

## Ministerial Update

As Minister for Resources, Energy and Tourism, I recently made the following announcements:

- The formal hand back of Maralinga to its traditional owners, the Tjarutja people, 58 years after the British Nuclear Tests at that site;
- The establishment of the Australian Centre for Renewable Energy under the Rudd Government's \$4.5 billion Clean Energy Initiative.
- The establishment of a wide ranging Commission of Inquiry to ensure accountability for last year's oil and gas leak from the Montara Wellhead Platform in the Timor Sea;
- A \$20 million boost for tourism funding to ensure Australia takes advantage of increasing global tourism as the world economy recovers; and
- The launch of Tourism Australia's new \$150 million "There is nothing like Australia" global campaign. Visit [www.nothinglikeaustralia.com](http://www.nothinglikeaustralia.com) and upload your photo of your favourite local holiday experience and finish the sentence "There's nothing like...". Enter by 12 May 2010.

For further information about announcements, transcripts and latest speeches as Minister for Resources, Energy and Tourism, please visit: [ht://minister.ret.au](http://ht://minister.ret.au)

## Renewable Energy Update

Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of announcing two significant developments in renewable energy under the Rudd Government's \$4.5 billion Clean Energy Initiative.

I recently signed the deed of contract for the King Island Renewable Energy Project, which received \$15.28 million from the Australian Government's Renewable Energy Demonstration Program. This project will provide baseload and peak power for the King Island mini grid system by integrating wind and solar energy with a biodiesel generator. It is hoped that up to 90 per cent of King Island's power will be from renewable sources by the end of the project.

In March I attended the opening of the Panax Geothermal project in South Australia which received \$7 million from the Rudd Government's \$50 million Geothermal Drilling Program. Geothermal energy is particularly important because of its potential to supply base-load electricity to the Australian grid from a zero-carbon renewable source.

Both of these initiatives increase energy security by diversifying our energy sources, reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions and ensure that 20 per cent of Australia's electricity is from renewable sources by 2020.

## Funding For Local Business to Boost Environmental Performance

Under the Rudd Government's Re-tooling for Climate Change, Exquisite Pty. Ltd in Thornbury, has received a \$517,971 grant to help them reduce their environmental footprint.

The program offers dollar for dollar grants to help small and medium manufacturers to reduce the environmental impact of their production processes. Exquisite Pty. Ltd was one of 13 companies Australia wide to receive grants totalling \$2.8 million.

For further information on the Re-tooling for Climate Change program visit AusIndustry's website at [www.ausindustry.gov.au](http://www.ausindustry.gov.au) call the hotline **13 28 46** or email the hotline at [hotline@ausindustry.gov.au](mailto:hotline@ausindustry.gov.au)



Martin with Sid Sidebottom, Member for Braddon, at King Island.

## Paid Parental Leave Scheme Update

Australia's first Paid Parental Leave scheme will be established to support families and prepare Australia for the economic and social challenges of the future

The Scheme will provide paid leave for 18 weeks at the rate of the Federal Minimum Wage (currently \$543.78 per week) to working mothers and other primary carers whose child is born on or after 1 January 2011.

The Government is now working with government agencies, business leaders and unions to implement the scheme. For further information on the scheme and on eligibility requirements please visit: [www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/families/progserv/paid\\_parental/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/families/progserv/paid_parental/Pages/default.aspx)

## 24 Local Volunteer Organisations Receive Volunteer Grants

24 local volunteer organisations have received funding in Volunteer Grants initiative and share over \$72,000 to buy much needed equipment and items.

Local organisations include: the Keon Park Tennis Club, who will buy cleaning utensils and a photocopier; the Life Activities Club Darebin Inc., who will purchase fuel and a public address system; and St John Ambulance Australia, Darebin Division, who will purchase portable radios.

## More Assistance For Children With Type 1 Diabetes

The Type 1 Diabetes Insulin Pump Program subsidy for children under 18 has now been raised from \$2,500 to \$6,400 (or 80% of the pump price) and is available to successful applicants who have an annual family income of up to \$64,240.



