \$24.7M

Funding of \$24.7million for three additional rounds of the Innovative Models of Care (IMOC) Program has been included in this budget. These grants fund solutions that address specific primary healthcare service issues within local rural communities and regions. It encourages multiple towns to work together and share primary healthcare services.

The last round of this funding closed on the 1st September 2022. If the future rounds follow the same cadence as in 2022, we should expect the next round to open in early 2023. Check out this [document](#) for feedback from the Department from the previous round to help you prepare to put a winning application together in 2023.

## IN SUMMARY

More grants supporting the health and aged care sectors will likely emerge from that \$135 billion figure, as investment areas become clearer; a good chunk of this allocation is spread across the forward estimates (i.e., from 2023 – 2025), with limited details on exactly how it will be used (language such as ‘capacity building’ and ‘targeted investment’ are used frequently), and we have another budget coming up in May 2023.

With outright grants support for COVID-related measures waning (think vaccine research, funding for staff and resources in primary care, etc.) it is encouraging to see the Labor government prioritising investment in Healthcare grants in different areas (i.e., Strengthening Medicare GP Grants). While no one can predict the next stage of the pandemic and how it may affect government budget priorities, telemedicine is fast becoming a preferred ‘first touch’ model of healthcare delivery, and programs such as this will help to ensure more Australians have access.

The fact that the MRFF is (by no small margin) the most significant area of grants investment from the Federal Government is consistent with Australia’s posture as a country of eminent medical research and innovation and we would expect future budgets from this government to be reflective of this position, with continued investment in research and development.

# What's in the Budget for Education

Eily Fidock

The workforce skills shortage within the Australia labour market has become a point of crisis over the past 12 months. The National Skills Commission's annual update from 2022 reported 20 of the largest employing occupations are facing skills shortages, most notably health professionals, information technology professionals and technicians and trade workers. Just as the workforce has changed since the onset of the pandemic, so has the delivery of education. Equitable access to technology, the flexibility to engage in remote learning and the importance of opportunity for face-to-face work experience were all challenges that are addressed in the recent 2022-23 Federal Budget.

## K-12 EDUCATION

Beginning with primary and secondary education, \$270 million has been allocated over two years for the *'Schools Upgrade Fund'*. A targeted round will provide \$18 million for small-scale capital projects followed by an open round of \$32 million for improvements to learning facilities such as ventilation upgrades, outdoor learning spaces, ICT equipment upgrades and other urgent repairs. A further \$215 million from 2023 will assist government schools with major refurbishments such as new classrooms and learning facilities. Applications opened on the 28th of November and will close on the 24th of February 2023.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

Moving to higher education, a number of programs received funding to encourage innovation and prepare graduates for future careers in rapidly changing industries. The *'Startup Year Program'* is a \$15.4 million initiative for eligible students to participate in an accelerator program encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation. This program will build a network of ambitious and knowledgeable students, graduates and companies to encourage collaboration between higher education providers, industry and the startup community.

The *'Strategic University Reform Fund (SURF)'* is back for another round with a \$40 million allocation for projects to enhance the collaboration between universities and local employers.



*'SURF'* supports research and innovation focused on jobs to create sustainable partnerships between universities and local industry. Previously funded projects featured digital health innovation, renewable energy technologies, advanced manufacturing and food technology innovation.

The *'Trailblazer Fund'* is also back with a further \$362.5 million investment over four years to establish selected universities as leaders in research commercialisation. Strategic priority areas of investment have been identified as defence, space, food and beverage, recycling and clean energy, resources technology and critical minerals technology. Each Trailblazer university that is successful in their grant application will receive \$50 million, to be matched by the university and industry partners, to build capability and capacity for real-world issues.

The *'Medical Research Future Fund'* has received a further \$6.3 billion over the next 10 years to fund projects shaping the future of health and medical research. *'MRFF'* grants can only be applied to from a list of approved eligible organisations including medical research institutes, universities and selected, eligible corporations. Key areas of investment include medical translation, research critical infrastructure and chronic disease research.





## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Part of the Australian Labor Government's plan to build a stronger, more resilient and modern economy includes increasing access to vocational education and training with fee-free places to support for women's participation in the workforce and planning for the future skill requirements of clean energy technologies and industry 4.0.

The 'New Energy Skills' program will address the growing skills demand for clean energy with a \$100 million investment for mentorships and apprenticeships. In addition, \$921 million has been allocated for 180,000 fee-free TAFE places to skill people for higher-paying jobs.

The 'TAFE Technology Fund' is dedicated to modernizing IT infrastructure of TAFEs across Australia. Eligible expenditure includes the create of laboratories and telehealth simulators. As part of the Government's 'Future Made in Australia Skills' plan, this funding will address skills shortages in healthcare as a result of the pandemic as well as the rising need for workers in growing industries like construction, resources, cyber security, new energy and advanced manufacturing.

