

## Diary of Social Legislation and Policy 1980

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**1980**

# Diary of Social Legislation and Policy

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# Introduction

This *Diary* summarises the legislative and administrative changes made in the social welfare field by the Commonwealth government during 1980. It provides a ready reference for research workers, and can also be used as a succinct and factual account of policy during the year.

The *Diary* follows the format of the 'diaries' prepared by Helen Ferber of the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research and published in R. B. Scotton and H. Ferber (eds), *Public expenditure and social policy in Australia*. (2 volumes, Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1978 and 1980). The 'diary' in Volume one of *Public expenditures and social policy* covered the period in office of the Whitlam government (1972 to 1975) while the 'diary' in Volume two covered the years 1975 to 1978. These 'diaries' proved to be highly useful works of reference, and their favourable reception prompted the Institute of Family Studies and the Social Welfare Research Centre to join with the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research to produce this further diary in the same style and sequence. We hope that this will be the first of an annual series.

Like its predecessors this *Diary* makes only incidental mention of State and local government policies. Were resources much greater it would be very useful to add State legislative and administrative events to the record, but for the moment this must remain an unfulfilled hope. It will also be noted that except for the section on immigration, which covers events for both 1979 and 1980, the present *Diary* covers 1980 only.

This leaves 1979 as a gap between the end of the diaries contained in the *Public expenditures* volumes and the beginning of the present series. We hope to be able to fill this gap and will publish the results as supplements to future issues.

The *Diary* covers the main areas of social welfare policy apart from education. However it makes no mention of general economic policy. For this area the reader is referred to the 'Diary of recent economic events and policy statements' included in each issue of the *Australian economic review*.

It has been possible to publish and distribute this issue free to persons on the mailing lists of the Centre and the two Institutes. This may result in some people receiving two copies: would those who do please hand the second copy on to somebody who can use it. Again, we cannot promise that the happy circumstances which enable us to distribute this issue of the *Diary* without charge will continue. It may be necessary to impose a charge in future years. The Secretaries of the three institutes would be glad to hear from readers wishing to receive a copy next year, and would also welcome suggestions as to how the *Diary* might be improved.

This issue was prepared and edited by members of the Centre and the two Institutes, whose individual contributions are acknowledged. We also wish to thank Helen Ferber for her guidance in preparing this continuation of the series which she originated.

Don Edgar,  
*Institute of Family Studies*

Adam Graycar,  
*Social Welfare Research Centre*

Duncan Ironmonger,  
*Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research*

# Social Security and Welfare\*

Compiled by  
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## Supporting Parents Benefit

**1 January 1980:** The Victorian Government withdrew from the cost-sharing arrangements of the States Grants (Deserted Wives) Act, which provides income support for sole mothers ineligible for Class A Widows Pension or Supporting Parents Benefit. Mothers in Victoria who were previously assisted under the States Grants Act generally became eligible for Commonwealth Special Benefit. The Victorian move was followed on 1 July 1980 by the South Australian government, and Western Australia indicated that it would withdraw from 26 August 1980. **19 August 1980:** In consequence of the State withdrawals from participation in the States Grants (Deserted Wives) Act, the Minister for Social Security announced the Government's intention to repeal that Act and to remove from the Social Services Act the six months qualifying period for eligibility for Supporting Parents Benefit. Section 3 of the Social Services Amendment Act 1980 (introduced as a Bill in the House of Representatives on 27 August 1980) provided for the repeal of the States Grants (Deserted Wives) Act on a date to be proclaimed. The Act also provided for the elimination of the qualifying period. No proclama-

tion date had been fixed for Section 3 by the end of 1980, but the six month qualifying period for Supporting Parents Benefit was removed from the first pension payday in November 1980. The Commonwealth thus effectively assumed responsibility for providing income support directly to those formerly assisted through the States Grants (Deserted Wives) Act.

**1 January 1980:** The Social Welfare Research Centre was established, under the directorship of Dr Adam Graycar. The Centre functions as a unit of the University of New South Wales and operates on funds provided to the University by the Commonwealth Government. **19 August 1980:** The 1980-81 Budget provided \$410 000 for the Social Welfare Research Centre. Expenditure in the 1979-80 financial year, for the first six months of the Centre's operation, was \$212 800.

## Youth Services Program

**30 January 1980:** The Commonwealth and State Governments reached agreement on a three year program of services to homeless youth, to be cost-shared on a dollar for dollar basis by the Commonwealth and State Governments. The Minister for Social Security and the South Australian Minister of Community Welfare announced that they had approved the first five projects in South Australia for funding up to a total of \$153 500 under the program. The projects would provide accommodation and support services to youth in need of emergency shelter on a short term basis and are located in areas of identified need. **14 February 1980:** The Minister for Social Security and the Victorian Minister for Community Welfare Services announced the allocation of \$515 235 for the first year of the Youth Service's Program in that State.

## Repatriation Pensions

**7 February 1980:** The Minister for Veterans' Affairs confirmed the announcement made in the 1979 Budget Speech to the effect that veterans who had served in a theatre of war as a member of an Allied force and who had resided in Australia for at least ten years would become eligible as from today for the Australian Service Pension. More than 1000

\* For earlier 'diaries' of legislative and administrative changes in the area of social security and social welfare for the years from 1969 to 1978, see the following:

1969-1975: See Helen Ferber in R. B. Scotton and Helen Ferber, (eds) *Public expenditures and social policy in Australia*, Sydney, Longman Cheshire, 1978, volume 1: pp 212-237

1975-1978: See Helen Ferber in Scotton and Ferber *op.cit.*, 1980, volume 2: pp 312-333.

Allied veterans applied for the service pension in the first six months of operation of this provision. **19 August 1980:** The Minister for Veteran's Affairs announced details of the changes in Repatriation benefits foreshadowed by the Treasurer in the 1980-81 Budget Speech. From 1 November 1980 a veteran whose stay in hospital together with post-hospital convalescence or other treatment on a full time basis for a service-related disability exceeded twenty-eight days would be entitled to a Temporary Incapacity Allowance (TPI). The maximum rate of this allowance would be equal to the Special Rate (TPI) Pension less any disability pension being received by the veteran. From 13 November 1980, Australian mariners who were prisoners of war and veterans with service-related amputation or loss of vision in one eye, who do not qualify on other grounds, would, subject to certain qualifications, be eligible for free medical treatment for all conditions whether or not related to the veteran's service or, in the case of an Australian mariner, to a 'war injury'. From 1 January 1981 only half of any disability pension would be taken into account when considering a veteran's income when determining entitlement for fringe benefits.

