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Australia's communications, media and arts sectors helping secure our recovery

The Morrison-McCormack Government is securing Australia's recovery through significant commitments to strengthen our communications, media and creative arts sectors, helping to rebuild our economy, secure jobs and support communities as we continue our resurgence from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Digital service delivery has become more important than ever, with many sectors rapidly digitising over the past year to meet the demands of home-based work. This is why the Government's Digital Economy Strategy plays a central role in the 2021-22 Budget, as we establish an enduring program to connect Australians and keep them safe online.

This Budget also recognises the challenges the pandemic has created for our arts sector, with significant support being delivered to help Australia's national cultural institutions and the broader arts sector position for stronger roles in a post-COVID world.

The Government's investments as part of its plan to secure Australia's recovery include:

- \$5.2 million for an awareness campaign to better support victims of online abuse and harm;
- \$84.8 million for improved connectivity in the regions through the Regional Connectivity Program;
- \$68.5 million for a dedicated stream of funding for Northern Australia under the Regional Connectivity Program and Mobile Black Spot Program;
- \$16.4 million for better mobile connectivity in bushfire-prone areas on the fringe of our cities;
- \$18.8 million over four years from 2021-22 for a Digital Games Tax Offset
- \$8 million for community broadcasting;
- \$15 million to the AAP Newswire in support of public interest journalism in regional Australia;
- \$7.7 million to help consumers select reliable, high speed broadband services that meet their needs;
- \$4.2 million to implement the News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code;
- \$85.4 million for eight national collecting institutions; and
- \$11.9 million over four years to boost quality children's television content.

Communications and the Digital Economy

Improving Online Safety

Under the Morrison Government's new Online Safety Act, there will be new and strengthened schemes to help Australians stay safe online. This includes a new adult cyber abuse scheme for Australian adults; an expanded cyberbullying scheme for Australian children and an enhanced image-based abuse scheme which addresses the non-consensual sharing of intimate images.

The Government will invest an additional \$5.2 million to alert Australians to the help available to them by informing the community of the new and strengthened schemes to keep them safe online.

Australia is at the forefront of online safety policy and regulation. The Online Safety Act will bolster Australia's world-leading online safety framework by creating new and strengthened schemes to keep Australians safe when things go wrong online.

Improving Regional Connectivity

The Government will build on the success of the Regional Connectivity Program by committing a further \$84.8 million to the Program, opening up new opportunities for regional businesses, communities and regional services such as health and education.

The Program complements the NBN and the Government's highly successful Mobile Black Spot Program by targeting the delivery of new and improved access to broadband and mobile connectivity in areas of high economic and social value outside of the NBN fixed-line footprint.

The first round of the program is providing \$90.3 million (GST inc) in funding towards 81 telecommunications infrastructure projects. Successful applicants included local councils, major telecommunications companies, regional businesses, community groups, educational facilities and fixed wireless providers.

Projects funded under the program will provide communities in regional Australia with access to improved broadband services and data, delivering fast, affordable and reliable connectivity.

The Government will also enhance digital connectivity in Northern Australia by providing \$68.5 million of dedicated funding for digital technology solutions in Northern Australia through the Regional Connectivity Program and Mobile Black Spot Program.

Connecting and protecting communities on the urban fringe

The Government will invest \$16.4 million to establish the Peri-Urban Mobile Program to improve mobile connectivity in bushfire prone areas on the peri-urban fringe of our major cities.

The peri-urban fringe is where the bush meets the suburbs, presenting a major bushfire risk to those who live and work in those areas.

By improving mobile coverage in these areas, communities will be able to receive vital information during emergencies, seek help if needed and stay in touch with loved ones.

On a day-to-day basis, the program will improve connectivity for these communities, contributing to the local economy through lifting productivity, capability and investment.

The Peri-Urban Mobile Program will provide grant funding to Mobile Network Operators and infrastructure providers to deploy new mobile phone infrastructure to upgrade mobile reception and coverage issues in these areas.

Digital Games Tax Offset

As part of the Digital Economy Strategy, the Government is providing \$18.8 million over four years from 2021-22 for a new Digital Games Tax Offset. This will provide a 30 per cent refundable tax offset for qualifying Australian digital games expenditure ongoing from 1 July 2022, with the criteria and definition of qualifying expenditure to be determined through industry consultation.

This measure will drive investment and growth in the sector, as well as help attract and build the creative digital skills needed in the economy, helping Australia to take a greater share of the approximately \$250 billion global video games development market.

Community Broadcasting

The Government will provide an additional \$8 million over two years to the Community Broadcasting Foundation as part of the Community Broadcasting Program

The community radio sector has made a valuable contribution to Australians throughout the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires and COVID-19 pandemic. This additional support will help to boost development and operational funding, support sustainability and capability for the sector, and allow it to manage the ongoing economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Australia's 450 community radio broadcasters will benefit from this measure.