To explore additional programs dedicated to workforce development initiatives from the 2022-23 Federal Budget, check out 'What's in the Budget for Workforce Development' by Grant Office's Global Research Associate.

With such a focus on the national skills shortage, the lack of cyber security skills grant funding from this Budget has left a void where the 'Cyber Security Skills Partnership Innovation Fund' previously occupied. The \$60 million grant program was frozen by the Labor Government and with the recent data breaches involving millions of Australians, there remains a strong appetite for cyber security skills and other ITC grant funding programs to return. With the \$10 billion 'Resilience, Effects, Defence, Space, Intelligence, Cyber and Enablers (REDSPICE)' package detailed within the Budget documents, there is potential for cyber capability programs and response initiatives to be product of the 2023-24 Federal Budget to be delivered in May next year.

# What's in the Budget for Climate Change

Eily Fidock

From the campaign trail to the recent delivery of the 2022-23 Federal Budget, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) have been vocal about their significant investment in climate response plans. This was the first Budget since Australia has committed to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and the first opportunity to prove to Australian communities how seriously they're taking the imminent threat of climate change.

## MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

Beginning with the Machinery of Government, the ALP have created the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water, merging the previous Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, and the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment. The purpose of this self-proclaimed 'super-ministry' is to deliver on the climate change and energy agenda to lead Australia's response to the climate emergency.

The Climate Change Authority have also been reinstated with a \$47 million investment, to provide transparency on Australia's progress towards net zero and advise the Federal Government with credible, science-backed direction on future emissions targets.

From just \$2 billion committed to climate action from the previous Morrison Government's March Budget to nearly \$25 billion from the Albanese Government, Labor has now set a baseline for future investments to accelerate the energy transition towards sustainable, clean industries. There are a number of grant opportunities anticipated to open for eligible businesses, local and state governments and community organisations from 2022-23.

## THE ENERGY TRANSITION

The energy transition from fossil-based systems of energy production and consumption to clean energy and renewables is critical to decarbonising Australia's heavy industries on the path to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 43% by 2030 and net-zero by 2050. To encourage this transition, the ALP have announced several new funds to drive innovation and development within new and existing industries Australia-wide.



The establishment of the \$1.9 billion 'Powering the Regions Fund' will invest in projects proposing to transform regional industries from 2023 to increase access to the economic opportunities of decarbonisation. This grant program will prioritise energy efficiency and fuel switching (hydrogen), the development of new, clean energy industries such as bioenergy, and workforce development to upskill existing workers through the energy transition.

The 'Driving the Nation Fund' will see a \$500 million investment in electric vehicle infrastructure to reduce transport emissions. This fund, previously known as the 'Future Fuels Fund', will co-invest in hydrogen and biofuels infrastructure to plan for a future of cheaper, cleaner energy without reliance on foreign oil. In addition, the national electric vehicle network will be extended connecting communities around the country.

The 'Rewiring the Nation' fund will support the transformation to a clean energy future, to ease the pressure on the electricity grid and the cost to Australian households. This \$20 billion total funding over the next five years will accelerate the construction of new electricity transmission links between regions as the power grid on the east coast transitions from running predominantly on coal power to renewable energy, increasing renewable energy generation from 35% to 82% by 2030.





## INVESTING IN AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE

To support the ALP's direct climate response action are a series of programs to strengthen priority industries, diversify the economy and drive regional development all while helping the transition to net zero emissions.

The '*National Reconstruction Fund (NRF)*' is one of the more notable and sizable funding announcements with \$15 billion of capital to provide loans, guarantees and equity to partner with the private sector, unlocking further \$30 billion investment to rebuild the nation's industrial base. With \$10 billion committed over the next five years and an additional \$5 billion from 2027, the NRF will concentrate funding for projects that leverage Australia's natural and competitive strengths including mining science and technology, medical science, defence capability, transport, agriculture and low emissions technologies.

Another program set to indirectly aid the energy transition is the '*Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program*'. This grant will invite proposals from state and local governments as well as not-for-profit organisations to collaborate on projects to transform regions and regional cities to move towards net-zero emissions, a decarbonised economy and support sustained regional growth.

The '*Strategic Critical Minerals Development Program*' will provide a total of \$50 million over three years in competitive grants to support early and mid-stage critical minerals projects. This initiative looks to grow the battery industry to create more jobs, diversity global supply chains and aid the transition to clean energy technology.

## PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Support in the budget for Australia's natural environment includes funding for both resilience from natural disasters and for protection and conservation of the environment.

The Disaster Ready Fund is a \$200 million per year initiative to support projects over the next five years to best build resilience and best prepare disaster-prone communities for future disasters. This funding comes as Australia has battled major floods in 2022, and with worsening and more frequent weather events predicted in the near future.

