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FUTURE DIRECTIONS  
FOR RURAL INDUSTRIES  
AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

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# FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RURAL INDUSTRIES AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Rural industries and rural communities play a vital role in Australia's economy and the fabric of Australian life and culture. However the sustainability of rural communities and industry over the coming decades will require investment in skills and infrastructure, an innovative culture, increased competitiveness in global markets, the creation of new export markets and the development of vibrant and connected remote, rural and regional communities. A targeted approach is also needed to sustain the long term viability of our rural industries in the face of climate change.

At the 2020 Summit, the Rural Stream considered a range of issues faced by rural communities and industries, many of which have synergies with ideas raised in other streams. Central themes included sustainability and the challenges that rural industries will face around climate change, education, creating a clear vision for the future of rural Australia, connecting individuals and communities, infrastructure and regional development, and the nationwide harmonisation of regulation and enforcement.

The Rural Stream developed a broad range of ambitions, themes and ideas that have influenced and guided the Government's policy in this area, including:

- **Infrastructure Australia** – Infrastructure Australia will conduct regular audits to determine the adequacy, capacity and condition of nationally significant infrastructure, taking into account forecast growth and the adequacy of the infrastructure to meet that growth. Infrastructure Australia released an interim report on the National Infrastructure Audit and the Infrastructure Priority List at the end of 2008.
- **National Broadband Network** – The Government has announced it will establish a new company that will invest up to \$43 billion over eight years to build and operate a National Broadband Network delivering superfast broadband to Australian homes and workplaces. The Australian Broadband Guarantee (ABG) program complements the rollout of the NBN in rural areas by providing safety net broadband services to all Australian households that are unable to access metro-comparable broadband services. An additional \$270.7 million over four years was allocated in the 2008–09 Budget to continue the ABG program.
- **Regional Development** – Funding of \$800 million is being provided to local councils and shires under the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program to build local and community infrastructure. This will be delivered in two parts: \$550 million for Strategic Projects and \$250 million allocated direct to councils and shires. This program builds on a range of other community building infrastructure programs where the Government is making infrastructure investments using local knowledge and advice.

The following tables provide the Government's response to the ideas raised by the Rural Stream at the 2020 Summit.

## Key ideas being taken forward by the Government

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Infrastructure – National Institution</b>  Also raised by: Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future infrastructure investment decisions should be approached from a national perspective. In rail infrastructure, such an approach would help facilitate a catch-up in investment and improve both the modality of our current network and intermodal hubbing.</li> <li>• A single national government entity to facilitate financing, approval and development of infrastructure projects.</li> <li>• Increase the power of Infrastructure Australia to drive priorities, develop more competitive national markets in areas such as water, electricity and transport and ensure market-based pricing of scarce resources such as water.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-part. Infrastructure Australia was established by the Government in April 2008. It will conduct regular audits to determine the adequacy, capacity and condition of nationally significant infrastructure, taking into account forecast growth and the adequacy of the infrastructure to meet that growth. It will also develop a national infrastructure priority list for COAG to consider.</p> <p>Infrastructure Australia released an interim report on both the National Infrastructure Audit and the Infrastructure Priority List at the end of 2008.</p>
<b>Infrastructure – National Broadband Network</b>  Also raised by: Productivity Economy Creative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connecting Australia: Use new technologies to foster new working environments that dissipate the ‘tyranny of distance’ both within and beyond Australia.</li> <li>• Build and enable the use by all Australians of a world class broadband system to foster full participation in the digital economy.</li> <li>• Roll out a competitive national broadband network across Australia.</li> <li>• Establish a national digital fund to continue to expand Australia’s broadband.</li> <li>• Improve technology infrastructure and increased access to technology.</li> <li>• Provide broadband access for remote, rural and regional Australia</li> </ul>	<p>Agree. The Government has announced it will establish a new company that will invest up to \$43 billion over eight years to build and operate a National Broadband Network (NBN) delivering superfast broadband to Australian homes and workplaces.</p> <p>Every person and business in Australia, no matter where they are located, will have access to affordable, fast broadband at their fingertips.</p> <p>The Schools Summits also recognised the importance of connecting regional areas to the internet, and the Australian Broadband Guarantee (ABG) program complements the rollout of the National Broadband Network in rural areas by providing safety net broadband services to all Australian households that are unable to access metro-comparable broadband services. An additional \$270.7 million over four years was allocated in the 2008–09 Budget to continue the ABG program.</p> <p>In addition the Government is preparing a ‘Digital Economy – Future Directions’ Paper in consultation with industry. The paper will provide a roadmap of how the Government and industry can collaborate to maximise the participation of Australians in the digital economy.</p> <p>Further, the Government’s Vocational Education Broadband Network will create a single post-secondary high speed broadband network, connecting the Australian training system to a similar network to that currently serving universities. This will increase flexibility in the place and pace of learning, and offer speedy access to resources no matter where they are located.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<p><b>Continued ... Infrastructure – National Broadband Network</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Productivity Economy Creative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The rural, economy, creativity and productivity streams proposed that the Government should assess the case for vertical separation of the national broadband network owner from retail carriers and carriage service providers.</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fibre-to-the-home should be the key technology goal of government.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-part. The Government has established a company that will invest up to \$43 billion to build and operate a new super fast national broadband network.</p> <p>The network will be a wholesale-only, open access network that offers equivalent access terms and conditions for all access seekers. The Government will encourage private sector investment in the new network but measures will be put in place to ensure that the equivalence arrangements are not compromised.</p> <p>The Government has also announced that in the transition period to the full rollout of the new network, it will give consideration to stronger measures to ensure access seekers receive equivalent access terms on Telstra's existing fixed-line network.</p> <hr/> <p>The Government has announced that it will establish a company that will invest up to \$43 billion to build and operate a new super fast national broadband network.</p> <p>The Government's objective is that the national broadband network achieve 90 per cent coverage to homes, schools and workplaces using optical fibre (fibre-to-the-premises or 'FTTP') and remaining coverage to be delivered through wireless and satellite technologies, within this funding envelope</p>
<p><b>Early Childhood Development Assessment (Healthy Kids Check)</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Productivity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every child should be given an early development assessment, which could be funded through Medicare and delivered by early childhood centres.</li> <li>Conduct comprehensive physical assessments of all remote, rural and regional children aged four years to ensure early detection of potential behavioural and learning difficulties before the children start school.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The Government introduced the Healthy Kids Check (\$25.6 million over four years) on 1 July 2008 to ensure that every four year old has a basic health check to ensure they are healthy, fit and ready to learn when they start school. The Healthy Kids Check recognises many of the ideas raised at the Summit, and will promote early detection of lifestyle risk factors and delayed development, and provide guidance for healthy lifestyles and early intervention strategies.</p>