Continued support for public interest journalism in regional Australia

The Government will provide additional funding of \$15 million over two years to the Australian Associated Press Newswire (AAP), starting in the 2020-21 financial year. The funding will support AAP's continued provision of newswire services, consisting of regional, national and international news, to regional media outlets across Australia. This allows regional media businesses to concentrate on covering local news stories that are important to their communities.

The funding is consistent with the objectives of the Public Interest News Gathering (PING) Program to support regional journalism and builds on the Government's existing support to the newswire service. The measure will bring the total support to AAP to \$20 million. AAP's existing PING agreement will be updated to reflect the increase in funding and new grant activities. The first payment of \$7.5 million will be paid before 30 June 2021.

Helping Australians access the right broadband services

The Government will support the continued delivery of the Measuring Broadband Australia (MBA) program by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) for an additional four years at a cost of \$7.7 million that will be recovered in full via the Annual Carrier Licence Charge.

The program will continue to help consumers select reliable, high speed fixed-line broadband services that meet their needs, and will extend these benefits to additional regional and emerging market segments by including fixed wireless broadband services.

The importance of the program's renewal is accentuated by the launch of new higher speed NBN products and increased reliance on broadband due to COVID-19.

News Media Bargaining Code

The Australian Government has introduced the world-leading News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code to address the bargaining power imbalance between Australian news media businesses and digital platforms, and to support a diverse and sustainable news media sector in Australia.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has several important functions under the Code, including registering news businesses, and maintaining a register of arbitrators.

Additional funding of \$4.2 million over three years from 2020-21 will be provided to ACMA in this Budget to enable the regulator to discharge its responsibilities.

Creative and Cultural Sector

As part of our plan to secure Australia's recovery, the Government has invested almost \$300 million to support the successful reopening of Australia's creative and cultural sector. These measures include:

- \$125.6 million for further Restart Investment and Sustain Expand (RISE) grants will provide competitive seed funding for new productions, festivals and events to support the successful re-opening of Australia's creative and cultural sector.
- \$50.8 million to extend the Temporary Interruption Fund used by the screen industry until 31 December 2021. The fund is helping to support local film and television producers secure finance and start filming again.
- \$20 million in grants providing support to our independent cinemas through the Supporting Cinemas' Retention Endurance and Enhancement initiative (SCREEN)
- \$75 million to reinstate the Producer Offset Rate for film set to 40 per cent as an ongoing measure for Australian film of creative and cultural significance.
- \$20 million to various arts organisations including \$10 million for the music charity Support Act, and \$5 million to support national performing arts touring.
- \$11.4 million to support the recovery of regional arts events in 2021-22.

More support for our National Cultural Institutions

The Government will provide additional funding of \$85.4 million to our National Collecting Institutions to improve their financial sustainability and enable them to undertake a variety of capital works so that we can continue to preserve and enjoy Australia's cultural heritage.

Additional funding of \$32.4 million over two years will be provided to eight National Collecting Institutions to improve their financial sustainability and enable them to deliver public services and programs. The Australian National Maritime Museum, Bundanon Trust, Museum of Australian Democracy, National Film and Sound Archive, National Gallery of Australia, National Library of Australia, National Museum of Australia and National Portrait Gallery of Australia will be the beneficiaries of this funding.

The Government will also provide additional funding of \$47.5 million to our national cultural institutions for a variety of capital works so that we can continue to preserve and enjoy Australia's cultural heritage.

This includes funding of \$28.6 million to the National Gallery of Australia to replace end-of-life capital assets to improve the safety of staff and visitors and support the ongoing care of the Gallery's collection valued at \$6.2 billion.

Funding of \$9 million over two years will also be provided to the Australian National Maritime Museum, Bundanon Trust and the National Library of Australia to deliver safety related capital works. This will include safety improvements to public thoroughfares and replacement of fire safety systems at the Australian National Maritime Museum, restoration of the Bundanon Homestead, maintenance of the Boyd Education Centre, and support for the replacement of the Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning system at the National Library of Australia.

Funding of \$5.5 million over four years will also be provided to establish and sustain an additional exhibition in the Museum of Australian Democracy.

Children's Television

Further funding of \$11.9 million over four years from 2021-22 and \$3.0 million ongoing, will be provided to the Australian Children's Television Foundation (ACTF) to support the development and distribution of quality Australian children's content. This is in addition to the funding of \$20.2 million over two years provided in the 2020-21 Budget.

ACTF has played a pivotal role in the success of iconic Australian programs, such as *Round the Twist* and *Dance Academy*, and more recent productions including *Bluey*, *Hardball* and *Little J and Big Cuz*.

This funding will enable ACTF to support producers of children's content to transition as the Government modernises the regulatory and funding framework that underpins Australian content. It will also assist ACTF to continue their role in helping producers capitalise on interest from streaming services to commission and acquire quality Australian children's content.

Through these significant investments in the 2021-22 Budget, the Government is securing Australia's recovery by supporting job creation and an economic revival across sectors hit hard by the pandemic.

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