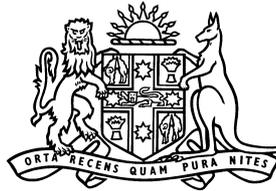


Budget Highlights for Rural and Regional New South Wales 2003-04



INFORMATION ON THE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES 2003-04

Regional Budget Highlights 2003-04 provides information at a glance on key State Government spending outside metropolitan Sydney.

The capital works in this document are a selection of the total commitment to regional and rural New South Wales.¹

For the purposes of this report, the Hunter, Illawarra and Central Coast are included.

Where capital works are funded over four years through forward estimates, both the 2003-04 spending figures and total project costs are included where available.

¹ For a complete details see Budget Paper 4

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FOREWORD – BY BOB CARR, PREMIER OF NEW SOUTH WALES

This Budget gets on with the job of improving services for people living in country New South Wales.

People living outside Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong and the Central Coast account for nearly 26 per cent of the State's population.

However, in this Budget, more than 36 per cent of all spending on capital works and road maintenance will take place outside of Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong and the Central Coast.

This means that country communities will get the benefit of \$2.9 billion of a total \$8.2 billion program.

This capital investment will sustain around 64,000 jobs.

Once again the Budget provides for a big lift in spending on health and education.

Some \$2.6 billion will be spent on health care for rural and regional communities, a 93 per cent increase in funding for rural and regional health services since Government took office in 1995.

The hospital building program includes planning for the redevelopment of hospitals at Orange, Bathurst and Wagga Wagga and 14 smaller hospitals across rural New South Wales.

Work continues on hospitals including Barraba, Bourke, Hay, Young, Henty, Milton/Ulladulla and Coledale.

Some \$2.3 billion is earmarked for public schools outside Sydney.

This Budget also provides for a major program of education public works with \$113 million to build and refurbish schools and TAFE colleges outside Sydney.

Construction worth \$68 million will begin on 16 schools and TAFE colleges including Bega High School, Bulahdelah Central School, Jindabyne Central School and Mudgee TAFE college.

Works worth a further \$164 million on completion will continue in 43 schools and TAFE colleges.

Spending on linking country schools to the Internet will continue, with \$213 million over the next four years.

Literacy and numeracy programs costing more than \$60 million will be undertaken in country schools.

Some \$104 million is set aside for maintenance work on public school grounds and buildings. A further \$73 million will be spent on distance education centres, grants for isolated schools and other measures to tackle educational challenges in rural communities.

Nearly 90 per cent of the State remains in drought. The Government will stand by drought affected farmers until the drought ends.

This Budget provides \$47 million for drought assistance over the next six months, continuing the high levels of spending on drought assistance.

This Budget also commits \$13 million to tackle salinity.

We will spend \$15 million this year to protect the Snowy River.

Country rail works include \$43.6 million to replace wooden sleepers with concrete sleepers, \$6.3 million for crossing loops on the North Coast Line, and \$9.5 million to replace and upgrade rail bridges.

More than \$80 million has been provided to support volunteer rural fire brigades and State Emergency Service units.

This document provides details of many more regional initiatives planned by the Carr Government in 2003-04.



Bob Carr
Premier

AGEING, DISABILITY SERVICES, AND HOME CARE

Rural and regional communities across New South Wales will benefit from the Government's allocation of \$530 million in the 2003-04 budget to fund programs for older people, people with a disability, their families and carers in country areas.

The regional allocation represents more than 40% of the \$1,275 million total to be spent on disability and aged services across the state.

The NSW Government is committed to improving access to specialist and mainstream services for people with a disability, older people and their carers living in rural and regional New South Wales.

As part of this commitment, the Government is expanding the Local Support Coordination program in rural and regional areas, with a further 20 Local Support Coordinators recruited and a total of 50 local government areas serviced, by December 2003.

Spending on programs and services in rural and regional New South Wales in 2003-04 will include:

- More than \$114 million in the Riverina Murray, Far West, and Central West regions.
- More than \$117 million in the Far North Coast, New England, and Mid-North Coast regions.
- More than \$102 million in the Illawarra and Southern Highlands regions.
- More than \$196 million in the Hunter and Central Coast regions.

Spending in regional and rural New South Wales will provide prevention and early intervention programs while improving access to specialist and mainstream services and support networks.

Regions will share in new funding of:

- \$28.5 million over four years for additional personal attendant care services for people with physical disabilities.
- \$1.6 million in 2003-04 and \$3.2 million per annum thereafter to make respite services more flexible, to better respond to the needs of people with a disability, their families and carers, through in-home and centre-based services.

An estimated total of more than \$172m will be spent in regional New South Wales on home and community care services (HACC) to assist frail older people and

people with a disability to live independently in the community. HACC spending in regional areas includes:

- More than \$44 million in the Riverina Murray, Far West and Central West regions.
- More than \$48 million in the Far North Coast, New England and Mid-North Coast regions.
- More than \$31 million in the Illawarra and Southern Highlands regions.
- More than \$47 million in the Hunter and Central Coast regions.

The Budget for 2003-04 is evidence of the NSW Government's continued commitment to building better services for people with a disability, older people and their carers living in regional communities.

AGRICULTURE

NSW Agriculture's primary mission is to help ensure the State's agricultural industries – which generate \$8 billion annually – maintain a profitable and sustainable future. The beneficiaries of the Department's research, advisory, education and regulatory services include farmers, rural and regional communities, as well as the wider New South Wales economy.

This year NSW Agriculture's operating expenditure in rural and regional New South Wales is \$275.3 million.

NEW INITIATIVES

Capital works

NSW Agriculture has received \$11.85 million for Capital Works in 2003-04.

The major items in this program include:

- \$2.6 million for purchase of plant and equipment.
- \$2.5 million to enhance and upgrade information technology infrastructure.
- \$500,000 for glasshouse and quarantine facilities at Tamworth.
- \$530,000 for Organic Waste Recycling Unit facilities at Camden.
- \$2.5 million for industry funded works.
- \$500,000 for stage two of Genetic Plant Research Laboratories at Wagga Wagga.
- \$130,000 to upgrade farm and domestic water supply systems of departmental properties.
- \$690,000 for a new Vocational Education Training facility at Orange.
- \$425,000 for minor works in research and diagnostics areas.
- \$195,000 for preservation of NSW Agriculture's heritage assets.
- \$650,000 to address occupational health and safety and environmental issues at various locations.

KEY INITIATIVES

- \$22 million as NSW Agriculture's contribution for ongoing drought assistance measures in the first six months of 2003-04, due to the prolonged nature of the drought. Drought assistance measures are also included in the allocations for other departments,

ensuring that overall spending on drought assistance is maintained at the same high rate as 2002-03.

- Statewide: \$916,000 for the final year of the Government's four-year Salinity Strategy to address agricultural issues involving salinity.
- Wagga Wagga: \$2.15 million for biotechnology projects, including the establishment of an Agricultural Genomics Centre at Wagga Wagga.
- Central and Southern Tablelands: \$950,000 to assist the New South Wales sheep industry to combat Ovine Johne's Disease (OJD).
- Western Division: \$500,000 to complete feral pig and fox eradication programs identified in the Government's initial drought assistance package in 2002/2003.
- Statewide: \$750,000 to assist commencement of the New South Wales Game Council.
- Statewide: \$2.6 million to fund the initial stage of the introduction of a mandatory National Livestock Identification Scheme in New South Wales.
- Statewide: \$6.994 million for New South Wales' contributions to the National Eradication Campaign for Red Imported Fire Ant being undertaken in Queensland.
- Statewide: \$1.442 million for Rural Lands Protection Boards (RLPBs) to implement new information technology plans.

ARTS

Government arts initiatives in regional and rural communities in 2003-04 include:

- An additional \$8.5 million over four years for grants to public libraries, including regional and rural libraries. This is in addition to the \$13.59 million announced last year and will increase additional public library funding to \$25.74 million by 2005-06.
- An additional \$1.9 million over four years to give teachers and students in remote and disadvantaged schools access to performances and education programs by professional arts companies and artists.
- An additional \$1.25 million over three years, starting in 2004-05, to expand regional programs by the state's major cultural institutions (for example, the Art Gallery of NSW, Australian Museum, Powerhouse Museum).

Funding to the Community Cultural Development program will increase by \$100,000 per annum in 2003-04, bringing total funding in 2003-04 to \$2.8 million. This builds on the additional \$700,000 provided in 2002-03. The fund will provide:

- Improved support for 10 existing Regional Arts Development Officers (RADOs).
- Two new RADOs (North coast and Orana regions).
- More training for RADOs and Regional Arts Boards.
- An extra \$100,000 for the Community Arts Support Program (CASP), administered by Regional Arts NSW. This will double existing funding to CASP.
- A new program that recognises the important role of museum volunteers, including those in regional museums.

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Nearly \$7 million will be spent building new court buildings and the refurbishing of existing courthouses in rural and regional New South Wales in the 2003-04 Budget.

The spending includes on-going funding for these major initiatives:

- \$2.4 million in 2003-04 for the construction of a new district court at Nowra. This will replace the small local court, improve the movement of prisoners and increase jury and judicial security. The estimated total cost of the project is \$4.8 million
- \$2.5 million in 2003-04 for Hunter Children's Court. A modern facility to handle both care and criminal matters will be built on the Worimi Detention Centre site. The facility has one courtroom and a large multi purpose conference room. The estimated total cost of the project is \$7.6 million
- \$1.3 million in 2003-04 for the Woy Woy Courthouse. This project will involve the conversion of the local court to accommodate children's court matters. Total cost of the project is approximately \$2 million.
- \$420,000 in 2003-04 to improve the security of prisoner access to Grafton courtrooms and to complete refurbishment of Courtroom 2. The estimated total cost of the project is \$1 million.
- \$140,000 in 2003-04 to start refurbishing the 1903 heritage wing of the Moree Court complex. Works will include general repair and maintenance of the building. The estimated total cost of the project is \$250,000.

These investments will improve security at country courthouses, upgrade existing accommodation and facilities and help maintain on-going court services to the local community.