At Parliament House with Ruby Dowling, Youth Ambassador, Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

## Centrelink's Financial Information Service

The time to get advice and arrange your financial affairs is well before retirement or entry into aged care.

Centrelink's Financial Information Service (FIS) can explain the possibilities and pitfalls you will face. Unlike many private financial advisers and investment institutions, FIS helps people to make informed decisions about investment and financial issues for their current and future financial needs. FIS is independent, available to everyone in the community and is free and confidential.

The FIS Officer cannot recommend particular products or services but they can make you aware of aspects of the social security system that any advisor should be knowledgeable about. The service is available in languages other than English. To book an appointment with FIS please phone **13 23 00**.



**My Office:**  
If you have a problem or query regarding a Federal government issue such as Centrelink, Superannuation, Veterans Affairs, Pensions, Communications, Education (Universities) or Immigration, my staff and I are here to assist you.

Free publications (see below) are also available:-  
*Australian Curriculum Information Sheet; Environment Kit; Families Information Kit; Food & Nutrition Kit; Legal Kit; Do Not Call Register; Pensioner & Senior's Information Kit; Promote Australia Guide; Social Inclusion Policy; Safe & Secure for Seniors; Safe & Secure at Home & Holidays; Information Kit for School Leavers; Accommodation Choices for Older Australians; You and Your Government Information Kit; Warranties & Refunds Guide and Information about Digital TV Changeover.*

Access these through my website on

[www.martinferguson.com.au](http://www.martinferguson.com.au) or call my office on **9416 8690** if you would like any of the above kits (max. 3) or if you need my assistance.

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# Ferguson Report Autumn 2010

## Health Reform

The new *National Health and Hospitals Network* will deliver better hospitals and better health care for Australians no matter where they live.

During the transition period, Victoria will receive an extra \$890 million for 332 new beds and an extra 33,900 elective surgery procedures.

From 2014, Australia will be one national network instead of eight separate systems means patients will benefit from the same high standards, including acceptable waiting times for emergency departments and elective surgery.

**Taking full responsibility for funding all health services provided outside of hospitals**

- The Government will take over funding and policy responsibility for all GP and Primary Health Care, resulting in an additional 1,375 GPs and 680 more specialist Doctors in the next decade.
- The Government has committed an additional \$5.4 billion nationally prior to the Plan starting in 2014.

**Ensuring the health system is financially sustainable**

- The Government will dedicate around 1/3 of the GST and invest all of this directly into health and hospitals.



- The Government is taking majority funding responsibility for the fastest growing area of all governments' budgets.

**National leadership and national standards**

- The Government will set strong national standards for the hospital system, producing an annual report that rates every local and private hospital against these standards.
- The Government will ensure that 95% of elective surgery is done on time and patients are treated within 4 hours in Emergency Departments.

**Setting up Local Hospital Networks and paying them directly**

- The Government will hand control of hospitals to Local Hospital Networks run by health and financial professionals.
- The Government will reduce waste and inefficiency by paying Local Hospital Networks directly for each service they provide.

**Improving the nation's mental health system**

- The Government will invest an additional \$174 million in mental health services for all Australians, particularly young people.

**Find out more information at the National Health and Hospital Reform website [www.yourhealth.gov.au](http://www.yourhealth.gov.au)**

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## Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan

Recently the Rudd Labor Government marked the one-year anniversary of the announcement of the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan.

It showed that most infrastructure projects are completed or underway and over half of the \$42 billion stimulus has been injected into the economy. Of the major building and construction projects being rolled out, 49,179 projects have been approved, 34,853 projects have commenced, and 8,339 have been completed.

When the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan was announced in February last year, our economy had contracted in the 2008 December quarter and was on the brink of a recession. We were facing the bleak prospect of a million Australians out of work. As a government, we were determined to do whatever we responsibly could to protect our economy, to protect jobs, and to protect small businesses. One year on, a combination of economic stimulus and the resilience and hard work of Australians and businesses has meant we have avoided recession and saved the jobs of tens of thousands of breadwinners. I think all Australians can be proud of the way in which we have come together as a nation during this global turmoil. Together, we have achieved stronger growth than any other advanced economy, created 112,000 jobs over the past year, and have so far kept unemployment to under 6 per cent.