## Social Security Appeals

**21 March 1980:** New appeal rights for persons claiming a pension, benefit, or allowance under the Social Service Act were announced by the Minister for Social Security and the Attorney-General. They would apply in cases where the Director-General had not accepted a recommendation in an appellant's favour by the Social Security Appeals Tribunal (SSAT). The new right of appeal, to apply to decisions of the Director-General made on or after 1 April 1980, allows that such cases may be further reviewed by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. **9 September 1980:** The Minister for Social Security announced an extension of the right of appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Any claimant whose case has been reviewed by the Social Security Appeals Tribunal and whose claim has been rejected by the Director-General, irrespective of whether the recommendation of the SSAT was favourable or unfavourable, may take their case to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal for further review. Provision will be made for appeals direct to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal without a preceding SSAT review where the appellant so requests and the Director-General certifies that an important principle of general application is involved. The Minister also announced that the Social Secur-

ity Appeals Tribunals would now be authorised to hear appeals relating to medical assessments and that a qualified medical officer would be appointed to sit as a member of the SSAT when it reviews such cases. **23 November 1980:** The relevant amendments to the Administration Appeals Tribunal regulations were announced by the Attorney-General and the Minister for Social Security. The wider jurisdiction of the Tribunal would come into effect that week but the new rights of appeal would be effective in respect of decisions made from 9 September 1980.

## National Consultative Council on Social Welfare

**1 April 1980:** The first report of the National Consultative Council on Social Welfare (NCCSW) was presented to the Senate by the Minister for Social Security. The NCCSW was established in October 1976 to provide a mechanism for co-operation and interchange of ideas with interested groups in the social welfare field. The report made recommendations on a number of matters, such as emergency relief, family policy, the needs of homeless persons, and the delivery of welfare services. The Minister said that the recommendations of the Council had been most valuable and their advice would be used in developing the Commonwealth's social security programs.

## Indexation of Pensions and Benefits

**8 May 1980:** The rates of pensions and benefits subject to automatic indexation were increased as a result of the re-introduction of twice-yearly indexation. The increases in May 1980 reflected the 5.4 per cent rise in the consumer price index for the six months between the June and December quarters 1979. The maximum rates of payment were increased by \$3.15 to \$61.05 a week for a single person and, in the case of married couples, by \$2.60 to \$50.85 a week for each partner. The increases became effective from 8 May 1980 in the case of pensions and supporting parents' benefits, and from the first payment due in May in the case of unemployment, sickness and special benefits. Unemployment benefits for adults without dependents were not indexed and remained at \$51.45, and unemployment and

sickness benefits for persons under 18 years remained at \$36.00. **19 August 1980:** It was announced in the Budget, and confirmed by the Minister of Social Security on 31 October 1980, that under the automatic adjustment provisions of the Social Services Act the basic rate of pensions and benefits would rise by \$3.05 to \$64.10 a week for a single person and by \$5.10 to \$106.80 a week for a married couple. The increases reflected a five per cent increase in the consumer price index between the December 1979 and June 1980 quarters. The increases took effect on 6 November 1980 in the case of pensions and supporting parents benefit, and on the first payday in November for unemployment, sickness and special beneficiaries.

## Children's Services

**20 May 1980:** The Minister for Social Security announced grants totalling \$290 000 to be made under the Children's Services Program, administered by the Office of Child Care within the Department of Social Security. The Minister said that in 1979-80 the Commonwealth had allocated \$36 million for child care projects, and a further \$33.1 million had been allocated in 1979-80 to assist State Governments and the Northern Territory in funding pre-school services. **2 September 1980:** In detailing the main expenditure items proposed under the Children's Services Program 1980-81, the Minister for Social Security announced that the proposed new legislation to replace the Child Care Act would not be introduced into the current Parliamentary Session. This would not delay the continued development of the Children's Services Program, however, and \$69.2 million was to be allocated in 1980-81, the same amount as was allocated in 1979-80.

## Services for Handicapped People

**20 May 1980:** The Third Report of the National Advisory Council for the Handicapped was presented to the Senate. The report reiterated earlier recommendations on a national employment strategy for the handicapped and transport assistance for handicapped people, and argued that supportive services should have priority over the funding of physical facilities. Other recommendations covered access to com-

munity life and physical access to buildings.

**12 June 1980:** The Minister for Social Security announced at a meeting of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers which discussed plans for the United Nations designated International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) that a total of \$400 000 would be provided in grants to help disabled children live a better, fuller life. Each State and Territory will receive \$50 000, to be disbursed by the responsible State and Territory Ministers. The grants will be used for small innovative projects on a one-off basis to improve the access of disabled parents and their children to community life. The Minister said that priority would be given to projects for migrants, Aboriginals, the children of single parents, and children of socially and economically disadvantaged parents.

**1 July 1980:** As announced by the Minister for Social Security on 18 December 1979, the Handicapped Persons Welfare Program began a new three year rolling program with the start of the 1980-81 financial year. Voluntary organisations would receive \$33 million over the three years for building new facilities, while \$122 million would be provided to support new and existing services. **8 August 1980:** The appointment of an IYDP National Committee of Non-Government Organisations was announced by the Minister for Social Security. In announcing the membership of the Committee, under the Chairmanship of Mr Geoff Say, the Minister said that the role of the Committee will be to work with Commonwealth and State Governments to promote the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981. **19 August 1980:** An amount of \$900 000 was allocated in the Budget for IYDP publicity and other costs including those associated with the establishment and servicing of the National Committee of Non-Government Organisations. The government also provided \$700 000 for home modifications for disabled people such as widening doorways and building ramps for wheelchair access. **3 September 1980:** A grant of \$46 000 per annum for two years to Technical Aid for the Disabled (NSW) was announced by the Minister for Social Security. The Minister said that the grant had been approved to mark the International Year of Disabled Persons. **30 December 1980:** The Minister for Social Security announced the appointment of Professor Lawrence McCredle as chairman of the IYDP National Committee of Non-Government Organisations in place of Mr Geoff Say, who had resigned.