An additional \$2 million will be spent on on-going routine maintenance of courthouses in rural and regional areas during 2003-04.

CABINET OFFICE

BIOTECHNOLOGY

BioFirst Strategy

The \$68 million BioFirst Strategy is designed to position New South Wales as a leader in biotechnology and maximise the social, environmental and economic benefits of biotechnology.

Agricultural Genomics Centre

The Government has allocated \$7.25 million over five years to establish an Agricultural Genomics Centre.

The Centre will identify genes for use in Australia's agriculture and protect them through patenting and other intellectual property protection mechanisms.

Research at the Centre also has the potential to positively impact on resource management issues such as water use and efficiency, for example, studying cold tolerance and dwarf growth genes in rice.

The Centre is geographically distributed, with research to be undertaken at:

- Wagga Wagga Agricultural Institute.
- Tamworth Centre for Crop Improvement.
- NSW Agriculture's Yanco Agricultural Institute near Leeton.
- CSIRO's Divisions of Plant Industries and Mathematics and Statistics (Canberra and Sydney respectively).
- Proteomics Centre at Macquarie University.

Register of Genetic Material

The Government has allocated \$600,000 over five years to develop a register of genetic material for ongoing research and development, including:

- Register of NSW Agriculture's Scientific Collections Unit at Orange Agricultural Institute and other regional locations, to record information on the occurrences, identities, host ranges and distributions of pests, mites and insects associated with agricultural activity in New South Wales.
- DNA fingerprinting of key parts of the Australian Winter Cereals Collection to simplify research and make wheat breeding programs more effective.

Regional Biotechnology Outreach Program (REBOP)

The Department of State and Regional Development has been allocated approximately \$1.8 million over five years under the BioFirst Strategy for a Leadership and Mentoring program to assist in building management skills in the biotechnology industry. Funds from this program are directed towards the REBOP program. The REBOP program aims to help regional businesses to commercialise biotechnology.

As part of this program, DSRD has also participated in a regional biotechnology seminar in Nowra during National Innovation Week in May 2003. The next REBOP event is scheduled for Lismore in conjunction with the regional meeting of the New South Wales Innovation Council.

FAMILIES FIRST

Families First is a coordinated State Government strategy aimed at families with children aged 0-8. Families First links prevention and early intervention services and community development programs to form a comprehensive service network providing wide-ranging support to:

- Help families raise healthy well adjusted children.
- Connect with each other for support.
- Prevent problems before families find themselves in crisis.

Families First is currently operating throughout New South Wales, including the following rural and regional areas:

- Far North Coast - \$1.65 million for 2003-04.
- Mid North Coast - \$1.73 million for 2003-04.
- New England - \$1.37 million in 2003-04.
- Southern New South Wales - \$1.18 million in 2003-04.
- Central West - \$1.18 million in 2003-04.
- Orana Far West - \$1.36 million in 2003-04.
- Central Coast - \$1.57 million in 2003-04.
- Riverina-Murray - \$920 000 in 2003-04.
- Hunter - \$2.74 million in 2003-04.
- Illawarra - \$1.02 million in 2003-04.

Families First has improved support for families in a variety of ways:

- By providing extra early childhood nurses who are able to contact more families with newborn babies and support them in their home.
- Through volunteers providing practical help and advice to families with very young children.
- By employing Family Workers to help parents increase their parenting skills.
- By providing more playgroups for families, which are run by early childhood-trained staff.
- By improving access to information on parenting.
- Through community projects that enable families to obtain improved access to the services they need and provide more opportunities to be supported by other families.
- By providing services for Aboriginal, non-English speaking and young parents.
- By improving communication between services that support families, particularly families with more complex needs.

ABORIGINAL CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY STRATEGY (CEOS OUTCOMES PROJECT)

The Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy will help meet critical needs of Aboriginal children and young people and their families and carers across New South Wales.

\$1.7 million will be allocated statewide to the strategy in 2003-2004. Around two-thirds of the allocation will be spent in rural and regional areas.

The strategy will allow Aboriginal community leaders and Government service providers to take action to meet needs.

This will be achieved by:

- Focusing on delivering services to Aboriginal people and achieving better outcomes.
- Better coordination of service delivery to Aboriginal communities.
- Focusing on prevention and early intervention.
- Focusing on Aboriginal culture and heritage.

BETTER FUTURES REGIONAL STRATEGY

The Better Futures Regional Strategy has been developed and funded in order to achieve better outcomes for young people in New South Wales by improving how communities and services support young people and respond to their needs.

\$10.8 million over four years from 2002-03 has been allocated to facilitate this process, with \$2.6 million available in 2003-04.

New funds will be distributed regionally based on the distribution of young people. A significant portion will be spent on disadvantaged communities in rural and regional New South Wales.

Other factors which will be taken into account when determining where to allocate resources include rurality and socio-economic status; schooling issues such as literacy, numeracy and retention rates; and issues such as juvenile justice rates and child protection notifications.

SALINITY

NSW Salinity Strategy

The NSW Salinity Strategy has a budget of \$52 million over four years to address the growing salinity problem in New South Wales. The forward estimate for Salinity Strategy expenditure in 2003-04 is \$13 million.

Continuing initiatives under the Salinity Strategy include:

- Working with producers and industry to establish farm benchmarking and industry guidelines leading to environmentally accredited farms within priority salinity hazard landscapes.
- Ongoing funding for specialist Salt Action Teams. Teams are translating output from agencies' technical staff to the catchment and landscape level. Teams also assist agencies' front line staff and other advisers who work with land managers and groups of land managers to develop actions at the paddock level.
- The Salinity Information Program and Decision Support Tool projects, which integrate data, analysis and modelling and decision-making support, and provide it in an easily accessible form.
- A salinity communication strategy to raise awareness of salinity issues in the general community.

- Research into land management practices that reduce recharge and prevent discharge.
- ‘Model farms’ - research sites have been established to evaluate new “Salt Solutions” farming systems, which maximise water use, minimise recharge and prevent discharge, while providing economically viable farming. Model farm demonstrations help farmers learn from other farmers.
- Research into planted forests and their potential for new products and environmental services in priority salinity hazard landscapes.
- Pilot projects trialling the systems and frameworks needed to develop environmental services markets and help mitigate salinity such as the Environmental Services Scheme.
- Demonstration of the viability of planted forests in the Liverpool Plains area as a means of controlling salinity.

National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality

The total budget for the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) is \$396 million. New South Wales and the Commonwealth are each contributing \$198 million. Funding committed under the NSW Salinity Strategy is recognised under this amount.

The forward estimate for expenditure under the NAP for 2003-04 is \$23 million (in addition to the Salinity Strategy budget).

Under the NAP, Catchment Blueprints within NAP priority regions have been endorsed for investment in water quality and salinity initiatives.

The NAP priority areas in NSW are the lower Murray-Darling, Murray, Murrumbidgee, Lachlan, Central West, Far West, Namoi, Gwydir and Border Rivers.

Regional NAP/NHT Investment Strategies are being finalised by Catchment Management Boards and are expected to be approved in late 2003.

Priority projects approved for funding in New South Wales include:

- Murray Land and Water Management Plans.

- Lower Murray Irrigation Areas Land and Water Management Plan.
- Implementation of MIA Envirowise.
- Implementation of Heads of Agreement between NSW Government and Communities of Coleambally, Kerarbury and Coleambally Outfall District Land and Water Management Plans.
- Feasibility Study to Achieve Water savings in the Murrumbidgee Catchment.
- Targeted Implementation of the Murray Catchment Blueprint Within the South West Slopes Management Unit.
- Kyeamba Valley Targeted Salinity and Water Quality Control Program.
- Implementation of the Darling Anabranch Management Plan.
- Identification of Riverine Areas of High Recovery Potential in the Namoi Catchment.
- Groundwater data collection and interpretation for Border Rivers.
- Cudgegong and Upper Macquarie salinity prioritisation and strategic direction project.
- Groundwater monitoring for trend analysis and management improvement in the Lachlan Valley.
- Stock watering points - a central key to environmental management in semi-arid landscapes.
- Groundwater investigations for salinity management in the Gwydir catchment.
- Providing the capacity for Salt Action Teams & Catchment Communities to access economic information & advice for greater adoption of salinity solutions.
- Development of a toolkit incorporating benchmarks for assessing Biodiversity benefits from vegetation managed or planted for salinity mitigation.
- Quantifying sub-catchment impacts of tree planting on water yield and quality.

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

This year, SEDA's expenditure in rural and regional areas will be more than \$3 million.

Ongoing Initiatives

- SEDA will contribute \$1.4 million to landfill gas and cogeneration projects at three Central Coast sites.
- SEDA will contribute a further \$1.1 million to a Waste Coal Mine Gas demonstration plant to be developed in either the Southern Highlands or the Hunter Valley.
- \$300,000 will be spent on promoting energy efficiency in rural and regional areas through the Energy Smart Business Program.
- \$100,000 will be spent on seminars and community engagement in regional and rural areas to promote energy efficiency and sustainability.

New Initiatives

\$50,000 will be spent on implementing a NSW energy cropping and bioenergy strategy in conjunction with NSW Agriculture.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Families in rural and regional New South Wales will benefit from over \$255 million in the Department of Community Services's budget for 2003-04 – half the \$509.1 million Statewide Budget for service provision to families, children and young people.

Rural and regional New South Wales will also get its fair share of \$294.1 million for DoCS operational costs.

DoCS will continue to expand its range of family support services throughout New South Wales in 2003-04. More than \$175 million has been allocated in grants and support payments for local service providers in regional and rural New South Wales in four key areas comprising:

- \$59.8 million for out-of-home care services and child support allowances.
- \$43.6 million for Children's Services.
- \$39 million for the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) to help people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless. This includes women - with or without children - who are escaping domestic violence.
- \$32.9 million for Community Services Grants Program, including continued delivery of initiatives associated with the Families First strategy.

Funds for an additional 875 caseworkers across the State over the next five years for child protection, and early intervention and prevention programs for children, young people and families, will see a significant injection of new staff into rural and regional areas.