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<p><b>Low Socio-economic School Communities</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Productivity Communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide one-on-one support and special education for students who fall behind.</li> <li>• Overcome the public–private divide by funding students according to need and encouraging more private investment in public and private schools through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Student-centred funding</li> <li>– Funding according to need, where disadvantaged students attract more funding and support to ensure that they become a productive participant in Australian society</li> <li>– Further cross-sector collaboration</li> <li>– Integrated sources of funding attached to students and/or institutions. One option would be to rationalise the use of private investment and then use public investment to make up the shortfall.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide education assistance for young people at risk or from disadvantaged backgrounds.</li> <li>• Provide case conferencing with school teachers and health professionals to meet the needs of children with conditions that impair their learning (rural).</li> <li>• Develop a school ‘twinning’ program—for example, pairing schools from different regions.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed to a number of National Partnerships in relation to low socio-economic status school communities. The Australian Government will provide \$1.5 billion to address the needs of disadvantaged schools. The Government will work with the states and territories on a range of reforms that will support the educational and wellbeing needs of students and schools in low socio-economic status communities.</p> <p>COAG has also agreed to a National Partnership on literacy and numeracy that will aim to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, especially those who are falling behind. Research and data collection will be supported by funding of \$40 million. This includes an additional \$13 million for the collection and reporting of data through the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority for which funding of \$17.2 million was announced in the last Budget.</p> <p>The Dare to Lead Project, funded by the Government, drives change in schools through a coalition of school leaders who influence improvements in Indigenous education. The project’s Partnerships Building Success direction for 2009–2012 has been supported by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and through the inclusion of colloquial reviews in sister school arrangements expect to increase the achievements in Indigenous student outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Education – Trade Training in Schools program</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in human capital by strengthening regional high schools and post-secondary education facilities to limit the flow of rural children moving to the city for education.</li> </ul>	<p>Through the Trade Training Centres in Schools program, the Government will allocate from Phase One 32 per cent of a total \$90.3 million of funding to benefit schools in rural or regional areas. This Program provides for facilities to enhance vocational education opportunities for students in Years 9 to 12 through the upgrading of trade workshops, computer laboratories and other vocational training centres.</p>

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<b>Education – Promoting Rural Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion of remote, rural and regional Australia and its sectors within schools.</li> <li>Incorporate rural studies into a national rural education program that includes life-long learning, and the establishment of centres of excellence in agricultural studies in rural and regional locations.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The Government has provided \$175,000 for the Primary Industries Education Foundation, a partnership between government, industry and the education sector that will develop, coordinate and promote farm education in schools.</p>
<b>Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden</b>  Also raised by: Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support kitchen gardens in schools to enable school children to see how food is grown and experience truly fresh food.</li> <li>Each child should be required to produce a real or virtual primary product' in order to better understand its origin and appreciate the effort and resources needed to produce it.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden National Program was launched by the Minister for Health and Ageing on 21 August 2008. The National Program will see up to 190 primary schools across Australia receive grants to build kitchens and gardens. Within four years, around 20,000 Australian primary school children in Years 3 to 6 will experience growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing fresh food each week, laying the foundations for a life time of healthy food choices.</p>
<b>Education – Digital Education Revolution</b>  Also raised by: Productivity Economy Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expansion of online education in tertiary and secondary schools to ensure that courses are accessible to remote, rural and regional people via virtual classrooms, online tutors and mentors, e-learning tele-education centres, and better use of hard infrastructure such as school buildings for out-of-school-time use.</li> <li>Establishment of interactive learning centres of excellence, which could be provided by satellite technology to allow high-quality education and training relevant to any field of expertise to be 'zoomed in' to remote, rural and regional communities.</li> <li>Use technology to improve the delivery of education inside and outside the classroom.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The Government is committing new funding of \$2 billion over five years to support the Digital Education Revolution. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grants through the National Secondary School Computer Fund for new or upgraded information and communications technology (ICT) for secondary students in Years 9 to 12</li> <li>A contribution of up to \$100 million through the Fibre Connections to Schools initiative, to support the development of fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) broadband connections to Australian schools</li> <li>Collaboration with the states and territories and Deans of Education to ensure new and continuing teachers have access to training in the use of ICT</li> <li>\$32.6 million over two years to supply students and teachers with online curriculum tools and resources.</li> </ul>
<b>Vocational Education Broadband Network</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expansion of online education in tertiary and secondary schools to ensure that courses are accessible to remote, rural and regional people via virtual classrooms, online tutors and mentors, e-learning tele-education centres, and better use of hard infrastructure such as school buildings for out-of-school-time use.</li> </ul>	<p>In addition to the wider Digital Education Revolution, the Government has also committed to a new Vocational Education Broadband Network which will create a single post-secondary high speed broadband network, connecting the Australian training system to a similar network to that currently serving universities.</p>

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<b>Higher Education – HECS/HELP Incentives for Skills Shortage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tertiary graduates having their higher education loan debts reduced by seeking voluntary or paid employment in remote, rural and regional areas.</li> <li>• Incentives for education and training such as reduced higher education loan debts.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The Government is reducing HECS/HELP repayments by about half for early childhood graduates who work in regional and remote areas, Indigenous communities and areas of high disadvantage.</p>
<b>Review of Australian Higher Education – Bradley Review</b>  <b>Also raised by: Productivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove the rigidity in funding arrangements.</li> <li>• Fund change management and leadership programs in remote, rural and regional Australia and develop a national strategy for rural education including a 'tertiary access allowance' and higher education loan waivers.</li> <li>• Provide clear educational pathways and partnerships for young people to gain access to quality higher education.</li> </ul>	<p>The Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley Review) which was released in December 2008, examined the future direction of the higher education sector, its fitness for purpose in meeting the needs of the Australian community and economy, and the options for ongoing reform.</p> <p>The Government has provided an initial response to the report detailing a number of reforms in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future structural reforms for the higher education sector, which focus on a student-centred, demand driven system.</li> <li>• Reforms to Vocational Education and Training (VET), which focus on developing a national tertiary education system with clear pathways for students</li> <li>• Enhanced equity in tertiary education, with a focus on improving the accessibility of tertiary education for all Australians</li> </ul> <p>More detail will be announced at the time of the Budget in May 2009.</p>