## Aged and Disabled Persons Accommodation

**1 July 1980:** A new three year funding program to assist the provision of accommodation for aged and disabled people was introduced. The program would provide grants approved under the Aged Persons Hostels Act and the Aged or Disabled Persons Homes Act, and was allocated \$225 million for the three years. Expenditure in 1980-81 was estimated at \$52.5 million, while spending on the personal care subsidy under the same Act was estimated at \$16 million. This subsidy was to be increased from \$15 to \$20 for each eligible resident in an approved hostel with effect from 1 October 1980.

## Invalid Pensions

**7 July 1980:** The Minister for Social Security responded to comments in the press that the Department of Social Security was implementing a 'crackdown' on invalid pensions by stating that no changes had been made to the provisions of the Social Services Act. The Act provides that a person is deemed to be permanently incapacitated for work if the degree of his permanent incapacity is not less than 85 per cent. In reply, the Shadow Minister for Social Security asserted that it was not the wording of the Act that was in dispute but its interpretation. He claimed that during 1979 the Director General of the Department of Social Security had sought a legal opinion on this provision, and that as a result in March 1980 the instructions to Commonwealth Medical Officers had been altered to remove all reference to environmental or social factors which may enable a doctor to certify the degree of incapacity. **1 August 1980:** The Australian Council of Social Service appealed to people recently refused invalid pensions to contact it since it was preparing a legal challenge to the Departmental interpretation of the Act. **9 September 1980:** The Minister for Social Security announced that the Social Security Appeals Tribunal would be authorised to hear appeals relating to medical assessments, so that claimants for the Invalid Pension would have the same appeal rights relating to medical assessments as other pension and benefit claimants. **26 September 1980:** The Australian Council of Social Service announced that it had obtained a legal opinion on the interpretation of the 85 per cent incapacity to work provision and had sought a fiat of the Attorney-General so that a group (relator) action could be brought by the Council

on behalf of people denied Invalid Pensions due to the revised procedures. **23 November 1980:** The making of regulations amending the appeal procedures, foreshadowed on 9 September, was announced, but the operation of the new system would be delayed until medical officers had been appointed to the Social Security Appeals Tribunal.

## Children's Allowances

**19 August 1980:** Provision was made in the Budget for an increase from \$65 to \$73 per month in the Handicapped Child's Allowance, and an increase from \$47.70 to \$55.70 per month in the Double Orphan's Pension. The additional pension or benefit payable to pensioners and beneficiaries with dependent children was increased from \$7.50 to \$10 per week for each child, and the mother's/guardian's allowance payable to single pensioners with children was increased from \$6 to \$8 a week for those with a child under 6 or an invalid child, and from \$4 to \$6 a week in other cases. The increases took effect from the first pension or benefit pay day on or after 1 November 1980. Family Allowances were not increased.

## Delivered Meals and Homeless Persons Subsidies

**19 August 1980:** The Treasurer announced in the Budget speech that the Government had decided to increase the rate of subsidy paid under the Delivered Meals Subsidy Act. The basic rate per delivered meal was to be increased from 25 cents to 40 cents, and the rate for meals with an approved Vitamin C supplement was to be increased from 30 to 45 cents. The increased rates were to be paid from 1 November 1980 in respect of meals provided on or after 1 July 1980. The Treasurer also announced that the food, accommodation and meals subsidies paid under the Homeless Persons Assistance Act would be increased. The food and accommodation subsidy per person per day would increase from 75 cents to \$1.20, and the meal subsidy in respect of non-residents' meals would increase from 25 cents to 40 cents per meal. The increase applied to food, accommodation and meals provided from 1 July 1980 and would be paid from 29 October 1980.



## Income Tests for Defence Reserve Forces

**19 August 1980:** The Minister for Social Security announced that pay and allowances received by members of the Defence Reserve Forces would be exempted from income tests on all pensions and benefits payable under the Social Services Act. The exemption would apply from 19 September 1980.

## Payment of Pensions and Benefits to Patients in Mental Hospitals

**19 August 1980:** An amendment to the Social Services Act was announced by the Minister for Social Security whereby the exclusion of mental hospital inmates from eligibility for pensions (including wife's pension) and benefits would be removed. The new arrangements applied to all pensions and benefits payable on or after 1 November 1980.

## Unemployment and Sickness Benefits

**19 August 1980:** The Government's intention to extend eligibility for Commonwealth fringe benefits to sickness beneficiaries, subject to the beneficiary meeting the normal pension fringe benefit income test, was announced by the Minister for Social Security. The extended eligibility came into effect on 1 November 1980. The Minister also announced that the Unemployment Benefit payable to persons aged 18 and over and without dependants would be increased by \$2 a week to \$53.45. This was the first increase in this non-indexed rate since May 1978. The Minister further announced that the income limits for Unemployment and Sickness Benefits would be extended as follows: for all single beneficiaries aged 16 and 17 years with a parent living in Australia the maximum rate of benefit would be reduced by 50 cents for each dollar of income received in the range from \$3 to \$40 a week and on a dollar for dollar basis over \$40. For all other beneficiaries the maximum rate of benefit would be reduced by 50 cents for each dollar of income received (including the income of a spouse) in the range from \$6 a week to \$50, and on a dollar for dollar basis over \$50 a week. The changes applied to unemployment and sickness benefits payable on or after 1 November 1980.

## Compensation Increases for Commonwealth Government Employees

**20 August 1980:** The Minister for Social Security announced increases in the benefits payable under the Compensation (Commonwealth Government Employees) Act 1971 and the Seamen's Compensation Act 1911. The new rates represented an overall increase of 16.5 per cent in the level of benefits, which were last amended on 1 September 1979, and would increase the maximum lump sum payable from \$28 000 to \$32 500 and the level of weekly payments from \$90 to \$105. The new compensation rates became payable from 1 September 1980.

# Employment, Unemployment, and Training

Compiled by  
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## Community Youth Support Scheme

**2 January 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs announced that following a comprehensive review of the Community Youth Support Scheme (CYSS) an additional \$1.6 million was to be allocated to the scheme, making a total of \$11.6 million for the 1979-80 financial year. Revised guidelines had been issued, based substantially on the recommendation of the Chairmen of the State CYSS Committees, to govern financial assistance to local community groups mounting supportive programs and services for unemployed young people and providing work oriented activity to maintain the employability of young people and their sense of purpose and direction until they find jobs. **19 August 1980:** The 1980-81 Commonwealth Budget allocated around \$11.6 million to CYSS.