Australia's strong economic performance has been highlighted by global ratings agency Standard & Poor's in its Asia-Pacific Sovereign Report Card which noted that

*"Australia has been the best performing developed economy in the world in recent years".*

Locally, nearly 333 stimulus projects are being delivered to modernise our schools, improve local roads and revitalise our community facilities. To find out what projects are happening in your local postcode, visit [www.economicstimulusplan.gov.au](http://www.economicstimulusplan.gov.au)

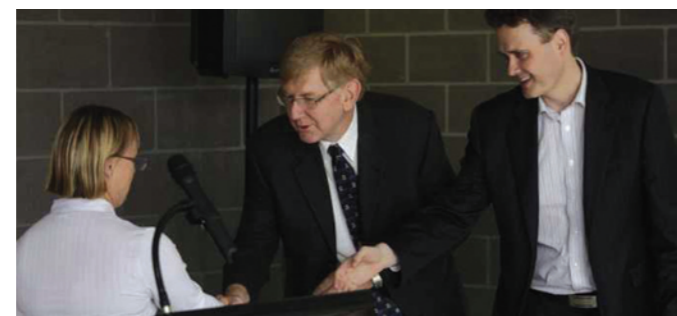
## Biggest investment in public housing in Victoria in decades under the Nation Building \$13 million project delivering jobs and better housing.

The old Preston bus depot will be transformed into 52 new homes thanks to a \$13 million Nation Building housing project.

As Federal Member, I went along with State Member for Preston, Robin Scott, and opened the project which has sustained 60 jobs locally in the construction and associated industries throughout the Batman area.

The Victorian Government has received \$1.167 billion through the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan and I am delighted to be able to see part of that contribution being invested in Preston. Under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan, the Rudd Government is investing \$50 million in 170 new homes in the wider Batman area. The new Nation Building homes will be environmentally friendly, with good insulation and ventilation, water tanks, bike-racks and space for a communal hire-car.

Over 180,000 jobs have been created nationally as a result of the Rudd Government's Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan – with the lowest debt of any advanced economy in the world.



Martin with Robin Scott, Member for Preston, at project opening.

## Withdrawal of Stimulus

The OECD's Interim Economic Assessment warns that "despite some encouraging signs on activity, the fragility of the recovery, a frail labour market and possible headwinds coming from financial markets underscore the need for caution in the removal of policy support." Here in Australia, our solid economic performance means that we are in a position to withdraw stimulus substantially faster than the IMF and OECD have recommended for advanced economies. Overall, the withdrawal of fiscal stimulus is expected to subtract around 1 percentage point from GDP growth over 2010, making room for the private business activity that will sustain our economic recovery.



## Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan

I have seen first-hand the positive impact that the largest school modernisation program in our nation's history is having in our community, including:

- \$3 million for new construction at Westgarth Primary School;
- \$2 million for new construction at Bell Primary School;
- \$850,000 for St. John's Greek Orthodox College to complete an Arts Centre;
- \$150,000 to upgrade painted and carpet areas at St. Raphael's Primary School;
- \$125,000 for an environment project at Reservoir Views Primary School.

All of this funding guarantees that much needed upgrades and repair work is done to the local schools in our community—valuable work that, if the Coalition had its way, would never have occurred. Currently there are 98 projects at 46 schools receiving a total of \$24,150,000 in the Batman electorate.

## Australian Curriculum

The first draft Australian Curriculum for students from Kindergarten to Year 10 in the subjects of English, maths, science and history was recently released by the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd. An online curriculum will be dynamic and easily updated.

From next year students will be able to move schools, school systems and states and be taught the same knowledge, skills and understanding as part of a curriculum for the 21st Century.

To view the draft Australian Curriculum and for public feedback, visit the consultation website [www.australiancurriculum.edu.au](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au).