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<p><b>Skills Development</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide free access to vocational education and training programs for every unemployed person.</li> <li>• Expand scholarship schemes to cover further education and other accredited training for remote, rural and regional students, trainees and apprentices.</li> <li>• Provide a well-trained and well-resourced workforce. Address ageing workforce, lack of skills, lack of parity in wages – for example, mining versus community sector.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. As part of its Skilling Australia for the Future initiative, the Government is funding an additional 711,000 training places over five years, including 85,000 apprenticeship places and 309,000 training places for jobseekers who need training to assist them in participating in the labour force. The most recent expansion, announced 24 February 2009, provides 10,000 additional places to assist newly retrenched workers to access training.</p> <p>The Government's Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan includes a \$511 million Training and Learning Bonus. The Bonus has two components. First, it provides a one-off bonus of \$950 to students and to certain other income support recipients to assist with education costs for the 2009 academic year. Second, it provides a temporary additional incentive for eligible social security recipients to return to education and training. This incentive is in the form of a \$950 temporary supplement to the Education Entry Payment, which provides financial assistance to commence approved training and education courses.</p> <p>In addition from 1 July 2009, an additional 3,650 pre-vocational training and support places will be provided to young people aged 19–24 years through the Australian Apprenticeships Access Program. The \$30.2 million expansion of the program will support at-risk jobseekers to pursue apprenticeships or training.</p>
<p><b>Workforce Participation – Workforce Development</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Productivity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct more research into what skills are needed (workforce development for science and mathematics education).</li> <li>• A skills audit of remote, rural and regional areas to identify labour and skills shortages and provision of training opportunities in communities where there are labour and skills shortages.</li> <li>• Improved professional development opportunities.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. Skills Australia will provide the Government with recommendations on current and future skills needs to inform the Government's decisions in relation to skills development.</p> <p>The Government recognises that equipping workers and businesses with green skills will be essential if Australia is to take the opportunities presented by a transition to a low carbon economy. The Skills for the Carbon Challenge program incorporates an audit identifying industry's green skill needs.</p> <p>In February 2009 the Government committed \$298.5 million investment in employment services to ensure that any Australian worker made redundant will receive assistance to help them get back into the workforce.</p>

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<p><b>Mentoring in the workplace – Golden Gurus</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Productivity</p>	<p>Create a scheme in which opportunities are provided for retired people to act as mentors in the workplace, incorporating remote, rural and regional Australia.</p> <p>The ideas raised regarding mentoring in remote, rural and regional Australia included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding should be provided for business coaches</li> <li>• People should be encouraged to create their own opportunities through a mentoring and coaching initiative</li> <li>• Partnerships between different industry sectors should be established including provision of business mentoring schemes between urban and remote, rural and regional Australia</li> <li>• Establish a mentoring exchange program between urban and remote, rural and regional Australia that targets students, trainees, young people, professionals and business people</li> <li>• Creation of a ‘flying business-mentoring squad’ of successful business people who volunteer their time to provide business and management coaching on the ground to small to medium businesses in remote, rural and regional Australia.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. To help meet the challenges of our ageing population and pass on valuable experience from retirees to new generations, the Government is committed to developing a national Golden Gurus mentoring scheme. As discussed at the Summit the scheme will provide opportunities for retired mentors to support a range of small business and community needs. The scheme will be developed during 2009.</p> <p><i>The full list of related ideas can be found in the Productivity Stream.</i></p>
<p><b>Pacific Development – Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Security Productivity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a workforce and skills program that enables foreign workers to come to remote, rural and regional Australia for up to two years, to work under an Australian industry instrument.</li> <li>• Develop links with Australia’s overseas aid programs to offer aid recipients work opportunities in Australia as an opportunity to develop skills, earn wages to support their family and community and promote cross-cultural understanding. The scheme would also offer Australian employers the capacity to fill jobs.</li> <li>• A rights-based labour mobility initiative for South West Pacific, including East Timor.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree. The Government announced the Pacific Seasonal Worker Pilot Scheme on 17 August 2008. This three year scheme will examine the viability of a seasonal worker program, with a focus on the horticulture industry. The Government is conducting the pilot to examine whether a seasonal worker program could contribute to regional economic development objectives and also assist Australian employers.</p>

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<p><b>Health Workforce – Inter-Governmental Agreement on National Registration and Accreditation</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement a system of common accreditation and registration for all health professionals.</li> <li>Establishment of a national system for registration of medical professionals.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree. In March 2008, COAG agreed to create a single national registration and accreditation system to create a more flexible, responsive and sustainable health workforce. The system will be in place by July 2010, initially for ten health professions.</p>
<p><b>Health Workforce – Promoting Migration/Rural Awareness</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce incentives targeted at recruiting and retaining health and education professionals in remote, rural and regional Australia.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree. The Government already has a number of incentives in place aimed at recruiting and retaining health professionals in remote, rural and regional Australia.</p> <p>One example is the Government's expansion of the John Flynn Placement Program, providing 150 additional places for medical students each year. In addition, \$2.5 million over three years is being provided for clinical placements for health students. The Government is also providing additional funding of \$12 million over four years to the Medical Specialist Outreach Assistance Program and \$7.9 million over four years to subsidise the cost of obstetricians working in rural and remote communities.</p> <p>The Government has established an Office of Rural Health within the Department of Health and Ageing to undertake a review of Commonwealth-funded rural health programs to ensure that workforce programs and incentives respond to current population figures and genuine need.</p> <p>The Council of Australian Governments' Health Workforce Package includes investment of \$175.6 million over four years in capital infrastructure to expand teaching and training, especially at major regional hospitals, to improve clinical training in rural Australia as students who train in rural areas are more likely to practice in rural Australia.</p>