## Special Youth Employment Training Program

**10 January 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs and the Premier of Victoria announced that 1000 young people would be given jobs by the Victorian Government under the Special Youth Employment Training Program (SYETP), commencing in February and March 1980. The Federal Government would subsidise the wages cost of a young person by \$50 a week during a four-month training period, with the balance of the cost being borne by the em-

ployer, whether State Governments or industry. Those eligible for the scheme would be aged between 15 and 24 years, have been unemployed and away from full time education for at least four months in the last twelve and be registered with the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES).

**23 January 1980:** The Minister announced that 3600 training places for the young unemployed would be made available in Commonwealth departments and instrumentalities during 1980, making a total of 6850 training places made available by the Commonwealth and State Governments over the year. **19 August 1980:** The 1980-81 Commonwealth budget provided \$30.1 million for SYETP. **17 October 1980:** A further 1000 young people would be placed in jobs with the Victorian Government under SYETP. New rates of subsidy would apply from January 1981 for persons aged 18 to 20 who had been out of work for eight months. The rate would be \$80 a week for the first 17 weeks followed by \$50 a week for a further 17 weeks. **26 October 1980:** The Minister foreshadowed higher subsidies under SYETP, to be available from 1 February 1981. Those completing courses under the School to Work Transition Program would be automatically eligible for SYETP assistance as from 1 November 1980. **8 December 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs and the New South Wales Minister for Industrial Relations announced that a further 2000 unemployed young people would be given jobs by the NSW State Government under the SYETP scheme. The Federal Government would provide a subsidy of \$55 per person per week for seventeen weeks towards the cost of special training programs.

## Industrial Training Scheme in Western Australia

**11 January 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs and the Western Australian Minister for Labour and Industry approved the terms of an agreement between the two Governments, employers, and trade unions for an intensive trade training program to meet the expected demand for tradesmen from the North-West Shelf Gas project and other development schemes in Western Australia. Under the scheme apprentices and mature age trainees would qualify for tradesmen status after three years. After passing aptitude tests, approximately 1000 persons would be trained as boiler-makers, electrical workers, welders, instrument makers or fitters. Preference would be given to semi-skilled workers and to apprentices who had been unable to complete their

training. The scheme would not proceed until it was announced that the North-West Shelf Gas project would go ahead, but if this announcement was made soon it was expected that the first intake of trainees into technical colleges would occur in July 1980. **22 July 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs and the Acting Premier of Western Australia urged employers to make more positions available under the Commonwealth-State Special Trade Training Program. Of the 200 vacancies for trainees in the first intake employers had provided places for only 114 trainees.

## Aboriginal Employment

**1 February 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs announced the start of a course in basic motor mechanics for Aborigines at Carnarvon. This was one of several small-intake courses in outback WA. **3 March 1980:** An advertising campaign by the National Aboriginal Employment Development Committee began with a speech from the Prime Minister in which he referred to the success of pilot campaigns in Dubbo in August 1979 and in Port Augusta in October. The national campaign would concentrate on areas of significant Aboriginal population. **13 March 1980:** An Aboriginal employment campaign was launched in Townsville by the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs. The Minister appealed to employers to provide jobs and training for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, and appealed to Aborigines to avail themselves of these opportunities. Similar campaigns were launched during March and May 1980 in Kempsey and Lismore (NSW), Cairns (Qld) and Shepparton (Vic). **19 August 1980:** The 1980-81 Budget provided \$11.8 million for Aboriginal training under the NEAT scheme, and \$342 000 for the National Aboriginal Employment Development Committee. Campaigns to improve Aboriginal employment prospects would be conducted in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. **2 October 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs launched an Aboriginal employment campaign in Perth.

## Employment Promotion Campaign

**5 February 1980:** A national promotion campaign to make

employers more aware of the need to employ and train more young Australians, and of the assistance the Government could offer, was launched by the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs.

## The Transition from School to Work

**21 February 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs and the Minister for Education announced that projects worth just under \$13 million, designed to help school leavers make the transition from school to work, had been approved by the Commonwealth Government. This represented the first stage of a \$250 million five year program, to be funded jointly by the Commonwealth and the States. The program would involve the provision of alternative courses as an option for secondary students in their last years at school, the extension of work experience programs for secondary students, improvements in career guidance and counselling services, special assistance to country students, the support of teacher in-service courses in transition education, and the development of new curricula. Some projects would foster co-operation between government and non-government schools, and between schools and technical and further education (TAFE) institutions. The expansion of TAFE courses under the transition program would provide training places for about 1700 additional school leavers, and about 1800 extra places would also become available under the Education Program for Unemployed Youth (EPUY).

**29 April 1980:** An additional \$2.8 million was allocated to help school leavers make the transition to the workforce. About \$1.5 million of this extra funding would provide 670 more places for school leavers in TAFE courses and 160 additional places under the Education Program for Unemployed Youth. **19 August 1980:** The 1980-81 Commonwealth Budget committed \$50 million to the School to Work Transition Program in 1980-81, and \$1.62 million was allocated for the occupational information program. It was proposed to develop a careers library for each of Australia's 2300 secondary schools. The budget also provided for the introduction of the Commonwealth Work Experience Program, under which Commonwealth departments and authorities in all States and Territories would offer work experience to secondary school students.

**26 October 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs announced that as from 1 February 1981 special allowances of unemployment benefit plus \$6 a week would

be available to unemployed young people undergoing school to work transition courses.

was launched by which the Commonwealth and Tasmanian governments finance the Tasmanian Training Council.

## Skills in Demand Program

**3 March 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs announced that 160 young unemployed people would be trained as computer programmers in a joint program with the New South Wales Government and Australian Computer Society. The program would be financed through the National Employment and Training (NEAT) Scheme.

**4 July 1980:** The Minister announced that special assistance would be provided through the NEAT scheme for training employees for Australian Newsprint Mills' paper mill at Albury. **22 September 1980:** These and similar projects were christened the 'Skills in Demand' program. Other approvals involved the training of clothing machinists in Adelaide, plasterglass ceiling fixers in Perth, home health aids in Victoria, stenographers in Canberra, young people becoming self-employed in Adelaide, and plastics industry tradesmen.