A recruitment campaign for these frontline workers, targeting universities, will commence in October 2003.

\$14.9 million will be spent across New South Wales on capital assets to improve systems and infrastructure including:

- Client Information System and the Community Partners System (\$300,000).
- Corporate Information System (\$2 million).
- Essential refurbishment, capital maintenance and minor works projects, including replacement of furniture and equipment (\$2.9 million).
- Accommodation requirements for new frontline

staff being recruited across all programs as part of the Government's new funding package (\$5.9 million).

- Out-of-home-care services (\$3.8 million).

\$39.7 million in recurrent funding will be spent on new initiatives to provide greater support to DoCS' frontline staff, and better management. This includes IT systems, operational support, staff development, and research.

These initiatives also include new Occupational Health and Safety systems, establishing a multicultural services unit to ensure better outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse people, and finalising the new client information system.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES

The NSW Government will provide more than \$46.4 million for custodial and offender management services in rural and regional areas across the State in the next financial year.

The funding will be used for the delivery of development programs and includes four new works and three on-going projects.

Major new initiatives include:

- Mid-North Coast Second Chance Program. This program will provide vocational training and assist indigenous offenders to re-establish important cultural links. The facility will provide accommodation for 80 offenders with an estimated total cost of \$9 million. The 2003-04 allocation is \$530,000.
- Relocating 109 positions in the Department of Corrective Services to Goulburn by 2005. The 2003-04 allocation is \$627,000.
- Statewide Community Offender Services (previously known as the Probation and Parole Service) program. A program to upgrade office accommodation involving fit-outs and improvement to fire and egress requirements of 16 offices in 2003-04 with an allocation of \$1 million. Estimated total cost is \$12 million.
- Kempsey Mid-North Coast Remand extension - A program to increase bed numbers from 350 to 500 for the new Mid-North Coast Correctional Centre, following increasing inmate numbers. Estimated total cost is \$25 million. The 2003-04 allocation is \$16.1 million.

The rural and regional areas of the State will also benefit by the injection of more than \$42 million in continuing programs. These include:

- Wellington Western Region Correctional Centre. A facility providing for 500 multi-classifications including components for female and remand inmates. The 2003-04 allocation is \$20 million.
- Junee Correctional Centre extension. Improvements to the Centre include upgrades of the kitchen, visiting centre, industries, education and program areas. The 2003-04 allocation is \$2 million and estimated total cost is \$5 million.
- Kempsey Mid-North Coast Correctional Centre. This multi-classification correctional centre, which is currently under construction will provide an

additional 350 bed capacity and will accommodate both male and female inmates. Total allocation for 2003-04 is \$18.3 million.

The Department of Corrective Services' rural and regional initiatives will address the need to suitably accommodate an increasing inmate population. These initiatives target a deficiency in accommodation in rural and regional areas such as the mid-north coast of New South Wales.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

363,000 students in regional and rural New South Wales will share in \$2.3 billion of recurrent funding for government preschools, primary and secondary schools in the 2003-04 State Budget.

More than \$60 million will be set aside for literacy and numeracy programs in regional and rural schools.

The 2003-04 Budget provides funding for 59 new and on-going major school building and TAFE projects, along with maintenance, to the value of \$336 million in regional and rural New South Wales.

16 major new construction projects worth more than \$68 million will begin in regional and rural parts of the State, with more than \$18 million to be spent in 2003-04.

More than \$96 million has been allocated in 2003-04 for 43 on-going projects worth more than \$164 million.

\$104 million has been allocated for maintenance in schools and TAFE colleges in rural and regional areas of the State.

As well as new school and TAFE facilities, regional and rural New South Wales will share in funding for statewide programs to reduce class sizes, enhance the quality of teaching, expand technology in schools, install air conditioning, and replace demountable classrooms.

The list of new capital works includes these major building projects:

- \$7 million for Banora Point High School - new school Stage 2 (\$300,000 in 2003-04).
- \$5 million for Bega High School - upgrade Stage 2 (\$200,000 in 2003-04).
- \$5 million for Bulahdelah Central School - upgrade Stage 1 (\$200,000 in 2003-04).
- \$5 million for Callaghan College - upgrade Jesmond campus (\$200,000 in 2003-04).
- \$1 million for Helensburgh Public School - completion of upgrade (\$700,000 in 2003-04).
- \$4.9 million for Hunter Performing Arts High School - upgrade facilities including new performance space (\$200,000 in 2003-04).
- \$5 million for Jindabyne Central School - secondary accommodation Stage 1 (\$200,000 in 2003-04).
- \$1 million for Tuggerah Lakes College - completion of Stage 1 upgrade (\$80,000 in 2003-04).
- \$4 million for Belmont TAFE - new child studies facility (\$400,000 in 2003-04).
- \$6.765 million for Blue Mountains TAFE - information technology, tourism and hospitality, outdoor recreation and library (\$3.735 million in 2003-04).
- \$5.563 million for Grafton TAFE - multi-purpose workshops, classrooms and offices (\$2.412 million in 2003-04).
- \$4.477 million for Mudgee TAFE - multi-purpose workshops and student amenities (\$2.171 million in 2003-04).
- \$502,000 for Orange TAFE - refurbishment for access programs (\$502,000 in 2003-04).
- \$1.1 million for Wagga Wagga TAFE - new learning centre (\$200,000 in 2003-04).
- \$5.9 million for Wollongong TAFE - refurbishment for trade workshops and general purpose spaces (\$250,000 in 2003-04).
- \$6.5 million for Horsley Public School - new school (Privately Financed Project).

Continuing projects include:

- \$2.628 million in 2003-04 for Anna Bay Public School - completion of redevelopment (total cost \$3.13 million).
- \$7.201 million in 2003-04 for Banora Point High School - new school Stage 1 (total cost \$13.179 million).
- \$2.408 million in 2003-04 for Bega High School - upgrade Stage 1 (total cost \$3.694 million).
- \$3.443 million in 2003-04 for Blue Haven Public School - upgrade Stage 2 (total cost \$4.196 million).
- \$936,000 in 2003-04 for Boambee Public School - hall, canteen and covered outdoor learning area (total cost \$1.54 million).
- \$3.644 million in 2003-04 for Bogangar Public School - new school (total cost \$5.436 million).
- \$3.204 million in 2003-04 for Brisbane Water Secondary College - Stage 1 upgrade (total cost \$5.227 million).
- \$4.619 million in 2003-04 for Callaghan College - upgrade Stage 2 (total cost \$6.777 million).

- \$3.082 million in 2003-04 for Clarence Town Public School - home bases and hall (total cost \$3.957 million).
- \$1.316 million in 2003-04 for Cooma North Public School - hall, canteen and covered outdoor learning area (total cost \$1.722 million).
- \$881,000 in 2003-04 for Dorrigo High School - upgrade accommodation (total cost \$2.299 million).
- \$2.622 million in 2003-04 for Frederickton Public School - provide permanent accommodation (total cost \$3.212 million).
- \$3.052 million in 2003-04 for Glenbrook Public School - new facilities and refurbishment of existing (total cost \$3.87 million).
- \$1.543 million in 2003-04 for Helensburgh Public School - hall, canteen and covered outdoor learning area (total cost \$1.804 million).
- \$2.076 million in 2003-04 for Henry Kendall High School - redevelopment Stage 1 (total cost \$5.186 million).
- \$1.163 million in 2003-04 for Jerrabomberra Public School - new school Stage 2 (total cost \$2.943 million).
- \$1.786 in 2003-04 for Kendall Public School - upgrade of existing facilities, provision of new facilities (total cost \$3.558 million).
- \$559,000 in 2003-04 for Kiama High School - upgrade Stage 1 (total cost \$4.407 million)
- \$2.442 million in 2003-04 for Lightning Ridge Central School - upgrade Stage 2 (total cost \$4.357 million).
- \$2.747 million in 2003-04 for Lightning Ridge Central School - upgrade Stage 3 (total cost \$4.343 million).
- \$1.408 million in 2003-04 for Merimbula Public School - hall, canteen, covered outdoor learning area (total cost \$1.880mill).
- \$3.106 million in 2003-04 for Merimbula Public School - upgrade of accommodation (total cost \$4.546 million).
- \$2.762 million in 2003-04 for Milton Public School - upgrade (total cost \$3.690 million).
- \$3.166 million in 2003-04 for Mullumbimby High School - upgrade Stage 1 (total cost \$4.822 million).
- \$2.741 million in 2003-04 for Mullumbimby High School - upgrade Stage 2 (total cost \$4.015 million).
- \$2.730 million in 2003-04 for Northlakes High School - technology infrastructure upgrade (total cost \$3.674).
- \$3.343 million in 2003-04 for Soldiers Point Public School- Stage 1 upgrade (total cost \$3.886 million).
- \$4.115 million in 2003-04 for Tuggerah Lakes College - upgrade Stage 1 (total cost \$5.530).
- \$1.881 million in 2003-04 for Tweed River High School - Stage 1 upgrade (total cost \$3.130 million).
- \$884,000 in 2003-04 for Albury TAFE - metal fabrication and electrical trades (total cost \$4.123).
- \$857,000 in 2003-04 for Armidale TAFE - disabled access and refurbishment (total cost \$1.244 million).
- \$3.186 million in 2003-04 for Cootamundra TAFE - nursing, welfare and general education (total cost \$3.8 million).
- \$682,000 in 2003-04 for Dubbo TAFE - Aboriginal Development Centre (total cost \$1.878 million)
- \$147,000 in 2003-04 for Dubbo TAFE - site consolidation for fitting and machining (total cost \$462,000).
- \$1.184 million in 2003-04 for Glendale TAFE - kitchen upgrade (total cost \$1.301 million).
- \$1.135 million in 2003-04 for Goulburn TAFE - business services, information technology, general education, arts and media.
- \$2.261 million in 2003-04 for Grafton TAFE - music centre (total cost \$2.458 million).
- \$300,000 in 2003-04 for Griffith TAFE - new hairdressing and beauty therapy facility (total cost \$640,000).
- \$1 million in 2003-04 for Kurri Kurri TAFE - horticulture and environmental protection (\$7.108 million).
- \$944,000 in 2003-04 for Lightning Ridge - new facility (total cost \$1.22 million)
- \$6.046 million in 2003-04 for Shellharbour TAFE - multi-functional complex (total cost \$9.095 million).
- \$1.198 million in 2003-04 for Wollongbar TAFE - hospitality and trade course facilities (total cost \$10.077 million).
- \$5.006 million in 2003-04 for Wyong TAFE - classrooms, student services, and cafeteria - (total cost \$5.446 million).