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<p><b>Community Engagement</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Economy Governance Communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitation of local 2020 summits to empower communities and to inform the development of regional prospectuses to guide future development and support bids for funding.</li> <li>New mechanisms for facilitating greater involvement of non-government organisations, as well as the arts and volunteer sectors, in the development of policies for remote, rural and regional Australia – particularly new climate change policies.</li> <li>Policy making at the local and regional level.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government agrees with the idea of enhancing community engagement. The Government's approach is to trial different and innovative mechanisms and draw on specific suggestions across several streams in that context.</p> <p>For example the Government is committed to developing practical initiatives in e-governance that increase the communities' ability to interact with the parliament and the policy development processes of government.</p> <p>The Government is also considering holding a set of forums that will bring together experts, business and community representatives and others to discuss high priority topics.</p> <p><i>The full list of related ideas can be found in the Governance Stream.</i></p>
<p><b>Regulation – COAG Business Regulation and Competition Working Group</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Economy Governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uniform regulation, licensing, standards and enforcement for transport (both road and rail) and agriculture.</li> <li>Harmonisation of state and territory regulations, including the removal of impediments associated with access to drought assistance.</li> <li>Cutting red tape in general and setting minimum red tape targets when introducing new polices for dealing with climate change.</li> <li>Harmonisation of federal and state regulations to reduce duplication and the costs of doing business.</li> <li>The speed of regulatory reform should be increased, including creation of seamless national markets in key areas.</li> <li>Review regulatory regimes to encourage private investment.</li> <li>Regulation to be seen in the context of allowing market solutions wherever possible to deal with social problems and externalities.</li> <li>Establish uniform national laws for industry, trade, finance and property.</li> <li>Uniform laws for human rights, resources and infrastructure, and workplace safety.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The 2020 Summit recognised the importance of regulatory reform and harmonisation of state and territory laws.</p> <p>Many of the ideas discussed at the Summit reflect the work program of the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) Business Regulation and Competition Working Group (BRCWG).</p> <p>In December 2007, COAG established the BRCWG to deliver more consistent regulation across jurisdictions, reduce restrictions on competition in priority areas of the economy, and improve processes for regulation making and review. The work program includes reducing inconsistent and unnecessary regulation in 27 separate areas and delivering competition reform in eight agreed priority areas.</p> <p>In November 2008, COAG agreed to the new National Partnership Agreement to Deliver a Seamless National Economy, under which the Commonwealth committed to provide funding to the states and territories of \$550 million over five years. The payments are in two components; \$100 million to facilitate the implementation of reforms, and \$450 million in reward payments. The reforms, include nationally uniform OH&amp;S laws, a national system for registering business names, and a national electronic conveyancing system.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<p><b>Infrastructure – National Priorities and Investment</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A time-sensitive approach to more rapid development of infrastructure.</li> <li>• Telescope the development approval process for infrastructure projects.</li> <li>• Provide clear guidance to parties so they can act on the objective criteria that have been set for a project and make the necessary longer term investments.</li> <li>• Increase accountability for regulators, with clear performance indicators to review performance.</li> <li>• Liaise more directly with capital markets (that is, superannuation funds) and develop national standardised protocols for public-private partnerships.</li> <li>• Government should confirm its priorities in energy, transport, water and communications.</li> <li>• Create a master plan with a clear framework for assessing infrastructure priorities. The plan should:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– focus on areas where Australia has a competitive advantage, such as agriculture, mining and education</li> <li>– impose national standards encompassing economic, environmental and social criteria for the development of infrastructure, and</li> <li>– provide a framework for a rigorous cost-benefit assessment of projects.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Immediate and sustained investment in Australia’s intramodal and intermodal transport systems, targeting rail as the short-term imperative.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. Infrastructure Australia released an interim report on both the National Infrastructure Audit and the Infrastructure Priority List at the end of 2008. The final Priority List will enable the Government, advised by Infrastructure Australia, to make timely decisions on projects that will advance Australia’s nation building agenda.</p> <p>In November 2008 COAG endorsed a National Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) package. The package offers major reform gains in terms of consistency and harmonisation of PPP policy and practices across jurisdictions. It aims to encourage the consideration of PPPs, ensure consistent application of best practice across Australia and encourage private sector investment in public infrastructure in Australia.</p>

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<b>Infrastructure – Highways (Auslink)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade and build new national highways that connect remote, rural and regional Australia.</li> <li>• An upgrade of the Pacific Highway to dual carriageway along its entire route.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The Government will invest more than \$27 billion to improve the nation's road and rail networks from now until 2014. In addition, the Government has already allocated \$12.6 billion to the Building Australia Fund to deliver further investments in nation-building infrastructure, including in regional Australia.</p> <p>The Government has committed to invest \$140 million in 2008–09 and a further \$60 million in 2009–10 to Black Spot funding. The Government has also provided \$150.0 million over two years to improve road safety by funding the construction of boom gates at rail crossings.</p> <p>The Government has also committed to invest \$2.45 billion between 2009 and 2014 to continue the duplication of the Pacific Highway. Priority projects include the Ballina Bypass, Bulahdelah Bypass and upgrade at Saxtons Hill, Banora Point.</p>
<b>Regional Development – Tourism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of tourism opportunities.</li> <li>• Provide greater opportunities for local and artisanal food and wine production to support local and national tourism industries.</li> <li>• In the face of current pressures such as lower rainfall and corporatisation of farms, special effort needs to be made in remote, rural and regional Australia to facilitate new entrants into tourism and tourism product development.</li> <li>• Development of a national policy and strategy to promote a profitable remote, rural and regional Australia.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The Government promotes tourism through Tourism Australia. There are also a range of existing state initiatives in this area.</p> <p>The Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism also runs the Australian Tourism Development Program (ATDP), a competitive merit-based grant program that supports the development of the Australian tourism industry. In 2008–09, the ATDP will provide \$4.5 million for 11 projects in regional and metropolitan Australia to develop quality tourism precincts, experiences, and strategies for growth.</p> <p>In addition, \$1.8 million is available to continue business mentoring support for Indigenous operators under the Business Ready Program for Indigenous Tourism (BRPIT) and to support the promotion of Indigenous tourism experiences to the international marketplace.</p> <p>The Government is also developing a National Long-Term Tourism Strategy for release later in 2009.</p>
<b>Regional Development – Regional Arts Promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote remote, rural and regional Australia's cultural virtues – including Indigenous culture and the arts.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree. The Government has made a commitment to working with Regional Arts Australia to examine ways to develop the arts in regional and remote areas, for example through the Regional Arts Fund.</p>