## National Training Council

**23 March 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs announced new appointments to the fifteen member National Training Council, which advises the Minister on matters concerned with industrial training in Australia. Captain J. G. Evans became Chairman of the Council, and Mr. T. B. Prescott, A.M., became Deputy Chairman. **15 August 1980:** The Minister announced that the National Training Council would offer a number of research grants for 1981. Applications for research into any area of industrial and commercial training would be considered but the Council was specifically seeking applications in the following areas: occupational analysis of trainers within industry, cost benefit studies of training, innovative training methods and practices and the implications of technological change for training. **19 August 1980:** The 1980-81 Commonwealth Budget provided \$3 million for the Training in Industry and Commerce Program in 1980-81, covering the National Training Council and eighty-one national and State Industry Training Committees, whose function, is to stimulate industry to invest in training. **12 September 1980:** A joint funding agreement

## Bureau for Labour Market Research

**4 June 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs announced the appointment of Mr N. W. F. Fisher as the first Director of the Bureau of Labour Market Research. The Bureau is part of the Department of Employment and Youth Affairs, and was established to undertake research into labour market problems and to analyse the trends in the supply of and demand for labour, to analyse the training requirements, skill shortages, and problems of the unemployed, to evaluate manpower programs and services, and to sponsor research by other organisations.

## Examination of Trade Training

**27 June 1980:** It was agreed at the Premiers' Conference that changes were needed in trade training in Australia, and that the State and Commonwealth Ministers for Labour should make an urgent examination of trade training with a view to increasing the number and improving the quality of skilled tradesmen. **19 September 1980:** The Commonwealth and State Ministers for Labour unanimously endorsed the recommendations of the report of a Commonwealth-State working party on present and projected shortages of skilled labour. These recommendations included: (1) There should be a national campaign to maximise apprentice intakes in 1980-81, (2) spare training capacity in government departments and instrumentalities should be identified and used, (3) there should be a program for up-grading suitable semi-skilled workers to skilled status in periods shorter than normal apprenticeships, (4) pre-employment courses in trade occupations should be expanded, (5) modular self-paced training curricula should be developed, (6) group apprenticeships should be supported and (7) indentures should be shortened for people with appropriate qualifications and experience. The Ministers also agreed that action should be taken on a variety of measures designed to monitor demands for skilled labour, increase information on the stock of skills in the workforce, and to improve the administration of apprenticeship systems.

## Commonwealth Rebate for Apprentices in Full-Time Training

**19 August 1980:** The Commonwealth Rebate for Apprentices in Full-Time Training (CRAFT) scheme was allocated \$56.6 million in the 1980-81 Budget, sufficient to subsidise 80 000 apprentices. **10 October 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs said that apprenticeship training in key trade areas would be encouraged by cash rebates modelled on the scheme operating between 1 December 1979 and 30 June 1980, which provided tax free rebates to employers of \$1000 for each first year apprentice engaged in that period over and above the number engaged in the corresponding period ended 30 June 1979. **26 October 1980:** The Minister announced that cash rebates of \$1000 would be paid to employers for each additional apprentice in the metal, electrical and building trades taken on between 1 December 1980 and 30 June 1981.

## National Employment and Training Scheme

**19 August 1980:** The 1980-81 budget provided \$60.9 million to the NEAT scheme, enough to assist over 100 000 people. **31 October 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs announced that NEAT allowances and subsidies would increase by an average of 10 per cent from 1 December 1980, following rises in male average award wages.

## Employment and Training for the Disabled

**19 August 1980:** The 1980-81 Commonwealth Budget allocated \$2 million for training handicapped people through the NEAT scheme and through a program assisting voluntary groups to train the disabled, and \$300 000 for the mounting of a national employment strategy for the handicapped, along the lines of the national Aboriginal employment campaign.

## Commonwealth Employment Service

**19 August 1980:** The Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs stated that the five year program to upgrade the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) would continue in 1980-81 with the opening of twelve new offices and the relocation of forty other offices. Nine new zone offices and three training centres would also be opened. **22 September 1980:** The Minister invited tenders for the supply of computer equipment for Job Bank, a computer-based vacancy management system for the CES. CES offices in all capital cities and major nearby areas would be linked through the system in which a central computer would circulate vacancy information across Australia.

# Family Law

**Compiled by  
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## Institute of Family Studies

**20 February 1980:** Membership of the Board of Management of the Institute of Family Studies was announced, with Mr Justice Asche as Chairman and Dr Don Edgar, Mr J. Carnsew, Professor J. Goodnow, Father B. Hickey and Mr D. Tulloch as members. **29 February 1980:** Dr Don Edgar commenced duties as Director of the Institute. **15 September 1980:** The Institute of Family Studies was officially opened at its permanent premises, 766 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, by the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General indicated that many of the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on the Family Law Act were being analysed by his department and that work had begun on preparing amending legislation.

## Family Law Act

**24 July 1980:** The Attorney-General indicated that he was considering amendments to the Family Law Act. He specified these as including a new structure for the hearing of appeals from single judges, allowing the Family Court to regulate its own practice and procedure and using the powers of the Commonwealth to the limit, in the event of the States refusing to refer power. **28 August 1980:** The Report of the Joint Select Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament on the Family Law Act, 1975, was tabled in the Parliament. The Report contained 72 recommendations, many of which would require amendments to the Act if they were to be implemented. The majority of Committee members agreed that there should be no alteration to the sole existing ground for divorce, viz. 12 months separation. Other recom-

mendations included inter alia: (1) that the Family Court be opened to the public, provided the judge retains a discretion to exclude people where this is considered necessary; (2) that in appropriate circumstances a power of arrest may be attached to an order or injunction; (3) that a child of any age would have his or her wishes taken into account where relevant (as the Act is currently drafted the wishes of a child 14 years of age or older must be taken into account); (4) that divorce on the papers (that is, without the attendance of parties or their legal representatives) should be permitted in undefended dissolution applications; (5) that Commonwealth powers in the area of children and property shall be extended where possible, either (i) by the States referring their powers over (e.g.) ex-nuptial and step children and matrimonial property disputes where no divorce was sought or (ii) by amending the Act to include children who were ordinarily members of the spouse's household and property disputes arising out of the marital relationship, and (6) that the Act should be amended so as to presume that the matrimonial home is owned jointly by the parties to the marriage. **11 December 1980:** The Attorney-General announced that the recommendations of the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee were being considered by the Government. Amendments would be introduced in the autumn 1981 session of Parliament and a free vote on all amendments would be given.

# Immigration

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## Information Needs of Migrants

**8 November 1978:** W D Scott and Co were commissioned to study the information needs of migrants, including their use of the media. **29 August 1980:** The survey report was presented to Parliament. It emphasised the critical importance of migrants' knowledge of English for their access to information.