Around \$73 million has been set aside for specific programs in regional and rural New South Wales. The programs include:

- Distance Education Centre Support for more than 2,800 students through eight secondary and 11 primary centres;
- Living Away from Home Allowance - Over \$800,000 has been provided for students in both government and non-government schools. The allowance in 2003 is \$1,052 per student.
- Access and Boarding Scholarships for Students. Funding of \$400,000 will be provided to support around 220 students.
- Isolated School Grants funding of over \$1.1 million will be provided to support over 17,000 students in 186 schools.
- Students in country schools will continue to benefit from computers, internet access and teacher training.

This year, funding for recurrent and capital programs across the New South Wales education and training system has grown by more than seven per cent to a record \$8.7 billion.

Rural and regional schools and TAFE colleges will benefit from statewide funding for major new education programs including:

- \$24.7 million in funding to progressively reduce class sizes from kindergarten to Year 2 in NSW Government schools, as the first instalment of a \$329 million, four-year program.
- \$257.8 million in 2003-04 for new computers, internet services and technology support in schools (\$965.2 million over the next four years).
- \$500,000 this year to establish 20 new suspension centres by 2007, helping students with behaviour problems.
- A total of \$126 million in 2003-04 for literacy and numeracy programs, including Reading Recovery and Count Me in Too (more than \$492 million over the next four years).
- There is \$26.4 million in 2003-04 to enhance the quality of teaching and ensure an adequate supply of teachers (\$139 million over the next four financial years).

A major effort will be made to improve the literacy and numeracy of Aboriginal students especially in regional and rural New South Wales.

In 2003/2004 \$39.2 million will be provided to support Aboriginal services for more than 34,000 students across New South Wales, including \$28 million for regional and rural New South Wales.

This includes about 320 Aboriginal Education Assistants employed in public schools across the State. This initiative recognises Aboriginal people working effectively with teachers in classrooms and liaising with Aboriginal parents.

The Government is giving high priority to programs designed to strengthen Aboriginal children's literacy and numeracy.

The network of TAFE colleges around the state will continue to support students in regional and remote areas

In 2002 167,000 students took part in courses offered through non-metropolitan colleges and the Open Training and Education Network, including 164,630 students from regional and rural New South Wales.

Through technology, the Open Training and Education Network continues to provide support for people in rural communities including an internet home page which links information, learning resources and a message board so that students can interact and exchange information.

This Government is committed to ensuring students have the opportunity to reach their full potential no matter where they live.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

As part of the Carr Government's upgrade of the NSW Fire Brigades fire engine fleet, \$6.4 million is provided in the 2003-04 budget for 22 new fire engines in rural and regional New South Wales.

These new fire engines will go to Fire Brigades in towns including:

- Crookwell.
- Kurri Kurri.
- Grafton.
- Raymond Terrace.
- Murwillumbah.
- Wentworth.
- Braidwood.
- Casino.

In addition, more than \$700,000 will be spent on vehicle subsidies to assist councils in purchasing new emergency response vehicles for 43 volunteer State Emergency Service, including:

- Byron Bay.
- Manilla.
- Walgett.
- Lithgow.
- Goulburn.
- Trundle.
- Karuah.
- Walcha.
- Quirindi.
- White Cliffs.
- Maitland.
- Bombala.

The SES budget also includes \$978,000 to assist volunteer units meet day to day operating expenses.

These new fire engines and emergency response vehicles will be equipped with the latest technology and will assist the Fire Brigade and SES in their vital roles of protecting and assisting the community in their times of need.

The Rural Fire Service Rural Firefighting Fund budget of \$125 million includes provision for:

- \$3.9 million a year to establish a statewide mitigation unit.
- A total of \$26.9 million for the purchase of new and refurbished tankers and associated equipment.
- An additional \$100,000 for grants to Volunteer Rescue units in country areas.
- \$30.2 million in equipment grants, \$11 million in maintenance grants and \$3 million in other subsidies to support volunteer rural fire brigades across the State.

ENERGY AND UTILITIES

The NSW Government will invest \$67.9 million in 2003-04 to fund major capital works to upgrade drinking water supplies and sewerage schemes in rural and regional New South Wales

This brings the total allocation to the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme to \$548 million since the Carr Labor Government came to office.

This program helps improve access to clean, healthy drinking water and enhance sewerage systems in rural and regional communities.

The 2003-04 funding allocation will start 30 new projects including:

WESTERN NSW

- New or upgraded water supply schemes for Darbys Falls, Euston, Finley, Mendooran, Rand and Tocumwal.
- New or upgraded sewerage schemes in Barellan, Collingullie, Coolah, Dunedoo and Wyangala.

SOUTHERN NSW, CENTRAL NSW AND THE HUNTER VALLEY

- New or upgraded water supply schemes for Broke, Murrumbateman and Scone-Aberdeen and Tea Gardens / Hawkes Nest.
- New or upgraded sewerage services for Berry, Ashley, Berridale, Bowral, Glen Innes, Lithgow, Mudgee, Tingha and Tumut.

NORTH COAST

- New sewerage services for Byron Bay and Clarence Town.

Ongoing projects to be funded from the Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage program include:

- Augmentation of Lower Clarence Regional Water Supply.
- Upgrade of the Milton Ulladulla Sewerage Scheme.
- Construction of water treatment plants at Mudgee and Gulgong.
- Construction of Shoalhaven Regional Effluent Management System.
- Upgrade of the Tamworth Sewerage scheme.

WATER REBATES

The Government provides assistance to pensioners to help meet their water bills funding rebates on water, sewerage and drainage charges.

In 2003-04 the Government's rebate program will benefit more than 22,000 pensioners in the Illawarra who will receive annual rebates up to a maximum of \$330.

Hunter Water will invest more than \$7 million on pensioner rebates.

ENERGY REBATES

The NSW Government also remains committed to helping pensioners meet their energy costs with a \$21.8 million investment in energy rebates.

Under the program approximately 195,000 pensioners living in rural and regional NSW will qualify for the annual \$112 rebate on their energy bills.

- Northern NSW - 110,000 customers
- Southern NSW - 50,000 customers
- Central NSW - 30,000 customers
- Far West NSW - 5,000 customers

STATE WATER

The Government will invest more than \$23 million maintaining and improving the state's regional dams, weirs and other bulk water assets that will ensure efficient delivery of water to farmers and irrigators.

\$6.1 million will be invested on flood mitigation works. These include:

- \$1 million on improvements at Blowering Dam (serving the Murrumbidgee Valley, Hay, Narrandera, Balranald Murrumbidgee Irrigation and Colleambally Irrigation areas).
- \$1 million on interim enhancement works at Chaffey Dam (serving Tamworth and the Peel River).
- \$1.8 million on finalising options for enhancements to the Keepit Dam (Provides water to Walgett and the Namoi Valley).
- \$700,000 for evaluation of enhancement options for the Copeton Dam (Serving Inverell and Garah Town Water supplies and cotton growers around Moree and the Gwydir Valley).

- \$3.5 million will be invested in the commencement of construction on the Macquarie River Reregulation project.
- \$4 million will be invested on periodic maintenance on bulk water delivery infrastructure.
- \$5 million will be invested on maintenance of more than 245 weirs, regulators and other water supply structures across New South Wales.

ENVIRONMENT

Over \$155 million is provided for major conservation activities in rural and regional New South Wales in the 2003-04 Budget.

National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) will receive an allocation totalling \$141 million, which represents around 62% of the overall NPWS budget allocation.

NPWS will spend around \$37 million on continuing and new capital works programs in regional areas this year, improving infrastructure and acquiring new lands for reserve.

Major new projects include:

- \$1 million of a \$4.5 million program for establishment costs for national parks associated with lands acquired during 2002-03.
- an estimated \$5 million to acquire reserves - predominantly in Western New South Wales.

Continuing programs include:

- \$15 million for Perisher infrastructure works.
- \$2 million of a \$10 million program for the North-East Regional Forest Agreement.
- \$1.1 million of a \$5 million program to upgrade roads and bridges in Kosciuszko National Park.
- \$1 million of a \$4 million program to convert Vacant Crown Lands into national parks under the Upper and Lower North-East Regional Forest Agreement.
- \$1 million for sewerage upgrade programs in national parks in regional New South Wales.
- \$2.5 million for land acquisitions.

Regional and Rural New South Wales will benefit from the priority for feral animal and weed control in this year's NPWS budget with the first stage of a major \$6.7 million funding boost being delivered.

This major increase in resources is over and above the previous and ongoing record commitment of the almost \$16 million to fight pests in our national parks.

The extra funding will be particularly targeted to southern New South Wales, and will help to eradicate wild dogs and foxes. Most of the extra funding will be spent in the Cooma-Monaro region, Brindabella and Wee Jasper Valleys and the Bega Valley.

A massive \$13 million injection over four years will fund the Government's strong commitment to the establishment of parks on lands acquired throughout the State. This includes:

- The establishment of a day use visitor area in a new addition to the magnificent new Paroo Darling National Park in Far Western New South Wales.
- The management and upgrade of visitor facilities including picnic area and visitor facilities in Bomaderry Creek Regional Park.
- The management of important threatened species and birds at Lake Wollumboola – one of the most important coastal lakes in New South Wales.

The Government is committed not just to the protection of high conservation areas but to their ongoing management. This is highlighted in the budget by the allocation of \$3 million in recurrent funding this year – increasing to \$5.2 million by 2005-06 – for the ongoing management of the "icon forest areas" and other high conservation areas in north east New South Wales.