\$1.2 billion has been allocated to support preservation and restoration of the Great Barrier Reef, a further \$1 billion to progress the Reef 2050 Plan to enhance health and allow for ecological sustainable development, and \$12 million to support Reef-dependent tourism industries.

This was the first Federal Budget to include a statement on the fiscal risks that may arise from impact of climate change, stating the physical impacts of climate change due to extreme weather events, which are likely to increase in frequency and severity, have the potential to influence Australia's economic outcomes, government revenue and expenditure. The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the Bureau of Meteorology have additionally projected that even with a reduction in emissions resulting from action taken in this Budget, it is extremely likely that Australia will experience heavy rainfall events, hot days will increase in frequency and intensity and sea levels will continue to rise leading to more frequent and severe coastal inundation from storm surges.

Decarbonisation of the global economy presents an economic opportunity for businesses around the world to transform their industries to manage and mitigate climate-related risks. Australia has a competitive advantage with wind and solar electricity generation and the innovation and commercialisation of low emissions technologies and is well positioned to continue the transition to net-zero emissions. This Budget's display of transparency in progress and commitment of funds to climate action are encouraging signs for the future of Australia, the economy and our natural environment.



# What's in the Budget for Regional Development

Eily Fidock

Over the next four years, the Labor Government will invest \$7.4 billion to support regional development across Australia. Regional development is focused on strengthening local economies, creating new jobs, building infrastructure, and investing in local businesses. There are a number of new grant programs announced that adopt a “place-based” approach to transformation, enabling Australian regions to grow sustainably from their own communities and resources. Due to the challenges of the pandemic, global economic pressures and catastrophic weather events, the Government has also announced grant programs to build community resilience and ease the impact of future social, economic, and environmental hardships.

## GROWING REGIONS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Regional infrastructure is key to growing regional economies, improving livability, and building strong and resilient communities. In the Budget, the Labor Government have announced a number of investments and initiatives to support this growth.

The ‘*Priority Community Infrastructure Program*’ together with the ‘*Growing Regions program*’ will provide over \$1 billion for local community, sport, and infrastructure projects across the country. These programs are integral to regions experiencing growth to ensure facilities and essential services can meet the needs of future communities.

A further \$250 million on top of previously committed \$500 million has been announced for the ‘*Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program*’. This allocated funding supports local council efforts to deliver projects to support the wellbeing and resilience of their communities. From the 1st July 2023, councils will have access to Phase four funding with projects to be delivered by 30th June 2025 allowing for larger, complex, and impactful projects to be undertaken.

The ‘*National Reconstruction Fund*’ will be established to drive productivity and strengthen supply chain resilience.



In partnership with the private sector, award recipients will support sustainable employment growth in Australia’s regions. This \$15 billion fund will be a key driver of regional development as mining, agriculture, forestry, and transport receive billion-dollar allocations from 2023.

## DIGITALISATION

Building a digital economy has long been a priority for the Australian Government. By definition, a digital economy will build capability in emerging technologies to enable economic growth and prosperity. Key areas identified include digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, and Internet of Things. These technologies will build the foundation of a modern economy where the workforce will be digitally skilled, industries will adopt automation and digitalisation and 100% of Government services will be available online.

Bridging the digital divide that exists between Australia’s metropolitan cities and regional and rural areas has attracted investment from the 2022-23 Federal Budget. With COVID-19 demonstrating how critical connectivity is for education, healthcare, social welfare and the future of business, there is a renewed need to address this country’s black spots.

'*The Regional Connectivity Program*' is a \$200 million grant program to support the delivery of "place-based" telecommunications infrastructure projects to improve digital connectivity. The purpose of funding is to improve the accessibility and reliability of mobile and broadband services for regional, rural and First Nations communities. The two previous funding rounds saw over a hundred projects across Australia improve mobile voice and data coverage, fixed wireless, and fibre broadband services, allowed businesses to access essential online services and communities to connect with the digital economy. The guidelines for Round three of the '*Regional Connectivity Program*' will be released in the coming months.

The '*Mobile Black Spot Program*' will return for another round of funding with a \$300 million boost to deliver improved mobile coverage to underserved remote communities. To compliment, the '*Peri-Urban Mobile Program*' provides funding to improve mobile connectivity in bushfire priority areas along the fringes of Australia's major cities such as Geelong, the Gold Coast and Newcastle. This peri-urban area where the bush meets the suburbs creates a natural disaster risk where those living and working may not receive vital information during emergencies. \$39.1 million will be awarded over two new rounds from 2022-23.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

Australia's net-zero by 2050 commitment has been a key driver of the 2022-23 Federal Budget. Many of Australia's largest emitters are based in regional and remote areas in industries such as energy production, agriculture, transport, and industrial processes. The '*Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program*' will fund state, territory, and local governments, as well as not-for-profit organisations, to collaborate on projects to transform regional areas to benefit their communities. This annual, open, competitive grant program has approximately \$500 million committed over three years and will aim to catalyse Australia's regions to invest in clean energies and decarbonisation to move towards net-zero emissions.

