



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR MEDIA

1 DECEMBER 1989

I am pleased to announce today a series of initiatives to improve access to Federal Government services for people living in rural and regional centres and isolated areas across Australia.

The review of our policy designed to improve the quality of life for people in non-metropolitan Australia contains a number of new three-year programs.

These include -

- . \$4.5 million to provide support for long term carers of disabled people in rural areas;
- . a \$3.4 million rural women's health strategy incorporating funding for mobile breast cancer screening units in all States and Territories, improved family planning services, better information and counselling on women's health and an enhanced domestic violence education campaign;
- . a \$1.5 million extension of funding for geriatric assessment units in rural areas to try to ensure that elderly people in more isolated areas are receiving the sort of home or institutional care they need;
- . a \$900,000 expansion of the Countrylink information program to reach more isolated areas. Countrylink consists of a 008 telephone service, country show displays, information stands at places such as local stores or Council offices, and the publication of The Rural Book;
- . a \$1.85 million program to trial new ways to provide people in smaller towns with face-to-face advice on Federal Government services. These trials will test various means for providing a "one stop shop" approach for access to Government services;
- . a \$500,000 extension to country visits by the National Acoustics Laboratory to assist the hearing-impaired;

- . the establishment of outposted rehabilitation services at a cost of \$1.9 million in remote communities such as Roxby Downs and the Pilbara;
- . trials of a new multi-purpose approach to providing supported accommodation for people in crisis;
- . a \$1.7 million expansion of the Rural Youth Servicing program to enable an extended school liaison program by Youth Access Centres, introduction of mobile youth services and greater use of community agencies in providing advice to disadvantaged young people in rural areas; and
- . a \$4.9 million expansion of the program providing hostel accommodation for rural school students.

The new health initiatives constitute a further response to the findings of a 1986 Rural Women's Survey conducted with the assistance of the Country Women's Association.

Australians living in remote areas face special difficulties not encountered by city people. There will be a review of the current system of tax zone rebates which provide relief to taxpayers in remote and isolated areas. The review will consider anomalies in zone boundaries and special zone rebate arrangements, as well as problems with social security testing arrangements affecting people in isolated areas. The Zone Rebate Review will be co-ordinated by the Treasury, with the involvement of the Department of Social Security in relation to social security income testing arrangements. The Review will consult with the Prime Minister's Country Task Force.

A total of \$3.5 million will target business potential in rural and regional centres under the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) which will provide an additional 200 places for aspiring business people. NEIS combines assistance to the unemployed with a boost to the development of new enterprises which, when successful, have the capability to employ many more people.

Community and Government consultation is an important element in the Federal Government's philosophy of providing equal access to services for all Australians.

As well as the work of the Prime Minister's Country Task Force, there have been special surveys and conferences, and many Government Departments have advisory and consultative mechanisms in place.