## Cyber Safety Pilot Program

Holy Name Primary School and Preston North East Primary School have been selected to participate in the new cyber-safety and student wellbeing pilot program which aims at helping school communities become smart, safe and responsible users of technology.

The \$3 million initiative funded by the Federal Government will provide schools with web resources designed to help them create an approach to cyber-safety that meets their specific needs and helps to clarify the role that schools play in ensuring the responsible and safe use of technology.

A full list of schools involved in the pilot and further information is available [www.safeschools.deewr.gov.au](http://www.safeschools.deewr.gov.au)

## Government Delivers On Youth Allowance

More than 100 000 students will be better off under recent Government changes by receiving more Youth Allowance or Youth Allowance for the first time.

New parental income test arrangements will come into force from 1 July 2101. All students who receive Youth Allowance will receive a \$2,128 start up scholarship every year, indexed for inflation. Key elements of the changes include:

From 1 July 2012, students will be able to earn \$400 a fortnight (up from \$236) without having their payments reduced. The age of independence will be progressively lowered from 25 years to 22 years by 2012, which will see an estimated 7 600 new recipients of the independent rate of allowance.

For further information visit: [www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/youth\\_allow.htm](http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/payments/youth_allow.htm)

## Pension Rise to Help With Cost of Living

From 22 March 2010, indexation will deliver an increase to pension payments of \$29.20 a fortnight for singles on the maximum rate, and \$44.00 a fortnight for couples combined on the maximum rate.

Australia's three million aged, disability, and carer pensioners, veterans' income support recipients, Wife Pension and Widow B Pension will receive higher pensions payments to help meet increases in the cost of living.



Local seniors meeting with Martin.

## Digital Community TV – Channel 31

I am pleased to announce that the Government has determined a pathway for Community Television to make the transition to digital broadcasting which allows C31 in Melbourne to simulcast its services until the switch to digital-only television in 2013.

The Rudd Government greatly values the role of community television so, to enable the community sector to meet the costs of commencing digital simulcasts, it has allocated funding support totalling \$2.6 million.

### Are you Enrolled to Vote or Need to Update your Enrolment?

To be eligible to enrol you must be an Australian Citizen and 17 years of age or older. You can enrol or update your enrolment by visiting [www.aec.gov.au](http://www.aec.gov.au) or phone my office for an application form.

## Do Not Call Register

Reminder to update your phone numbers

The current Do Not Call Register started in 2007 and has been an effective way to reduce the number of telemarketing calls you receive of an evening and on weekends. The Register needs to be refreshed every three years, so people who were quick to sign on when it was first introduced in May 2007 will be subject to new sales pitches as the Register's three year time limit expires.

People can re-register their numbers ahead of time to ensure their phone number is on the Register for the next three years. To renew or register for the first time:

Call **1300 792 958**, Register online: [www.donotcall.gov.au](http://www.donotcall.gov.au).

The Government is also planning on expanding the Register to include businesses, fax users and emergency service organisations.

## Funding for Community Infrastructure

\$271,000 has been provided by the Rudd Government for three ready-to-go community infrastructure projects as part of our plan to support jobs in the local economy while delivering lasting benefits for communities.

The funding from the second round of the Government's Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program (RLCIP) will deliver:

- \$80,000 Refurbishment of the former court house in Preston.
- \$80,000 Upgrade of Frank Arthur Allan Dunstan Reserve including improved facilities, improved access and updated play equipment in Darebin.
- \$111,000 Construction of a demountable building at Clifton Street Children's Centre in Northcote to support additional kindergarten places.

Further information is available at: <http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/local/cip/index.aspx>

## Weekly Payments for Vulnerable Australians

Vulnerable Australians will now have the option of receiving their regular income support payments weekly, instead of fortnightly. The changes will help people who find it difficult to budget and often end the fortnight with no money left to pay the bills. It gives people the option of weekly access to payments to buy essential basics like food, clothing and medication. Weekly payments can also help families and individuals struggling with their rent to keep a roof over their heads.