Improvements to visitor facilities in icon and high conservation areas in the north of the State include \$500,000 for:

- The upgrade of the Rummery Park camping area in Whian Whian National Park.
- improvements to camping in Myall Lakes National Park.
- Upgrade of day use facilities at Yarrhapini National Park.
- Establish a new camping ground at Bongil Bongil National Park.
- Improved camping facilities at Chaelundi National Park.

The Government's strong commitment to conserve Aboriginal cultural heritage was underpinned by a \$6.5 million funding boost over the next four years, commencing 2004-05.

Negotiations will continue with local Aboriginal communities for joint management of culturally significant national parks such as new reserves near Seal Rocks and Warrell Creek and existing reserves at Gulaga, Jervis Bay and Biamanga National Parks and Mt Grenfell Historic Site.

The Government recognises the need for properly funding these significant joint management initiatives in the years to come and will allocate funds accordingly.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage funding also covers the repatriation of ancestral remains to Aboriginal communities, mapping oral histories, establishing an Aboriginal Tour Guide and Cultural Heritage Training Facility at White Cliffs and working with Aboriginal communities to declare Aboriginal Places and better protect sites of great cultural significance.

The Environment Protection Authority will spend \$3 million in regional New South Wales including the Hunter and South Coast on environmental protection programs including industry compliance and protecting air and water quality.

Dubbo's Western Plains Zoo will receive an \$11.8 million budget allocation. Of this, \$2.8 million will be allocated to support the third year of a 12 year Master Plan redevelopment for Western Plains Zoo.

The Masterplan will ensure the continued planning of Western Plains Zoo's African Safari for an ongoing superior visitor experience among wildlife at this world class attraction.

FAIR TRADING

The Budget this year will contain measures to protect the rights of consumers in rural and regional New South Wales through a network of Fair Trading offices around the state as well as other regional initiatives.

Fair Trading services are also delivered through the State's network of more than 50 Government Access Centres (GACs) in rural towns.

In the past year, Fair Trading officers have visited numerous locations in rural and regional NSW. They have also participated in expos, fairs and other events.

Over 40,000 Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunals (CTTT) hearings are held in rural and regional NSW aimed at resolving issues between tenants and landlords as well as consumers and traders.

Major programs in this year's budget for rural or regional New South Wales include:

- \$4.1 million to fund the Registry of Cooperatives in Bathurst, which employs 46 people.
- \$3.2 million to fund 10 community-based tenancy advisory services in regional areas to provide better assistance for rural and regional tenants.
- \$410,000 to provide financial counselling in country areas.
- \$1.2 million for the Aboriginal Action Plan, providing specialist advice to Aboriginal communities and employing 15 Aboriginal Service Officers in Fair Trading Centres outside Sydney.

Consumers in regional and rural NSW can also access Fair Trading services 24 hours a day seven days a week via the website - www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au.

This improves access to services and information in areas such as licensing, the Register of Encumbered Vehicles (REVS), and the rental bond service.

FISHERIES

The 2003-04 NSW Fisheries budget focuses on fish stocking, education programs and environmental protection for rural and regional areas.

The list of projects includes the following major new initiatives:

- \$4.4 million to buy-out commercial fishers from Cape Byron Marine Park, which will reduce fishing pressure in the park and protect its sanctuary and habitat protection zones.
- \$150,000 for the Cape Byron Marine Park to employ an extra two rangers, who will help educate the community and enforce fishing rules.
- \$370,000 to commence an upgrade of the NSW Fisheries fleet, including vessels on the Hawkesbury River, Port Stephens, Murray Darling and Richmond River.
- \$500,000 to upgrade communication systems between the 32 NSW Fisheries offices around the State.

In addition, vital on-going programs to receive support include:

- \$1.3 million to continue stocking New South Wales waters with trout and native fish. A record 7.9 million trout, salmon and native fish were stocked last year around the State, bringing significant benefits for anglers.
- \$800,000 to support the second year of the Indigenous Fisheries Strategy - allowing NSW Fisheries to keep working with Aboriginal communities along the New South Wales coast.
- \$700,000 to maintain the popular Fishcare volunteer program, which involves more than 370 active volunteers in public education roles.
- More than \$12 million for on-going research and \$12 million for compliance Statewide.

The largest stockings this year took place at Burrinjuck Dam near Yass, Lake Mulwala near Albury, Wyangala Dam near Cowra, Glenbawn Dam in the Hunter region, Copeton, Split Rock and Keepit dams in the north west and Lakes Jindabyne and Eucumbene in the Snowy Mountains.

Private hatcheries produced the record number of fry and fingerlings, which were released by NSW Fisheries, community groups and angling clubs.

Freshwater anglers contribute \$300,000 of their licence fees each year to this Statewide program.

HEALTH

Over \$2.6 billion is being spent on health services in rural and regional New South Wales in the 2003-04, an increase of \$244 million, or more than 10%, on last year.

It also includes \$1 million to plan a number of new major building projects as well as \$1 million for planning the roll-out of Phase 3 of the Rural Hospital and Health Service Program projects.

New major projects in the planning phase are:

- Mid North Coast Area Radiotherapy Service.
- Bathurst/Orange hospital redevelopment.
- Wagga Wagga Hospital redevelopment.
- Refurbishment of Richmond Clinic at Lismore Base Hospital.
- The continued roll-out of Phase 3 of the Rural Hospital and Health Service Program projects in Batlow, Bingara, Bombala, Dunedoo, Guyra, Junee, Merriwa, Portland, Berrigan, Tingha, Tottenham, Tullamore, Walcha and Warialda.

Continuing capital works projects include:

- \$11.3 million in 2003-04 for the \$15.3million Bourke Hospital and Health Service.
- \$68.8 million in 2003-04 for the \$208.1 million Central Coast Access Plan at Wyong and Gosford hospitals.
- \$4 million in 2003-04 for the \$5.1 million Coledale Rehabilitation Unit.
- \$6.3 million in 2003-04 for the \$10.2 million Hay Hospital and Health Service.
- \$5.2 million in 2003-04 for the \$5.6 million Henty Hospital and Health Service.
- \$12.9 million in 2003-04 for the \$112.6 million Illawarra Area Health Service Strategy Stage 2.
- \$7.4 million in 2003-04 for the \$9.4 million Kyogle Hospital and Health Service.
- \$4 million in 2003-04 for the \$7 million Milton-Ulladulla Hospital redevelopment.
- \$16.2 million in 2003-04 for the \$236.1 million Newcastle Strategy, a redevelopment of acute health services.
- \$7.8 million in 2003-04 for the \$16.6 million Young Hospital and Mercy facility co-location.

- \$3.8 million for the \$74.4 million Phase 1 of the Rural Hospital and Health Service Program.

Recurrent spending includes a major boost of \$16.7 million to the Hunter, Illawarra and Central Coast for clinical service initiatives recommended under the Government's Greater Metropolitan Transition Taskforce program (GMITT) including:

- Establishment of Bone Marrow transplantation services at Gosford Hospital (\$293,000) and Wollongong Hospital (\$263,000).
- \$3.4 million for improved cardiac services, including the introduction of cardiac catheterisation at Wollongong and Gosford Hospitals and improved access to this service in the Hunter.
- \$1.9 million for improvements to emergency departments at Shellharbour, Wyong, Belmont and Maitland hospitals.
- \$1 million for additional surgical procedures such as ear, nose and throat operations, ophthalmology, orthopaedics and general surgery at Bulli Hospital.
- \$3.4 million for stroke services, including the establishment of stroke units at Gosford, Belmont, John Hunter, Newcastle Mater and Wollongong hospitals.
- \$134,000 each towards the operation of regional trauma services at Gosford and Wollongong hospitals as well as \$360,000 for a major trauma unit at John Hunter Hospital.
- \$350,000 to support the installation of a CT scanner at Wyong Hospital and the recruitment of staff to improve diagnostic capability of the hospital to reduce the need to transfer patients to other centres for CT scanning.

In addition, significant funding will be provided for health services closer to where people live. These programs include:

- A \$2 million boost to renal services in rural communities. This is in addition to the \$2.5 million annual funding announced last year to expand rural renal dialysis services.
- Australia's first Mobile Surgical Unit - performing additional surgery in rural areas as part of a \$2.6 million six-month trial.
- \$5 million for extra orthopaedic surgery in Southern, New England, Mid Western, Far West,

Mid North Coast, Macquarie, Murray and Northern Rivers area health services.

- \$1.5 million to improve critical care services at Dubbo and Coffs Harbour.

More funding has been committed to programs aimed at recruiting and retaining medical specialists in rural and regional New South Wales.

These programs include:

- A \$5 million medical indemnity insurance package to enable Visiting Medical Officers (VMOs) and staff specialists to treat private patients in public hospitals in rural and regional areas.
- \$3.5 million to enable area health services to employ extra general practitioners and support their training in procedural work.
- \$2.2 million to train doctors in Orange, Port Macquarie, Shoalhaven, Tweed Heads, Tamworth and Dubbo in anaesthetics.
- \$3 million to the Rural Clinicians Locum Program to assist in providing short-term locum cover for rural clinicians.

Additional ambulance staff will be recruited for rural New South Wales under a \$2.6 million package. More than \$13 million will be spent on drug and alcohol services. \$2.5 million will go to the implementation of the Transport for Health initiative to improve access to services.

HERITAGE OFFICE

The Heritage Office will spend more than 70 per cent of its \$2.4 million Heritage Incentives Program in regional and rural communities.

The \$1.75 million to be spent on non-metropolitan heritage projects is comprised of \$600,000 for local government heritage management, \$800,000 for conservation work, \$150,000 for study and promotion and \$200,000 for Aboriginal projects.

The allocation to specific Aboriginal projects will be determined following meetings of the Heritage Council's Aboriginal Heritage Committee during the year.

Funding to organisations such as the National Trust, the Royal Australian Historical Society and the Keep Australia Beautiful Council will also substantially support rural and regional projects.

HOUSING

Over \$196 million is being spent on public, community and aboriginal housing in rural and regional New South Wales in the 2003-04 State Budget.