## Institute of Multicultural Affairs

**30 November 1978:** A five member interim council for the proposed Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs was announced by the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. **10 June 1979:** The interim council having prepared detailed plans for the proposed institute, the minister announced that it would be established in Melbourne. **13 September 1979:** The Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs Bill was presented to Parliament, providing for a governing council of from 6 to 9 members, one of whom was to be the Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. The Institute was empowered to commission and conduct research and to collect material on ethnic communities in Australia, though not to encroach on the work of the Institute of Aboriginal Studies. It was also empowered to advise the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, and to provide public education on multicultural matters. **24 January 1980:** The membership of the council of the Institute was announced, with Mr Frank Galbally as Chairman. **20 February 1980:** Assent was reported to the Bill establishing the Institute.

## Advisory Bodies

**3 December 1978:** The membership of the first of a series of Migrant Settlement Councils, that for Victoria, was announced, with Peter van Hest as Chairman. Similar Councils were announced as follows: 12 January 1979, South Australia (Mr J. Kiosoglous, Chairman); 15 January 1979, Queensland (Prof K. Regan, Chairman); 17 January 1979, Western Australia (Prof R. Appleyard, Chairman); 9 March 1979, Australian Capital Territory (Dr C. Price, Chairman); 4 July 1979, Tasmania (Mr A. Schuler, Chairman); 27 July 1979, New South Wales (Mr J. Samios, Chairman); July 1979 Northern Territory (Dr K. Moo, Chairman). **12 July 1979:** The Australian Population and Immigration Council was increased from 15 to 18 members, and required to continue its research on population change, particularly that through immigration. **26 October 1979:** The Australian Population and Immigration Council met in Canberra and discussed demographic trends. For the immediate future it recommended increased efforts to attract skilled migrants to Australia. **4 March 1980:** The Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs announced that the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council, under the continuing chairmanship of Professor J. Zubrzycki, would be re-appointed with 17 rather than 24 members. **29 March 1970:** The Minister asked the Ethnic Affairs Council to consider public submissions on multiculturalism and its implications for immigration policy.

## Migrant Selection and Residence Permits

**1 January 1979:** The Numerical Multi-Factor Assessment System (NUMAS) came into operation for the selection of prospective migrants. By this system a two-part test is applied, with economic and personal components. Points are allocated for the following: work skills, occupational demand in Australia, having a job pre-arranged in Australia, fluency in English, financial assets, level of education, being nominated by relatives, age, personal presentation, attitude, adaptability and initiative. **19 October 1979:** Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers for Immigration at their biennial conference agreed that immigration procedures should be streamlined to facilitate the recruitment of skilled migrants. **19 June 1980:** A Regularisation of Status Program was announced, by which persons who had arrived in Australia before 1 January 1980 without permanent residence

status could apply for permanent residence, which would be granted if they were of good character. The program extended to people who had previously applied, and also enabled a number of illegal immigrants to be released from detention. By the time the offer closed at the end of December about 11 000 applications had been lodged, and only one had been refused. **1 July 1980:** The requirements under NUMAS were changed to make it easier for people with relatives in Australia to qualify for selection. **19 September 1980:** The regulations were further changed so that fewer forms would have to be filled out by people wanting to bring their relatives to Australia.

## Refugees

**13 January 1979:** The first people from East Timor to come to Australia under a program of family reunion arrived in Darwin. **15 January 1979:** A grant of \$40 000 over three years was announced for Centrecare, a Catholic organisation in Perth, to employ a social worker to organise a scheme by which refugee families would be linked with Australian host families. Various other grants of similar kind were made in the succeeding months. **13 July 1979:** The Minister announced his intention to establish an Australian Refugee Advisory Council. **7 October 1979:** The Australian Refugee Advisory Council of 21 members (The Hon Mr Justice Gobbo, Chairman) was established to advise the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs on the reception and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons in Australia, and measures which would improve relations between refugees and the host community. **30 October 1979:** At the first meeting of the Council the Minister announced the formal establishment of the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme (CRSS) by which community groups could assist Indochinese refugees by arranging their initial accommodation, helping to find jobs and providing social support. **13 February 1980:** The first people to be assisted under the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme arrived in Australia. **8 December 1980:** CRSS was extended to include East European refugees.

## Finance of Migrants' Services

**30 January 1979:** The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs invited organisations to apply for grants. It had \$1.7 million over three years to finance the employment of social workers and welfare officers by ethnic organisations, and \$450 000 over the same period for other projects. **21 August 1979:** The Budget allocation for migrants' services in 1979-80 was \$73.4 million. Major items for increased spending would be translation and telephone interpreter services, and adult education especially English lessons. **28 August 1979:** A cost sharing agreement was reached with Victoria to upgrade translation facilities in that state. The Commonwealth would pay all costs in 1979-80 and 50 per cent in the next two years. A similar agreement was announced with South Australia on 12 February 1980, and with New South Wales on 14 February 1980. **20 August 1980:** The Budget allocation for the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs in 1980-81 was \$90.3 million. Emphasis would be placed on increased inflow, further implementation of the Galbally report program for new arrivals, and on adult education including the on-arrival English teaching program, which would now be provided for 15 000 of the proposed 95 000 arrivals.

## Ethnic Health Workers

**1 March 1979:** The Commonwealth offered the State and Northern Territory governments additional grants under the Community Health Program for the employment of ethnic health workers. Commonwealth support would be 100 per cent of cost in 1979-80 and 75 per cent for two years thereafter. **9 May 1979:** The Acting Minister for Health announced that the offer had been taken up by New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. **24 October 1979:** A similar offer was made for funding additional health interpreters and translators. **15 January 1980:** Agreement was reached with New South Wales and Victoria for the employment of additional health interpreters and translators. **5 March 1980:** The scheme was extended to Western Australia with the appointment of two interpreters. **15 May 1980:** The scheme was introduced in South Australia.



## Migrant Resource Centres

**9 March 1979:** The Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs announced a plan for opening a series of Migrant Resource Centres on the lines of the pilot centre set up in Parramatta in 1977. The centres would provide premises for multilingual counselling, meetings, orientation programs and cultural activities, and would co-ordinate migrant services, assist emerging ethnic groups and promote the general understanding of migrant cultural backgrounds. **4 July 1979:** The first of the series of centres was opened in Melbourne. By September ten centres had been opened. **14 November 1979:** The Minister announced that the pilot centre at Parramatta had been independently evaluated and would remain in business.