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<b>Regional Development – Local Infrastructure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of locally appropriate regional infrastructure that is informed by an enterprise service strategy.</li> </ul>	<p>This goal is being progressed through the new Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program, as well as existing local, state, territory and Commonwealth initiatives.</p> <p>The Government has committed \$800 million to local councils and shires under the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program to build local and community infrastructure.</p> <p>This will be delivered in two parts: \$550 million for Strategic Projects and \$250 million allocated directly to councils and shires.</p> <p>This program builds on a range of other community building infrastructure programs where the Government is making infrastructure investments using local knowledge and advice.</p> <p>The Government has also launched the Innovative Regions Centre (IRC) program, which will work with regions around Australia to increase the innovative capacity of local firms and regional economies.</p> <p>The Government has also committed \$150 million in 2008–09 to repair regional roads across Australia. This program will fund state and territory governments to repair roads in all regions, with funding to be focused on areas that have the largest backlog of eligible projects.</p>
<b>Sustainability – Food Production</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gain consumer trust through the pursuit of sustainable production.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. Sustainable production, particularly in a changing climate, is being promoted through a range of measures, including Australia's Farming Future and Caring for Our Country programs.</p>
<b>Food Security – Policy Unit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a government unit to consider national and global food security by looking at the context, drivers and emerging trends and new policy options.</li> <li>Examine projected national food demands and the production systems required to enable sufficient food production to continue to be achieved within Australia's environmental and resource constraints.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The Government has established a team dedicated to working on food security issues within the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<p><b>Water Management and Reform</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake research into the most efficient way of moving water around Australia.</li> <li>Streamline the regulation of water markets.</li> <li>Improve water security for existing users.</li> <li>Provide additional water infrastructure (including new dams) across Australia through a national program funded jointly by government and the private sector.</li> <li>Deliver innovative, efficient and cost-effective water savings and modernisation programs in established agricultural areas.</li> </ul>	<p>Through its \$12.9 billion Water for the Future initiative, the Government is funding infrastructure projects to secure water supplies through recycling, desalination, urban stormwater harvesting and improving the efficient use of water. The initiative includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The \$5.8 billion Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure program to improve irrigation efficiency</li> <li>The \$1 billion National Urban Water and Desalination Plan to support desalination, water recycling and stormwater reuse.</li> </ul> <p>In rural areas, the Government is working with the states and territories to improve key irrigation infrastructure to minimise system losses and enhance the efficient use of water.</p> <p>In addition, the Government has funded the \$82 million Groundwater Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$50 million – Groundwater assessment initiative</li> <li>\$2 million – Knowledge and Capacity Building</li> <li>\$30 million – Centre for Groundwater Research and Training.</li> </ul> <p>In July 2008, the Australian, New South Wales, Victorian, Queensland, South Australian and the Australian Capital Territory Governments signed the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) on Murray-Darling Basin Reform. Under the IGA, governments committed to a new culture and practice of Basin-wide management and planning, and to a new approach to partnerships with the community.</p> <p>In November 2008, COAG agreed to a number of initiatives to improve the operation of water markets and trading through faster processing of temporary water trades, and to coordinate water information and research through the development of national water modelling strategy and a national water research strategy.</p> <p>On 4 December 2008, the Federal Parliament passed the Water Amendment Bill 2008, giving effect to crucial reforms on the management of the Murray–Darling Basin.</p> <p><i>The full list of related ideas can be found in the Sustainability Stream.</i></p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<p><b>Biodiversity – Caring for our Country Program</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce a long term stewardship incentive scheme for private landowners for the provision of ecosystem services.</li> <li>• Actively rebuild resilience in nature and societies to avoid further loss and potential catastrophic breakdown of ecosystems.</li> <li>• Recognise and reward environmental stewardship and biodiversity banking – perhaps set targets such as 20 per cent in protected areas by 2020.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle but without a commitment to the targets proposed. The Caring for our Country program commenced on 1 July 2008 and seeks to achieve an environment that is healthy, well-managed and resilient, and that provides essential ecosystem services in a changing environment. The program is being delivered in partnership with private landowners, regional natural resource management groups, local, state and territory governments, Indigenous groups, industry bodies, land managers, farmers and landcare groups.</p>
<p><b>Preventative Health – Healthy Food and Living</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making healthy food choices easy (e.g. delivering ‘fast fruit’ to primary schools, fresh food to Indigenous communities, banning junk food advertising to children, regulating allowable content of unhealthy ingredients).</li> <li>• Healthy food leads to healthy nations. Model of food labelling (traffic light), label all food ingredients including trans-fats.</li> <li>• Use positive social marketing to encourage healthy living by making poor health habits expensive and healthy living habits less expensive.</li> <li>• Provide incentives to employers/schools to introduce healthy food exercise.</li> <li>• Develop a physical activity pathway for all Australians at all stages of life.</li> <li>• Introduce physical activity every day – 30 minutes throughout the workforce.</li> <li>• Design healthier buildings and neighbourhoods.</li> <li>• Develop health and lifestyle plans for every city.</li> <li>• Develop a wellness rating scheme for all suburbs, towns and cities.</li> <li>• Abolish duty-free alcohol and cigarettes into Australia.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government agrees that helping Australians to make healthier choices is an important goal. Not all of these ideas will be necessarily adopted in achieving that goal.</p> <p>In November 2008, COAG agreed to a Preventive Health National Partnership Agreement (to which the Australian Government contributes funding of \$872.1 million over 6 years) to support a range of nutrition, physical activity, obesity and smoking initiatives, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to services for children to increase physical activity and improve nutrition</li> <li>• Provision of support incentives for workplaces and local communities to provide physical activity and healthy living programs.</li> <li>• Rewarding States and Territories for achieving specified targets in the areas of healthy weight, healthy eating, physical activity and smoking.</li> </ul> <p>The Preventative Health Taskforce will also be providing evidence-based advice to governments and health providers on health programs and strategies. The Taskforce will develop a National Preventative Health Strategy by June 2009, which is likely to address some or all of the issues raised by the 2020 Summit.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Reform of the Federation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Commonwealth making incentive payments to state governments in line with their progress with reform. Significant progress should be achieved within 12 months, with further progress built on each year until 2020.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-part. The Government is progressing this issue with states and territories through COAG. COAG has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reaffirmed its commitment to cooperative working arrangements through an Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations (IGA) that provides an overarching framework for the Commonwealth's financial relationships with states and territories. The IGA aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of government services by reducing Commonwealth prescriptions on service delivery by the States, and providing them with increased flexibility in the way they deliver services to the Australian people. The IGA is supported by six new National Agreements in the areas of health, education, vocational education and training, disability services, housing and Indigenous reform. The framework provides a clearer specification of roles and responsibilities of each level of government and an improved focus on accountability for better outcomes and better service delivery</li> <li>Agreed to a new form of payment – National Partnership payments – to fund specific projects and to facilitate and/or reward States that deliver on nationally significant reforms.</li> <li>Agreed to an expanded role for an independent body, the COAG Reform Council (CRC) to monitor the progress of COAG's agreed reform agenda, to assess independently whether performance benchmarks have been achieved before an incentive payment to reward nationally significant reforms under a National Partnership is made and produce an analytical view of performance information for each Specific Purpose Payment.</li> </ul>
<b>Climate Change – Australia's Farming Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management of farms with inputs different from those currently used so as to achieve new outputs—for example, carbon sequestration.</li> <li>Provide education on research and development results, including on-the-ground extension.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. Farm Ready, announced in July 2008 as part of the Australia's Farming Future initiative, provides farmers with specialised training to help them to deal with the impacts of climate change. The Climate Change Research Program will also fund on-farm demonstrations of adaptation techniques.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Climate Change – Remote Renewable Energy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a national renewable energy policy that is focused on providing investment opportunities and associated benefits for remote, rural and regional Australia.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree. In 2007 the Government committed to ensuring that 20 per cent of Australia’s electricity supply comes from renewable energy sources by 2020. The majority of this investment will be in regional areas.</p> <p>In addition, the Renewable Remote Power Generation Program provides financial support to increase the use of renewable generation in remote off-grid parts of Australia, including rebates of up to 50 per cent (up to \$200,000) for replacing diesel systems with renewable energy sources.</p>
<b>Climate Change – Research Program</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigation of the likely impacts of climate change on remote, rural and regional Australia as well as the likely adaptation requirements.</li> <li>Integrated research, development and extension for adaptation to climate change to streamline and integrate investments across institutions (such as at CSIRO and government departments).</li> </ul>	<p>The Climate Change Research Program is part of the Australia’s Farming Future initiative and will fund projects for new climate change adaptation technologies and techniques. The Government has committed to a funding increase to \$46.2 million over four years for the program, which includes funding for large scale collaborative projects involving a range of stakeholders, such as research providers, producers and state governments.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<p><b>Climate Change – National Climate Adaptation Strategy</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Climate-proof’ the economy: not just thinking ‘locking up’ areas, include carbon offsets, biodiversity banking, stewardship, and caring for country. Valuing and caring for biodiversity are essential. Fundamentally change the approach to agriculture by recognising the new opportunities and services climate change might bring.</li> </ul> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a website that progressively charts climate change impacts across Australia.</li> <li>• Establish an independent Australian Climate Information Authority to disseminate evidence-based information rather than advocacy.</li> </ul>	<p>Agree in-principle. The Government recognises the importance of preparing Australia for the impacts of unavoidable climate change and will continue to improve the nation’s capacity to adapt to climate change through the COAG Working Group on Climate Change and Water.</p> <p>The \$130 million Australia’s Farming Future initiative will assist primary producers to adapt and respond to climate change.</p> <p>Both COAG and the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council have identified biodiversity as a priority for climate change adaptation. The Government is taking action to address the impacts of climate change on biodiversity through activities such as the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility.</p> <p>The Government has increased funding for Australia’s National Reserve System, a nation-wide network of reserves established to protect Australia’s environment. This network is part of the Government’s Caring for our Country initiative which focuses on achieving a healthy, protected and well-managed environment.</p> <hr/> <p>Agree in-principle. Existing data published by the CSIRO, the Bureau of Meteorology and of the Australian Climate Change Science Program maps the impacts of climate change across Australia. In addition the Department of Climate Change website provides information on the impacts of climate change across Australia. Work continues on assessing the impacts of climate change across Australia, including through the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility.</p>