The spending includes \$840,000 on a new employment and training program for social housing residents, WorkiT, which will operate in Newcastle, Taree and the Illawarra over the next two years.

The WorkiT program will help unemployed housing residents access training and employment opportunities through a local organisation, which will then tender for selected minor works contracts with the Department of Housing.

Work will include cleaning, landscaping and lawns and grounds maintenance, with the organisation required to directly employ these tenants to deliver the contracted works.

On-going projects to be funded in the 2003-04 State Budget include:

- \$97.6 million for capital improvements to existing housing stock in regional New South Wales, to improve some 20,023 homes. \$6.6 million of this is for improvements to Aboriginal housing.
- The Intensive Tenancy Management (ITM) program - \$1.5 million has been allocated to continue the work of seven priority areas in Moree, Dubbo, Bolton Point, East Nowra, Hamilton South, Taree and Kempsey.
- \$5 million for the Community Renewal Program - which will continue in towns, including Inverell, Moree, West Dubbo, Casino, Goonellabah, Booragul, Windale and Nowra.
- RentStart - will assist about 23,000 rural and regional families with the costs of starting up a private rental lease. Private rental subsidies will be provided to about 455 households where a person is living with a disability or HIV/AIDS.
- More than \$2.3 million will be spent building and acquiring crisis accommodation.
- \$2 million under the Community and Organisational Development Program to support and enhance the management of Aboriginal housing organisations in rural and regional NSW.

INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Regional communities will receive significant benefits from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources \$552.8 million budget.

The Department's expenditure is regionally focused and provides strong socio-economic boosts to rural New South Wales, as well as directly delivering departmental services.

New initiatives:

- \$6 million to be provided over 4 years towards a New South Wales Coastal Cycleway stretching from Tweed Heads to the Victorian border.
- \$2.5 million as part of a \$5 million Aboriginal Water Trust to assist the Aboriginal community in the development of water based farming and aquaculture enterprises.

Continuing programs include:

- \$11 million to purchase specific coastal icon sites in New South Wales.
- \$14 million for regional planning and the Area Assistance Scheme in rural and regional New South Wales.
- The implementation of the Government's \$11.7 million Coastal Protection Package.
- \$1.3 million as part of a \$3.9 million enhanced package towards the remediation of Lake Macquarie.
- \$3 million towards native vegetation mapping initiatives.
- \$11.7 million in funding towards the implementation of the New South Wales Salinity Strategy as part of a \$52 million inter-agency program over four years.
- \$44.4 million as the State's share of operating costs and works programs for irrigation areas and the Murray Darling Basin Commission.
- \$2.5 million State contribution to the Cap and Pipe the Bores program.
- \$18.4 million in State contributions towards local government programs in the areas of floodplain, estuary, coastal and waterways management, inclusive of \$1 million for Lake Illawarra improvements.
- Capital works planned for 2003-04 include building works at Dubbo and Wellington.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

The Department of Juvenile Justice is committed to delivering its services in regional New South Wales. The department will continue to fund programs aiming to reduce rates of recidivism and maintain a safe environment for clients and staff.

In 2003-04 the Department of Juvenile Justice will:

- Spend more than \$1 million for special programs to counter drug and alcohol abuse by young offenders. These programs expand measures introduced in the past four years under the Government's Drugs Action Program. Included is funding for two regional residential drug rehabilitation units at Dubbo and Coffs Harbour.
- Continue funding for the very successful Youth Justice Conferencing scheme costing \$4.2 million, which gives victims the chance to attend conferences to tell young offenders of the harm they have caused while ensuring offenders take responsibility for their actions.
- Maintain special programs to curb re-offending, at a total cost of \$3.9 million for rural and regional New South Wales. The Juvenile Justice Community Funding Program (CFP) aims to reduce the likelihood of re-offending of young people who come into contact with the Department. Programs available under CFP include Post Release Support, Accommodation Support, Local Offender, Employment, Drug and Alcohol and Legal programs.
- Continue funding for diversionary programs run by rural and regional Alcohol and Other Drug Counsellors with a State Government commitment of \$550,000.
- From early July, take over from Police the responsibility for the transporting of young offenders between juvenile justice centres and courts in the North Coast region. Costing \$1.643 million, this initiative is the second stage of a strategy for the department to assume these responsibilities in all parts of the State over the next three years.
- Open a new Juvenile Justice community office for the Hunter region at a cost of \$1.1 million to replace the existing office in the Worimi Children's Court building at Broadmeadow.

LANDS

There are 19 Department of Lands offices across rural and regional NSW, providing information and services like:

- Crown land management.
- Management of Trusts and reserves.
- Mapping and topographical studies.
- Surveying.

The Soil Conservation Service will receive \$16.3 million in the 2003-04 budget.

This is an important service for rural and regional area, and will provide:

- Conservation advice and assistance to farmers.
- Specialist conservation earthmoving.
- Soil consultancy.
- Soil and water testing.

In the last 12 months, the Soil Conservation Service visited around 3,000 farms to complete 2309 projects.

With problems such as salinity and drought, the Soil Conservation Service is particularly important to farming communities.

It will help ensure that land is used in a sustainable manner.

MINERAL RESOURCES

Over \$19 million is provided for major mineral resources projects in rural and regional New South Wales in the 2003-04 Budget.

The spending includes on-going mine safety, environmental and exploration initiatives.

The advanced regional geological and geophysical data gathered under the program promotes and encourages mineral and petroleum exploration and investment across rural and regional New South Wales.

The list of projects includes:

- \$2.5 million to continue the Government's Mine Safety Reform initiative, focusing on developing the regulations, guidelines, policies and procedures associated with the implementation of new legislation.
- \$1.6 million for the on-going Derelict Mined Lands Rehabilitation Program - much of which is spent contracting rural and regional-based companies to provide earthmoving, fencing and other remedial work to address environmental and safety hazards at derelict mine sites.
- The appointment of four environmental field officers to strengthen the Department's regulatory capability in the regional centres of Orange, Wollongong, Singleton and Broken Hill.
- \$400,000 over the next two years to maintain the Broken Hill Core Library and make it available to assist explorers in the Broken Hill area.

In addition, a total of \$10.6 million will go towards the Department's relocation to Maitland. Links with existing regional offices will be improved with \$5.6 million earmarked for information and communication networks upgrades.

Rural and regional initiatives address the major issues of attracting exploration and investment, stimulating regional economies and improving the health and safety of all mine workers and our environment.

There is \$5 million in 2003-04 for targeted rural and regional works under the Government's seven-year, \$30 million Exploration NSW initiative, including:

- Broken Hill / Far West (\$1.2 million).
- Cobar / Bourke (\$1.1 million).
- Murray Basin (\$0.2 million).
- Central West (\$0.5 million).
- Northern New South Wales (\$0.5 million).

POLICE

An amount of nearly \$2,073 million is provided for recurrent expenses and capital acquisitions for NSW Police in the 2003-04 Budget. A number of major projects will affect regional areas.

Major new rural and regional initiatives include:

- A new \$4.8 million police station in Armidale.
- \$8.6 million over two years for the installation of In Car Video Cameras in all New South Wales Highway Patrol Vehicles.
- \$3.3 million over three years to equip police vehicles to transport prisoners.
- \$6.2 million over three years for improvements to educational facilities including Goulburn Police Academy.

Continuing programs include:

- \$3 million in 2003-04 to continue the statewide high-visibility, high-impact Operation Vikings strategy, targeting anti-social behaviour.
- \$864,000 for the ongoing roll-out of Livescan Digital Fingerprinting systems, especially in rural areas.
- \$1.5 million for a new police station in Griffith.
- \$950,000 for a new police station at Muswellbrook.
- \$950,000 for a new police station at Thirroul.
- \$8.8 million for ongoing upgrades to the Country Police Radio Network.

In addition, \$17 million will be used for the upgrading of police accommodation and facilities, including prisoner handling and security, the purchase of smaller items of operational plant and equipment, the replacement of road safety equipment and minor computer works.

This record budget continues our commitment to record police strength across New South Wales with an authorised strength of 14,454 officers.

The Government has created 32 Rural Crime Investigator positions located in regional Local Area Commands, specially trained to investigate stock theft, trespass and illegal hunting.

The Government has also developed a Remote Policing Plan, which provides:

- Immediate one-off incentive payments of \$5,000 for officers who take up a 'remote' location positions.
- Removal of city tenure restrictions, so officers who want to work in the bush can do so without delay.
- An increase in spousal assistance payments from \$1,000 to \$1,605 at one-officer stations, and from \$500 to \$803 in two-officer stations.
- Removing the requirement that NSW Police rejoiners recommence duties in the Sydney metropolitan area.

PREMIER'S DEPARTMENT

REGIONAL COORDINATION PROGRAM

In 2003-04, \$3.243 million will be allocated to the Premier's Department for the Regional Coordination Program. The Program covers rural, regional and metropolitan New South Wales.

Under the Regional Coordination Program, Regional Coordinators and government agencies are working with communities to address issues impacting on their quality of life. A particular strength of the Program has been its capacity to lead and support initiatives that address local issues. Local and Commonwealth Government agencies, non-government organisations and business and other community stakeholders are encouraged to participate.

Specific initiatives:

- The River Towns Project, Western New South Wales is assisting the Brewarrina, Walgett, Wilcannia, Bourke communities to become more resilient and robust by strengthening their capacity to respond to social and economic change and where able resolve issues locally.
- The Western New South Wales Region is developing protocols for government co-ordination on significant new plans and developments. The protocol will spell out general principles for State and Local Government co-operation and procedures for development applications, which must be referred to one or more state agencies.
- The Myimbarr Family Youth Project (Shellharbour and Wollongong) is developing an innovative cross-agency, multi-disciplinary approach to care management and support for Aboriginal families with multiple support needs.
- The Small Community Service Initiative (Gunning-Crookwell) is developing a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to service delivery for this rural town.
- The Aboriginal Youth Program (Eurobodalla) is providing young Aboriginal people with access to supportive services and activities. It has demonstrated the benefits of bringing agencies together to plan and implement innovative programs and activities.