The Labor Government will also establish a \$1.9 billion '*Powering the Regions Fund*' to provide funding to support the transition of regional industries to net zero. From 2023, funding from this grant program will support the decarbonisation of existing industries in regional areas through energy efficiency improvements, fuel switching, workforce development and the development of new clean energy industries.



Australia's regions have grown by 1% over the past 12 months and continue to attract more and more people compared to the capital cities. In 2022, regionally based industries made up 72% of the Australia's merchandise exports leading to increased job opportunities and a greater need for upgraded community infrastructure. Assuming a 'place-based' approach to regional development allows initiatives and opportunities presented within this budget to support projects targeting regional Australia's economies, communities, and industries. As grant programs are announced and awarded over the next year, Grants Office will explore in future FUNDED editions the impact these projects have on regional communities and tips for how to submit a great application to capture a piece of the multi-billion-dollar pie.

# What's in the Budget for Workforce Development

Anastasia Terziman

Whilst the new budget appears to be cutting back on some programs, new initiatives have emerged in key areas such as education and workforce development.

Thus, look no further to check out some of the new long-term initiatives the Labor Government has announced to allow Australia better access to training and skills. As a result of the Government's Jobs and Skills Summit held in 2022, a total of 36 actions have been agreed upon for immediate implementation. This includes subsidy schemes and bonuses for several groups in Australia wishing to study or further improve their skills to address the current labor market shortage.

## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

- **Fee-free TAFE:** The Albanese Government is delivering 480,000 fee-free TAFE and community-based vocational education places over four years (2023-26). Of this, 180,000 places have been allocated for 2023, with a \$1 billion fund. This agreement will prioritise training for students that face barriers for work and study, including those industries with severe skills shortages. This is likely to include trades, IT and digital skills, and skilled labour. Potential applicants include students and individuals wishing to pursue vocational training and trades.
- **TAFE Technology Fund:** this fund has been allocated \$50 million to support the modernisation of TAFEs across Australia and enabling students to take advantage of up-to-date IT facilities, workshops and laboratories. This will likely include grants to support the purchase of digital equipment and other digital solutions or funds for the upgrading of outdated equipment. Potential applicants include TAFEs and Registered Training Organisations (RTO's).
- **National Skills Agreement:** a new five year National Skills Agreement will commence in 2024, supporting a national skills and training reform. It is unknown if this will result in grants at this stage.



## SUPPORT TO STUDENTS

The Labor Government has initiated a \$474.5 million investment from 2023-24 to support Australian schools in recovering from the effect of COVID-19 and supporting their further development.

- **Student well-being boost:** Schools will receive \$20,000 towards improving student mental health. This will result in free mental-health checks being given to students. The grants are likely to be for the hire of additional medically qualified personnel or facilities to support this initiative.
- **Schools Upgrade Fund:** will provide \$270.8 million to support improvements to ventilation and air quality, and other large refurbishments. These may include furniture and other outdated equipment. This fund is intended predominantly for public schools.
- **Teacher shortage:** the government will support schools with grants of up to \$40,000 each to tackle the teacher shortage and attract new talent.
- **One-off university boost:** will support 20,000 free places for students within a low socio-economic background. This will eventuate in funding being issued directly to individual universities to provide scholarships to students.
- **Startup Year:** will support up to 2,000 eligible students each year to participate in a university-based accelerator program.





## SUPPORT TO MIGRANTS

Several new initiatives have been announced to support the labour migrant workforce in their adaptation. The initiative addresses mostly skills shortages, again within digital skills, trades, and the adequately skilled labour market. This includes:

- **Migration program:** this program has been extended from previous years and in 2022-23 will have an additional 35,000 places for the migrant labour force, totaling 195,000 places. More than 90% of places are intended for skilled workers, and at least 25% are aimed at regional areas. Students and secondary training visa holders will have their work restrictions relaxed until 30th June 2023 as well. This will allow them to work additional hours in any sector, helping to address workforce shortages.
- **Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme:** the Government will scale up the aged care training pathway with an additional 500 places in 2022-23.

## OTHER INITIATIVES

- **Work Bonus Income:** a one-off payment to pensioners of \$4,000 to alleviate the pressures created by the skills shortage. This will allow recipients to work additional hours in any sector, helping to address workforce shortages.

We expect some of these initiatives eventuating into grant funding over the next few months, as well as further detail within the May 2023 Budget. We look forward to exploring these opportunities further and seeing the impact they provide to Australia.



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