## Ideas the Government will consider further

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Community Events Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding support for community events.</li> </ul>	<p>A range of grant programs already provide funding for community events. Funding support will be considered under the Community Programs Review being carried out by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. States and territories, and local governments also already support community events through various programs.</p>
<b>Community Corps – Support for Volunteer Work</b>  Also raised by: Productivity Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a new form of national service for young people to travel through the country, visiting a variety of places and performing some sort of community service while in that location.</li> <li>Allow community service to reduce a person's HECS/HELP debt.</li> <li>Allow tertiary graduates to have their higher education loan debts reduced by seeking voluntary or paid employment in remote, rural and regional areas.</li> </ul>	<p>The Australian volunteering spirit is one of our biggest strengths and we need to foster, promote and recognise it.</p> <p>The government is not currently proposing either a new form of national service or reductions in higher education debts and notes that both proposals would be likely to have significant resource implications for government. That said, it considers that these options do have merit and will take them into account when further developing proposals to boost the volunteer sector.</p> <p>Job Services Australia (which will replace Job Network from 1 July 2009) has a work experience stream and will encourage job seekers to participate in volunteer and other community work to build their work skills.</p>
<b>Support for Philanthropy and Giving</b>  Also raised by: Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouragement of volunteering.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government is considering wider incentives and strategies for corporate philanthropy, and is considering the input provided by the Australia 2020 Summit in that context.</p> <p>The Government is also considering the development of a national volunteering strategy.</p> <p>Job Services Australia (which will replace Job Network from 1 July 2009) has a work experience stream and will encourage job seekers to participate in volunteer and other community work to build their work skills.</p> <p><i>The full list of related ideas can be found in the Communities Stream.</i></p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Regulation – PC Review of Regulatory Burdens on Business</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce the regulation costs imposed on the food processing sector and remove regulatory food and fibre supply chain impediments and export services impediments.</li> </ul>	<p>The Productivity Commission completed its review of Regulatory Burdens on Business: Manufacturing and Distributive Trades in September 2008. The review identifies a range of improvements to regulations that primarily affect food manufacturing and distribution. The Government is considering its response to the review.</p>
<b>Agriculture Industry – Farm Management Strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The government should investigate and develop a holistic sustainable farm operational plan strategy, including an integrated carbon strategy.</li> </ul>	<p>The development of new and enhanced farm management strategies are core outcomes from Australia’s Farming Future and Caring for our Country programs. In addition, the Government – along with the states and territories – is investigating a national approach to farm management strategies aimed at improving the sustainability of agriculture.</p>
<b>Agriculture Industry – National Review of Drought Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove current impediments to adjustment – namely government subsidies that prevent the adjustment required to grow resilient businesses, both intellectual and economic.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government is committed to ensuring that Australia’s agricultural, fisheries, food and forestry industries remain competitive, profitable and sustainable. The Government has a range of policies to assist these sectors to adjust to a changing climate and drought.</p> <p>The Government is also conducting a comprehensive national review of drought policy.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<p><b>Water – Office of Northern Australia, Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce</b></p> <p>Also raised by: Sustainability</p>	<p>Manage tropical water system conservation and sustainable use by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing a management plan for Northern Australia within three years to prevent rather than repair environmental damage</li> <li>• Develop shared governance of tropical catchments (perhaps through a COAG agreement)</li> <li>• Partner with Indigenous and local communities – including through developing markets for ecosystems services and stewardship payments to Indigenous communities</li> <li>• Limit water system development to achieve healthy rivers whilst achieving the best economic outcomes – for example, water use for mining instead of agriculture</li> <li>• Leverage the available data to enable better policy making</li> <li>• Improve water-use efficiency and greater use of high rainfall areas in the north of Australia</li> <li>• Provide incentives for private sector investment; government provision of infrastructure in northern Australia—particularly water-related infrastructure—to facilitate further development of the agriculture, mining and other sectors.</li> </ul>	<p>The Northern Australia Taskforce was given new terms of reference in January 2008 to consider broader economic development opportunities for northern Australia. The taskforce delivered a mid-term report February 2009, with the final report due in late 2009.</p> <p>The Government has also established the Office of Northern Australia to facilitate the provision of high level policy advice on sustainable development issues affecting northern Australia.</p> <p>In addition, the Northern Australia Water Futures Assessment aims at providing a knowledge base to inform decisions about the development of northern Australia’s water resources to ensure that any development proceeds in an ecologically, culturally and economically sustainable manner.</p> <p>The Government will make available up to \$195 million over 2008–09 and 2009–10 to support economic development in the East Kimberley region through investments in social and common use infrastructure (e.g. health, education, housing, roads, ports and power) as part of its \$4.7 billion nation building investment initiative.</p>
<p><b>Biodiversity – Review of Australia’s Quarantine and Biosecurity Systems</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preservation of the diversity of our plants and animals, including protection from exotic disease, through the implementation of safeguards including biosecurity measures.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government commissioned a comprehensive, independent review of Australia’s quarantine and biosecurity systems. The report of the independent Review of Australia’s Quarantine and Biosecurity Arrangements, One Biosecurity: A Working Partnership (Beale Review) chaired by Mr Roger Beale AO, was released on 18 December 2008. The Government has agreed in principle to all 84 recommendations proposed by the Beale Review to improve the biosecurity system. These changes are necessary to better protect the health of Australian people, the environment and agricultural industries. Implementation will depend on a number of considerations, including the outcome of negotiations with the states and territories, budget considerations, development of biosecurity legislation and discussions with stakeholders which will occur over 2009 and into 2010.</p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Biodiversity – Response to the Inquiry into the Future Development of the Australian Honey Bee Industry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the crucial role of honey bee pollination in food production and adequate support for the honey bee industry.</li> </ul>	<p>A House of Representatives report – ‘More Than Honey: the future of the Australian honey bee and pollination industries’, was released in June 2008. The report proposes 25 recommendations to address the challenges facing the honey bee and related industries in Australia. The Government’s response will be provided in due course.</p>
<b>Food Security – CPRS Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoid creating food shortages by providing more favourable incentives for agriculture to participate in carbon markets.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government has committed to a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) which will commence in 2010. The Government does not consider that it is practical to include agriculture emissions in the trading scheme at commencement. A final decision on coverage of agriculture emissions will be made in 2013 following consultation with the industry to identify practical methods for inclusion and to develop reliable and cost-effective methods of emissions reporting. The CPRS also provides scope for some activity to create offset credits, although the Government is not proposing to establish an offset scheme for agriculture prior to a final decision on inclusion of agriculture within the CPRS in 2013.</p>
<b>Food Security – Office of Northern Australia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fulfil the significant potential of north and north-west Australia, so that Australia can be ‘the food bowl of Asia’.</li> <li>Initiate further research into the potential of north and north-west Australia with particular reference to Agriculture.</li> </ul>	<p>The Government has established the Office of Northern Australia to provide high level policy advice on sustainable development issues affecting northern Australia. The Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce is also examining the potential for new developments in northern Australia that rely on significant local or regional water resources.</p>
<b>Taxation – Review of Australia’s Future Tax System</b>  <b>Also raised by: Economy Productivity Creative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide business and tax incentives, such as reduced income tax rates for those living in remote, rural and regional Australia.</li> </ul>	<p>As discussed at the Summit, the Government agrees with the need to review taxation issues and is undertaking a comprehensive review of Australia’s tax system to position Australia to deal with the demographic, social, economic and environmental challenges of the 21st century. The review’s terms of reference have been heavily influenced by ideas from the 2020 Summit. The final report is due by the end of 2009.</p> <p><i>The full list of related ideas can be found in the Economy Stream.</i></p>