RURAL AND REGIONAL AND MISCELLANEOUS GRANTS FUND

In 2003-04, \$1 million will be allocated to the Rural and Regional and Miscellaneous Grants Fund. The Fund was established in 1999 to support local initiatives across rural and regional New South Wales. Since then funds have been allocated to over 80 communities. Towns which have received grants vary widely in size, location and economic capacity, for example: Bulli, Clarence Town, Clunes, Dungog, Evans Head, Geurie, Glen Innes, Gunbar, Humula, Murrurundi, Nimbin, Oberon and White Cliffs.

REGIONAL COMMUNITIES CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

In 2003-04, \$150,000 will be provided to support the work of the Regional Communities Consultative Council (the RCCC). The Council advises on rural and regional policies and services; recommends initiatives to advance social, economic and environmental development; and consults with rural and regional communities regarding community issues, solutions and opportunities.

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS AND CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY

The Community Solutions and Crime Prevention Strategy is a five year program which was established to directly address the causes of crime in local communities. It provides packages of multi-agency responses to crime and social issues facing communities, including family violence and the needs of young people and children at risk. It allocates funding over and above that already provided for crime prevention and capacity building. The development of strategies for dealing with crime on a local level occur through partnerships between residents, community workers, police, local councils and State Government agencies.

The program has been allocated \$50 million between 2002 and 2006. Allocations to rural and regional locations in 2003-04 are as follows (total allocated funding for these locations to 2005-06 are provided in brackets):

- Bourke - \$165,000 (\$540,000).
- Bellambi/Corrimal - \$231,000 (\$575,000).
- Brewarrina - \$179,000 (\$324,000).
- Cessnock - \$560,000 (\$1.13 million).
- Gosford Peninsula - \$257,000 (\$533,752).
- Gunnedah - \$80,000 (\$190,000).
- Kempsey - \$525,000 (\$1.105 million).
- Nimbin - \$206,000 (\$478,000).
- Nowra - \$352,500 (\$1.158 million).
- Taree - \$385,000 (\$850,000).
- Walgett - \$148,000 (\$443,000).
- Warilla - \$790,000 (\$1.349 million).
- Warrawong/Berkeley - \$480,000 (\$1.029 million).
- and Wyong - \$881,842 (\$1.808 million).

In addition, Community Solutions funding is used to enhance place management projects.

Three place management projects will receive funding in 2003-04. These are:

- Booragul/Bolton Point - \$165,500 (\$376,000).
- Wentworth - \$200,000 (\$405,000).
- Moree - \$160,000 (\$408,000).

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Government has secured \$6.5 billion of private investment as a result of its regional development program. This has directly delivered 35,000 new jobs across regional New South Wales.

More than \$17 million is being provided for major regional development assistance programs across New South Wales in the 2003-04 Budget.

The spending includes funds for a wide range of ongoing projects.

- The Regional Business Development Scheme, encouraging the growth of local jobs and investment.
- The Agribusiness Alternatives program, encouraging value-added agribusinesses.
- The Australian Technology program, promoting New South Wales technology worldwide.

These projects include:

- \$2 million over the next four years for the extension of the New Market Expansion program to help country businesses target new domestic and international markets.
- \$1.2 million a year for a further four years for the Townlife and Villages Future program helping small communities of less than 2,500 people generate new economic opportunities.
- \$1 million of ongoing support for Community Economic Development programs which include the Main Street/ Small Towns and Developing Regional Resources projects. These projects help regional communities to explore opportunities to grow and diversify.

Continuing programs include:

- The Regional Economic Transition Scheme helping communities which include; Eden, Broken Hill, Lithgow, Gunnedah, Goulburn and the shires of Blayney, Bogan, Cootamundra, Cobar, Eurobodalla, Kempsey, Nambucca, Rylstone, Scone, Bellingen, Gloucester and Batlow.
- The Meat Processing Industry Restructuring Program, assisting meat processing firms to maintain a sustainable future.
- The Country Lifestyles Program, promoting the benefits of living and working in regional centres.
- Regional business and Investment tours, giving regional businesses the opportunity to showcase their products to investors.
- Regional film tours, highlighting regional locations and resources. Areas which have already been promoted in this way include the Hunter, Broken Hill, Tweed Heads, Port Macquarie, Grafton, and Coffs Harbour.

ROADS

A record \$1.34 billion is provided for improvements to the road network in rural and regional New South Wales in the 2003-04 Budget.

This represents 60 per cent of the 2003-04 Roads Capital and Maintenance program budget, up \$48 million, or 3.7 per cent, compared with the 2002-03 Budget.

The spending includes \$215.7 million on the continuation of major upgrades of the State's main arterial roads, such as:

- \$131.4 million for the continuation of the \$2.2 billion Pacific Highway upgrade program, including work on the \$123 million Karuah Bypass, the \$150 million Bulahdelah Bypass, the \$107 million Bundacree Creek to Possum Brush upgrade and the \$59 million Taree to Cooperook upgrade.
- \$45 million towards the \$460 million Great Western Highway upgrade program, including State funding worth \$28 million for widening work at Lawson, Leura and between Woodford and Hazelbrook in the Blue Mountains.
- \$39.3 million towards the \$380 million Princes Highway upgrade program including the North Kiama Bypass and planning work for the Princes Highway between Oak Flats and Dunmore.
- \$4.4 million towards the \$36.5 million Alstonville Bypass.

The Budget includes more than \$60 million to increase RTA road maintenance primarily on country roads, funded by increases in the Harbour Bridge toll and other user charges announced in late 2001.

It also provides a record \$133.6 million in 2003-04 for State Government funding to councils to help them manage their road networks.

The Government recently announced a review of the current classification of state, regional and local roads to reflect the nature of their usage and the importance of the roads.

The review would particularly help local councils by ensuring state funding assistance was targeted to help maintain roads of regional economic importance which meet agreed criteria.

This follows a recent government initiative to provide \$105 million to assist Councils to upgrade 369 timber bridges on their regional roads. The seven-year

Regional Roads Timber Bridge Program builds on the State Government's successful Country Timber Bridge Program.

Major Regional Capital Works include:

- \$22.2 million in joint Commonwealth and State funding for Murray River crossings at Corowa, Robinvale and Moama.
- \$18.8 million for planning and construction on the Pacific Highway on the Central Coast and the Entrance Road and Avoca Drive as part of the Central Coast Transport Action Plan.
- \$22.6 million for improvements to roads in the Hunter Region including \$4.8 million for the upgrading of the Morisset to Wallsend Road and \$4.7 for the upgrade of Vincent Street in Cessnock.
- \$9.7 million on the upgrade of the Castlereagh Highway between Lidsdale and the Coxs River.

Major Maintenance Works planned include:

- Replacement of Redbourneberry bridge near Singleton.
- Replacing the crossing of the Murray River at Barooga, jointly with Victoria.
- Upgrade of the Wellington to Parkes, Oberon to Goulburn, Gundagai to Tumut, Guyra to Ebor and Inverell to Yetman roads.
- Upgrade of the Medowie Road near Port Stephens.
- Reconstruction and widening of the Beresfield to Cessnock road near Singleton, the Mitchell, Gwydir and Kamilaroi highways as well as the Lachlan Valley and Fossicker's Ways.
- Repainting of Harwood bridge near Maclean.

Safety will also be enhanced with a total road safety budget of \$93 million, including speed management, drink driving, seatbelt usage, fatigue management, cyclist safety and school and youth programs.

The three-year, \$10 million Safety Around Schools program will continue to provide improvements to rural and regional schools. Measures include the installation of children's crossings, traffic signals and pedestrian refuges.

RURAL AFFAIRS

A new Office of Rural Affairs will be created within the Department of Lands.

ORA will replace the Office of Regional Communities, formerly located in the Premier's Department.

The administrative arm of the Regional Communities Consultative Committee (RCCC) will be located in the ORA.

The RCCC is the main State Government consultative body with regard to issues in rural and regional NSW.

As part of the Government's commitment to further strengthening its relationship with rural and regional NSW - the RCCC will now have its own Minister in Cabinet, reporting directly to the Minister for Rural Affairs as well as the Premier.

Detailed program statements for the Office of Rural Affairs will be published in August 2003.

SMALL BUSINESS

The Carr Government will spend \$9.5 million in 2003-04 assisting the State's small businesses.

The spending includes funding for a wide range of new and ongoing projects:

- The Home Based Business Program, which offers seminars on marketing and business planning, will be expanded. Seminars will be held in six locations around the State, including four in regional areas.
- The Women in Business Regional Program will be extended to Wagga Wagga, Illawarra, Merimbula, Queanbeyan, Tweed Heads, Port Macquarie, Kempsey and Jindabyne. The program aims to increase business success through workshops, mentoring and networking.
- A workshop on intellectual property and business management for arts and crafts enterprises will be held under the Aboriginal Business Development program. As well, leading businesspeople will share their expertise with Aboriginal operators at three networking sessions.
- Inventors in regional areas will be offered expert advice usually only available in capital cities. Advisory days will be held in five regional centres.
- A series of financial management workshops, based on cashflow workshops held during 2002-03, will assist small business owners with pricing and costing, and raising finance for growth.
- The New Export Opportunities Program will continue to help small and medium enterprises develop new markets. Regional export advisers will operate around the State from bases in Nowra, Coffs Harbour, Bathurst, Wagga Wagga, Gosford, and Tamworth.
- The Small Business Advisory Service will be delivered in regional NSW through 39 Small Business Centres at a total cost of nearly \$3 million.
- The BioBusiness programs for small and medium enterprises will be expanded in 2003-04 at a cost of \$1.5 million. These programs help get these new technologies on the market, and encourage new investment in this sector.
- Youth entrepreneurship will be supported through the Young Achievement Australia program, which gives young people experience in running a small business.
- The biennial Aboriginal Employment and Business Awards will be held in November 2003. For the first time, the awards will include a new category recognising the support for Aboriginal businesses provided by corporate NSW.
- Support for Innovation Advisory Centres in the Hunter and the Illawarra will be maintained, to provide advice, referrals and limited funding to more than 400 inventors and small business innovators.
- Up to \$250,000 will be offered to financially support 50 regional small and medium firms to undertake business and export development projects, through the Small Business Expansion and High Growth Business Programs.
- The Smallbiz Website will be upgraded during 2003-04 to improve search and navigation facilities to enhance the 350,000 hits per year on the site.