## English for Professionally Qualified Migrants

**12 March 1979:** A pilot intensive English language course for professionally qualified migrants was announced to begin at the University of New South Wales in mid April. **2 June 1980:** A similar course began at the Melbourne State College.

## Ethnic Television

**29 March 1979:** A discussion paper on ethnic television was released. **24 January 1980:** The Minister for Post and Telecommunications announced that an Independent and Multicultural Broadcasting Corporation would be set up to replace the Special Broadcasting Services and the National Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Council. **23 April 1980:** The Broadcasting and TV Amendment Bill was introduced into Parliament to give effect, inter alia, to this announcement. The proposed Corporation would provide broadcasting and TV for the whole Australian community and for its component ethnic communities, and would foster understanding of the diverse cultures in Australia. It would have 7-11 members appointed by the Minister for Post and Telecommunications. **2 April 1980:** Mr Bruce Gyngell was appointed Managing Director Designate. **25 July 1980:** In view of the slow passage of the legislation through Parliament a committee with 13 members chaired by Mr Frank Galbally was appointed to

administer the introduction of multicultural television services, using the Special Broadcasting Services legislation already on the statute books. **18 September 1980:** The Broadcasting and TV Amendment Bill lapsed when Parliament was prorogued. **24 October 1980:** The first transmissions took place, and the Acting Minister for Post and Telecommunications said the future administration of the service was being investigated.

## National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)

**16 November 1979:** Establishment of the first state assessment panels of the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) were announced for Western Australia and Tasmania. Other panels were established as follows:- 18 February 1980: Victoria; 9 May 1980: Northern Territory; 15 May 1980: South Australia; 25 June 1980: New South Wales; 31 July 1980: Queensland.

# Housing

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## Aboriginal Housing

**15 February 1980:** The Department of Aboriginal Affairs lifted the proportion of funds available for housing of Aborigines by 15.4 per cent to \$45.8 million in 1980. The Department estimated that this funding would allow 800 homes to be purchased or constructed through grants-in-aid and State grants programs and a further 204 houses to be bought by private buyers through the \$5.5 million allocated to the Aboriginal Loans Commission as well as funds generated by it through loan repayments.

## Support for Low Cost Housing Initiatives

**19 March 1980:** The Minister for Housing and Construction announced that the Federal Government would provide financial incentives to companies involved in the research and development of 'cost conscious' building techniques. From July companies engaged on approved projects would be eligible for grants covering up to 50 per cent of their research and development costs, subject to a limit of \$500 000 per year.

## Interest Rates

**24 March 1980:** Increases of 0.5 per cent on housing loans interest rates were announced by the Bank of New South Wales. The Australia and New Zealand Banking Group Ltd

made a similar announcement on 27 March and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney Ltd on 28 March. **2 December 1980:** The maximum rate of interest on savings bank loans for owner-occupied housing was increased from 10.5 per cent per annum to 11.5 per cent per annum.

## Assistance for Home Purchase

**13 May 1980:** The Minister for Housing and Construction tabled annual reports of the Commonwealth Housing Assistance Act and Home Savings Grant Scheme in Parliament. The Housing Assistance Act report showed that the Commonwealth provided \$330 million to the States in 1978-79. The funds enabled more than 10 000 low interest housing loans to be made to people on low to moderate incomes. A further 29 000 applicants were provided with suitable rental accommodation. The report on the Home Savings Grant Scheme showed that grants totalling \$56 million were approved for some 52 000 applicants in 1978-79. **19 August 1980:** A Budget allocation of \$52 million for advances under the Home Savings Grant Scheme was announced. Full grants of \$2 000 would be payable for homes costing up to \$45 000 with the grant reducing progressively until cut out for houses costing \$55 000, the previous limits having been \$35 000 and \$40 000 respectively. **1 October 1980:** Changes to the Home Savings Grant Scheme, to become effective upon the Government's return to office, and backdated to 1 October 1980, included benefits to first home buyers with dependent children and measures to encourage energy savings in the home. The \$2000 Home Savings Grant would be payable on house and land packages costing up to \$70 000, an increase from the previous limit of \$55 000. Bonuses of \$500 and \$1000 would be payable to first home buyers with one child and two or more dependent children respectively. The bonuses would not be tied to savings and would be paid to all those home-buyers qualifying for the basic grant. Persons buying their first home on or after 1 October 1980 would be allowed to deduct insulation costs from their taxable income.

## Welfare Housing

**2 July 1980:** The Minister for Housing and Construction announced that the Commonwealth would guarantee the

States and the Northern Territory a base level of \$1000 million for welfare housing for the five years from July 1981. The \$1000 million represented only a guaranteed minimum level of funding, with additional money to be allocated each year as part of the normal budgetary process. Grants of \$20 million a year for five years would be available to the States to fund special programs, including interest subsidy schemes to boost home ownership. For each year of the five year period \$30 million in grants would be made available for innovative rental projects such as the leasing of dwellings from the private sector and private-public housing ventures. The guaranteed allocation of funds committed the Commonwealth government to the forward planning of welfare housing. **19 August 1980:** The Federal budget allocated a total of \$285 million to welfare housing for the year 1980-81.

## Health

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### Effects of Herbicides

**7 January 1980:** The Minister for Veterans' Affairs said that an independent study into the effects of the herbicide, Agent Orange, on Australian Vietnam veterans and their children would be set up. **11 January 1980:** The Minister asked the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine at the University of Sydney to design a study to establish whether exposure in Vietnam could affect the health of veterans or cause birth defects in their children. **21 February 1980:** The Minister set out the nature of the study proposed by the School, and stated that its feasibility was being investigated. **3 March 1980:** The name of the School was changed to the Commonwealth Institute of Health. **31 March 1980:** The Minister announced that the Institute was to go ahead with the study.

### Inquiries into Drugs

**15 January 1980:** Mr Justice Williams transmitted the report of the Australian Royal Commission of Inquiry into Drugs to the government. The report dealt with drug use and abuse, law enforcement, treatment, education and controls and recommended a national strategy on drug abuse. **18 March 1980:** The Minister for Health announced that the government accepted in principle the major recommendations of the Royal Commission's Report and suggested that they be discussed further by the National Standing Control Committee on Drugs of Dependence. **19 March 1980:** The Minister for Social Security announced the Government's response to that part of the Senate Standing Committee on Social Wel-

fare Report 'Drug Problems in Australia — An Intoxicated Society?' dealing with legally used drugs. (Action on illegally used drugs would be taken in the context of the Royal Commission Report.) The government, wishing to discourage the abuse of alcohol without restricting the freedom to drink responsibly, rejected the proposals for a ban on advertising alcoholic beverages but would take health considerations into account when deciding excise levels for alcohol and tobacco in future budgets. Discussions would be held with the tobacco industry on the redirection of research funds into less injurious varieties of tobacco leaf.