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<p><b>Response to the Review of the National Innovation System</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term funding for research, including its extension that goes beyond the current short-term bidding cycles.</li> </ul>	<p>The Review of the National Innovation System was undertaken by an expert panel chaired by Dr Terry Cutler and was completed in August 2008. The report from this review, <i>Venturous Australia: Building Strength in Innovation</i> was released on 9 September 2008.</p> <p>The Review considered numerous aspects of the National Innovation System including; education, funding for research and commercialisation and strengthening innovation culture.</p> <p>The Government will respond to the review in the near future.</p>

## Ideas others may progress

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Education – Urban-Rural Migration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occupational training programs that support urban-rural migration and are backed by a diverse range of industries.</li> </ul>	State and local governments deliver a range of urban and rural study programs. The Productivity Places Program National Partnership also offers training places to job seekers and existing workers in areas of skills shortages.
<b>Higher Education – Agriculture Centres</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restructure 22 faculties of agriculture across the country into a smaller number of faculties with centres of excellence as the focus.</li> </ul>	This could be addressed by the states and territories (which fund such institutions and rural programs) or through individual universities.
<b>Regional Development – Regional-Business Online Network</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of an online regional business network, funded through advertising revenue, that offers online discussion, the exchange of ideas, sharing of resources and a job-matching service.</li> </ul>	There is no evidence that direct Government provision would be necessary. A number of online business networks are already in place and this idea could be pursued further through the private sector.
<b>Promoting Migration/Rural Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting communities in developing their own social and marketing strategies to facilitate the relocation of people from urban Australia to remote, rural and regional areas.</li> <li>Showcasing of remote, rural and regional communities by way of promotional drives – could be called ‘the Bush Blitz’.</li> <li>Skilled people across all age groups who are passionate about working and living in sustainable and profitable parts of remote, rural or regional Australia.</li> <li>The hope of attracting people from urban to remote, rural and regional areas was encapsulated by one of the participants through the following anecdote: ‘Over 40 years ago I was a city convert relocating to the middle of nowhere to start my own pastoral enterprise, and I know that there are so many city converts yet to be converted. This is my dream and vision – that we reverse the drift, revitalise the bush, because the outback is the heart of the nation’.</li> </ul>	Marketing of rural areas would be best led by state and local governments or regional communities, which are best positioned to understand their communities’ needs.
<b>Rural Workforce – Promotion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of a national marketing strategy that promotes agriculture and rural careers as rewarding compared with other career structures and other advantages such as affordable living and diversity of enterprise.</li> </ul>	This concept would be best addressed by particular industries or regions that could target people to fill their skills gaps.