SPORT AND RECREATION

The NSW Government will provide more than \$26 million for sporting facilities and activities in rural and regional areas.

In 2003-04, a \$8.8 million public works program will upgrade Sport and Recreation centres across the State. This investment will provide improved facilities and increased recreational opportunities for those using the centres.

Some examples are:

- \$1.5 million to replace and upgrade the dining hall and accommodation at the Berry Sport and Recreation Centre on the South Coast.
- \$1 million for an outdoor recreation hall at Lake Ainsworth Sport and Recreation Centre on the North Coast.
- \$500,000 for an accommodation and infrastructure upgrade at the Jindabyne Sport and Recreation Centre.
- \$3.7 million to continue works to replace the dining hall and kitchen facilities at Point Wolstoncroft and Myuna Bay Sport and Recreation Centres in the Lake Macquarie area.

The Centres, 10 of which are located outside the Sydney Metropolitan area, provide a wide range of sport and recreation opportunities. The following facts are provided to demonstrate the importance of these Centres:

- On average over 65,000 school children will be involved in outdoor education programs that link directly with the school curriculum and can be tailored to meet specific needs of schools.
- School holiday programs for children and families will see 49,000 participants days at the Centres. Participants will enjoy activities ranging from skiing to canoeing, and archery to abseiling.
- The Centres also provide programs for special populations and around 17,000 participant days for these programs. Upgrades to the facilities make them suitable to diverse community groups including people with disabilities.
- Sporting groups and other community organisations can use the Centres' facilities over weekends, for camps. Recreational activities such as music and gentle exercise camps may be held. The Centres

also provide opportunities for groups of talented athletes to join with quality coaches and other sports experts to improve their skills and knowledge.

Continuing Recurrent funding of up to \$13 million will see the maintenance of the following areas of support:

- The Department will continue to provide grants for sporting facility development in rural and regional New South Wales.
- The Country Athletes Program will continue to provide over 300 of the State's upcoming champions with the opportunity to access appropriate training and competition.
- The network of independent Academies of Sport will provide over 1,500 junior athletes with access to quality coaching and sports science in their home environments. This enables athletes to develop their skills whilst maintaining their education and family links.
- The Far West Travel Scheme will ensure that people in remote far west New South Wales can participate in local sporting competitions.
- The It's Your Business program that provides club directors with the latest knowledge and skills in risk management, governance and financial management will be rolled out across the State.

TOURISM

Over \$8 million is provided for the Regional Tourism Plan for the marketing and development of tourism experiences and destinations in rural and regional New South Wales in the 2003-04 Budget.

Major projects include:

- \$500,000 a year for the Government's two-year Country at Heart program to promote the diversity and variety of tourism experiences in country and regional New South Wales. The program will showcase country New South Wales tourism products by promotion of the state's spectacular natural attractions, food and wine experiences and festivals and events.
- More than \$2 million to Regional Tourism Organisations to support marketing and development plans.
- More than \$3 million on the promotion of New South Wales holiday experiences to singles/couples, young families, mid life and older households.
- \$1.5 million to fund international marketing and advertising campaigns to promote regional New South Wales to overseas markets.
- \$200,000 for the further development of market segment plans including backpackers, food and wine and indigenous and cultural tourism.
- \$150,000 to the Sydney Convention and Visitors Bureau to continue the Regional Conferencing Strategy to promote meetings and conventions in regional New South Wales.
- \$120,000 for the regional tourist visitor information centres development program.
- Free membership of the Get Connected program for tourism operators in New South Wales. This will provide regional tourism operators with a free product listing on visitnsw.com.au, sydneyaustralia.com and the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse which distributes information to the Australian Tourism Commission's australia.com website.

The latest evolution of the marketing of tourism in New South Wales will focus on the showcasing of key experiences such as nature, discovery tourism, food and wine, beaches and sport and events to a wider range of potential audiences.

TRANSPORT

The NSW Government continues to commit significant funding to support transport services in rural and regional areas of New South Wales, including over \$154 million for capital works in the 2003-04 Budget.

The list of projects includes these major new initiatives:

- \$43.6 million to replace wooden sleepers with concrete sleepers around the State, extending the life of these lines by 50 years. Resleepering enhances the safety and reliability of the New South Wales country rail network as well as improving passenger comfort. Work includes:
 - \$20 million for 53km of the North Coast Line north of Nana Glen, improving passenger and freight services.
 - \$12 million for 12.5km of the Main South Line from Macarthur to Medway Junction, improving Intercity travel into Sydney from the Southern Highlands and removing speed restrictions.
 - \$6 million for 15km of the Western Line from Orange to Wallerawang, improving passenger and freight services to the Central and Far West of the State.
- \$6.3 million for two crossing loops on the North Coast Line, decreasing running times for CountryLink passenger services and allowing more frequent freight services. This work is part of long-term planning to increase freight traffic between Brisbane and Melbourne.
- \$9.5 million for the replacement and upgrade of rail bridges, including Menangle Bridge, building on the Government's determination to improve the performance of rail agencies in maintaining and upgrading rail bridges.
- \$2 million for digital announcement systems at 82 locations in regional New South Wales, providing improved service information for commuters.
- Capital spending on Waterways facilities in rural and regional New South Wales includes:
 - \$275,000 for preparatory work for the dredging of the south arm of the Hunter River, providing significant economic benefits for the Newcastle region through improved freight operations.
 - \$250,000 for a replacement berth for pilot vessels and Waterways patrol vessels at Yamba on

the Far North Coast, improving the commercial port operations and ensuring safe and environmentally responsible boating on the Clarence.

- \$1.2 million for new operational equipment at Newcastle Port, providing increased efficiency and safety with flow-on economic benefits to the Newcastle region.

The list of projects includes these major continuing programs:

- \$10.3 million for the purchase of new rail cars to serve the Hunter (total estimated cost \$102m), providing modern rolling stock equipped with comfortable high-backed seating, easy access, air conditioning, enhanced security features including CCTV cameras, toilet facilities, and on-board information displays.
- \$6.9 million for the continuation of work in 41 new outer suburban cars to serve the Blue Mountains, Illawarra, South Coast and Central Coast (total estimated cost \$171 million), providing modern rolling stock equipped with an additional 52 seats per eight car train, comfortable high-backed seating, easy access, air conditioning, enhanced security features including CCTV cameras, toilet facilities, and on-board information displays.
- \$3.4 million for railway level crossing improvements in country New South Wales, selected using the new Computer Assessment Model which assesses level crossings against a number of risk factors including visibility and train and car volumes and speeds.
- \$200,000 to commence an Easy Access upgrade to Blaxland Station in the Blue Mountains (total estimated cost \$2.5 million) and \$300,000 to commence an Easy Access upgrade to Thirroul Station in Wollongong (total estimated cost \$3.7 million). These upgrades will include lifts and ramps, providing improved access for seniors, the disabled and parents with prams.
- \$1.3 million for the replacement of the overhead footbridge with an upgraded concrete structure at Falconbridge in the Blue Mountains.
- \$3.5 million to complete the contract of 30 new, low-floor, air-conditioned, Volvo buses for Newcastle.

In addition, more than \$250 million has been allocated in 2003-04 to rural and regional maintenance programs. This includes:

- \$34 million for rail maintenance on the North Coast.
- \$23 million for rail maintenance in the North-West.
- \$65 million for rail maintenance in the West.
- \$80.5 million for rail maintenance in the South.
- \$42.5 million for rail maintenance in the Hunter.
- \$5 million for maintenance on Newcastle buses and ferries infrastructure.

These rural and regional initiatives will provide improved safety, reliability and cleanliness for people across New South Wales.

There is over \$566 million in the 2003-04 Budget for targeted rural and regional programs, including:

- \$249.9 million for school student travel subsidies in rural and regional New South Wales, to ensure country students have access to educational facilities, including geographically isolated students attending mini schools.
- \$102.1 million to support regional and rural passenger services, including maintenance and operations of railway stations and carriages.
- \$72.4 million for concession travel for pensioners and welfare beneficiaries using public transport in rural and regional New South Wales.
- \$11.8 million for community transport projects, addressing the specific transport needs of the frail elderly, people with disabilities and their carers, and other disadvantaged groups.
- \$3.8 million for the Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme, providing half-price taxi travel for people unable to use public transport because of a severe and permanent disability.

WOMEN

This year's State Budget continues the NSW Government's commitment to deliver essential services to support women no matter where they live in the State.

- Following a successful trial, the innovative GirlSavvy program will be rolled out to at least 40 schools throughout New South Wales. The program teaches high school girls about financial independence and economic empowerment, and assists with follow-up mentoring in areas of high need.
- The state-wide 2003-04 Summer Schools program will be extended. A \$50,000 grant will be used to encourage young women to explore career options in traditionally male-dominated industries.
- The \$1 million annual women's grants program will help women across New South Wales develop skills to make a difference in their own community. It provides one-off funding for not-for-profit organisations to run a range of projects focusing on achievable improvements for women.
- The highly successful Women on Wheels program will be extended to a third year. This will bring government and non-government agencies to the doorstep of communities in South West Slopes, Southern Tablelands, Snowy Mountains and the Far South Coast regions in late 2003.
- The new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Unit in the Department for Women will develop a New South Wales Plan for Indigenous Women to achieve lasting advances in the status of indigenous women.
- Ongoing information services including the Women's Information and Referral Service and award winning Women's Gateway website (which features a special section for rural and regional women) will continue to serve the needs of rural and regional New South Wales. More than 1,000 women are helped each month with problems ranging from finding the nearest women's health centre to accessing legal advice, home help and refugees.
- The Premier's Council for Women (PCW) will continue to travel to rural and regional New South Wales, acting as a permanent forum for exchange of information between the Government and the women of New South Wales on relevant issues.