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Health – Non-Hospital Health Facilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an ‘easy entry, gracious exit’ approach to non-hospital health facilities, which could be owned by bodies such as local Governments or divisions of general practice and staffed by those bodies and individual general practitioners.</li> </ul>	This would be best addressed by state, territory and local governments.
<b>Food Security – Biotechnology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate further community debate on the use of biotechnology in the production of food.</li> </ul>	There is ongoing public discussion on the use of biotechnology in the production of food in a range of fora, including the media. Further debate is a matter for the community.

## Ideas with no further action at this time

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Education – Rural Studies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusion of rural studies in a compulsory national education curriculum.</li> </ul>	Disagree. The national curriculum under development does not incorporate mandatory rural studies, but individual schools or state and territory school systems are free to incorporate rural studies into their curricula.
<b>Education – Rural Education National Body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government funding to establish a national body for remote, rural and regional education.</li> </ul>	States currently run rural schools programs and the need for a national body has not been established. The National Partnership on low socio-economic status school communities and improving teacher quality agreed by COAG will help to address the needs of rural and remote school students.
<b>Economic Zones</b>  <b>Also raised by: Indigenous</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation of economic zones that are underpinned by tax incentives, including measures that allow for accelerated depreciation, income splitting and allowances for access to education, health and housing.</li> </ul>	Disagree. The objectives this idea seeks to pursue are likely to be addressed through the review of Australia's Future Tax System. However, creation of 'economic zones' may prove unconstitutional as they may favour one region over another.
<b>Regional Development – Multi-peril Insurance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protection of infrastructure and investments from natural and human-induced disasters through government provision of multi-peril insurance.</li> </ul>	Disagree. There is currently no evidence of market failure with respect to multi-peril insurance. In addition government intervention could undermine market provision of insurance. The Government will continue to consider insurance issues in the context of growing climate change challenges.
<b>Regional Development – Rural Social Inclusion Board</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishment of a rural social inclusion board.</li> </ul>	The Government established the Australian Social Inclusion Board in May 2008. It will focus on the most disadvantaged geographic areas and communities, which is likely to include some rural areas.
<b>Regional Development – Rural-Urban Parity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Productivity Commission audit to examine parity of access between urban and remote, rural and regional Australia to quality health, education, housing, transport and social services as well as other community services and professional resources. Following this, a 'charter of parity on essential services for remote, rural and regional Australia' could be enacted.</li> </ul>	A range of initiatives are already in place to promote regional development. A 'charter of parity' is unlikely to provide significant additional benefits.
<b>Regional Development – Investment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of matching government incentives under 'mutual obligation partnerships' for activities that deliver broad community benefits for remote, rural and regional Australia.</li> </ul>	A number of existing programs, such as the Better Regions Program, the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program, Caring for our Country Program, Tourism Development Program, Mobile Connect Program and the Community Heritage Grants program currently provide funding to communities for specific purposes.

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Rural Impact Statement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A requirement that a rural impact assessment be carried out for all new policy measures.</li> </ul>	All submissions that go before Cabinet already require a regulatory impact statement which considers the impacts on key stakeholder groups, including rural Australia.
<b>Liability Insurance</b>  Also raised by: Creative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community and arts groups, including those in rural areas, should no longer be required to obtain public liability insurance. Alternatively, the costs of public liability insurance should be minimised or should be the responsibility of the Government.</li> <li>Funding support for community events and subsidisation of the insurance costs of holding these events.</li> <li>Removal of the requirement for public liability insurance for community groups, to enable them to hold functions and social events, which are often ‘the life blood of rural communities’.</li> </ul>	<p>Not supported at this time. Civil liability issues are state and territory responsibilities.</p> <p>In recent years, there has been significant reform to state, territory and Commonwealth tort law. The cost of public liability insurance in Australia has also fallen significantly. In these circumstances, further evidence is required to justify Government intervention.</p>
<b>Agriculture Industry – R&amp;D</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding for the delivery of research extension services through application of a tiered levy on agricultural product customers such as supermarket retailers. It should be applied so that the levy cannot be passed on to consumers.</li> </ul>	Disagree. The costs of such a market intervention would be very high and it would be impossible for costs not to be passed to consumers. There are other mechanisms available for funding research.
<b>Agriculture Industry – Productivity Drivers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreement on what the ‘drivers’ of productivity are by a broad range of stakeholders, so the drivers can then be benchmarked and measured. Each driver would require a government action agenda to facilitate industry improvement and to deliver progress.</li> </ul>	Productivity drivers vary between industries and the Government is already taking action in relation to some of these drivers (such as market access). The idea is also already being broadly addressed by the Government’s Productivity Agenda.
<b>Agriculture Industry – Superannuation investment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encouragement of Australia’s growing superannuation and investment funds to invest in agriculture ideas.</li> </ul>	Disagree. It is inappropriate for government to intervene in the investment decisions of commercial enterprises.
<b>Agriculture Industry – New Agriculture Ministry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transform the federal agriculture portfolio into a ‘ministry for food, fibre, environmental services and shelter’ to better reflect the products remote, rural and regional Australia provides.</li> </ul>	Disagree. Altering the name of the existing Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry would not necessarily result in increased recognition of products from remote, rural and regional Australia. The issues associated with ‘food, fibre, environmental services and shelter’ are too broad for one department and are better addressed through current whole-of-government approaches.

Topic	2020 proposed ideas	Government response
<b>Sustainability – Food Prices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support a willingness on the part of consumers to pay more for sustainably produced food.</li> </ul>	Disagree. Introduction of the CPRS is an important first step in ensuring the production of sustainable food pricing and the scheme will be accompanied by an education strategy. However, specific product pricing is a business decision in which the Government should not intervene.
<b>Climate Change – Landscape and Carbon Commission</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a new national body (a ‘Landscape and Carbon Commission’) to implement national policy, research and development, ecosystem programs and the governance of associated markets, and coordinate regional delivery of programs and extension.</li> </ul>	These objectives are already being pursued through a range of other institutions and policies, including the CPRS, Caring for our Country, the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and Arts and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forests. It is not clear that a new national body will improve outcomes.
<b>Water – North Australia Pipeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use geothermal energy to pump water from northern to southern Australia.</li> </ul>	Disagree. Technological limitations would not allow this idea to be economically implemented in the short-to-medium term.
<b>Safe and Healthy Food</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce safe and healthy food.</li> </ul>	The Government is already committed to ensuring the production of safe and healthy food through the primary industries and health portfolios.
<b>Modern Federation</b> <b>Also raised by: Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abolition of the states and territories and their replacement with amalgamated regional councils, which could potentially be modelled off the 1920 Australian Labor Party regional provinces map.</li> </ul>	Not supported at this time. State governments play a central role in policy development and service delivery to citizens. Abolition of the state and territory governments has very limited popular support.