## Health Promotion Campaigns

**23 February 1980:** A pilot campaign to 'get Australians to take a personal look at their lifestyle' called 'Help Yourself' was launched by the Minister for Health. The campaign emphasised self responsibility for health and concentrated on giving up drink and smoking. **21 May 1980:** It was stated that evaluation of the pilot campaign in Adelaide and Canberra-Goulburn showed that people were 'interested in helping themselves to better health'. **27 June 1980:** A National Quarantine Publicity Campaign was launched.

## Commonwealth Serum Laboratories

**27 February 1980:** A Bill to amend the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories Act passed the House of Representatives. The Bill was first introduced on 11 October 1979 and arose from the Report of the Inquiry into the CSL tabled in May 1978. Under the Bill the role of the CSL was enlarged and its financial and administrative arrangements were changed to make it more comparable with private industry. Assent to the Bill was reported on **25 March 1980**.

## Health Insurance

**29 February 1980:** The Druids' Friendly Society of Tasmania closed leaving a number of unpaid claims for medical and hospital bills. **23 April 1980:** The Federal government announced some aid to claimants on the Druids' fund who had lodged claims prior to its closing. The Commonwealth subse-

quently arranged to pay its own benefit direct to contributors, reached agreement with the Tasmanian AMA to encourage doctors to accept Commonwealth benefits in full settlement of accounts, and reached agreement with the Tasmanian and Victorian governments to waive demand for the payment of outstanding hospital charges on the understanding that it would share the resulting loss of revenue. **3 June 1980:** An increased government contribution to the Hospital Benefits Reinsurance Trust Fund was announced. The increase, to date from 1 August 1980, raised the Commonwealth subsidy to the Fund from \$50 million per annum to \$125 million. The aim of the fund is to equalise the burden of long-stay hospital patients on hospital benefit funds, and its effect is to reduce hospital insurance contribution rates and also enable the funds to provide for patients too risky to be insured otherwise. **10 June 1980:** Preliminary results were released from the ABS Health Insurance Survey conducted in March 1980. The final results, released on **27 November 1980**, showed that 59.4 per cent of all possible contributor units had some form of private health insurance, a net decline of three percentage points compared to a similar survey in March 1979. **29 December 1980:** The Jamison Report (q.v.) recommended that payment of medical benefits should be limited to the insured.

## Advisory Panel on Medical Technologies

**4 March 1980:** The Minister for Health announced the establishment of a National Health Technology Assessment Advisory Panel as recommended in the 1978 report on Applications and Costs of Modern Technology in Medical Practice. The main function of the panel would be to advise the government on the cost effectiveness of medical technologies, and it would also advise on the payment of health insurance benefits for new medical technology services.

## Hospital Inquiry (Jamison Report)

**6 March 1980:** Revised Letters Patent were issued by the Governor General for a Commission of Inquiry into the Efficiency and Administration of Hospitals. The appointed Commissioners were J. H. Jamison (Chairman; Retired Sydney Chartered Accountant); J. S. Yeatman (former Medical Superintendent of Royal Melbourne Hospital); and C. W. L.

de Boos (former General Manager of the Bank of New South Wales). The revised Letters Patent replaced those originally issued on 29 August 1979 following Federal-State negotiations. The Terms of Reference were to inquire into and report upon: (1) Factors behind rising costs in hospitals and related institutions and services; (2) The effectiveness of machinery for determining objectives, policy and resource allocation in hospitals; (3) Ways in which hospital efficiency might be improved and (4) Ways in which cost increases could be constrained. **30 June 1980:** The Commission's interim report was published. It reviewed some of the published evidence on Term of Reference (1). **29 December 1980:** The final report of the Commission was submitted. (It was publicly released on 9 January 1981.) The Report, together with two supporting volumes, included a review of most aspects of hospital services and financing. The report recommended that cost-sharing between the Commonwealth and States in health services should be replaced by block grants; payment of medical benefits should be limited to the insured; charges should be imposed for non-urgent outpatient attendances; and the value of the remaining free hospital services should be added to the patients' income for tax purposes. The report also made numerous recommendations to improve cost-accounting, management efficiency and manpower planning in the health sector. It supported the creation of a Bureau of Health Economics and the establishment of a working party to devise a new health insurance system for long-term implementation.

## Aboriginal Health

**1 April 1980:** The Report of the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program of the Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists was tabled in Federal Parliament. The report recommended better health amenities and services as a prerequisite to improved eye health of Aborigines. All people living in rural Australia should have housing with sufficient bed space, breathing space, cleanable surfaces and shelter from sunlight, screens to exclude disease carrying insects, and adequate water supply, refrigeration and cupboard space for storage of food and sewerage and garbage disposal facilities. The National Trachoma and Eye Health Program should continue, as should regular scheduled visits by medical personnel.

## Pharmaceutical Benefits

**2 April 1980:** The Minister for Health stated that there had been a notional overpayment to chemists of \$235 million over the period 1973-79. The overpayment was due to an error in calculating pharmacists' dispensing costs which resulted in excess fees being paid by the Commonwealth government for the dispensing of prescriptions under the National Health Scheme. **9 April 1980:** Mr Justice Ludeke, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Pharmaceutical Benefits Pricing Arrangements, announced a 4 cent reduction in pharmacists' professional fees to take effect on 1 May 1980. **21 April 1980:** The overpayment issue was referred to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Public Accounts. **19 August 1980:** In the context of the Budget the Ministers for Industry and Commerce and for Health announced their preliminary response to the Ralph Report on the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Industry, which had been tabled in Parliament on 19 September 1979. There would be an increase of 20 cents an item in the dispensing fee for pharmaceutical benefits, and legislation would be introduced to allow chemists to discount the patient contribution of \$2.75 if they wished. **21 August 1980:** The proposal to allow price discounting by chemists was set aside. **17 September 1980:** The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Public Accounts recommended, inter alia, the establishment of a Health Fee Tribunal and a Bureau of Health Economics. The Committee also recommended that a public inquiry be undertaken into the structure of the retail pharmacy industry.

## Medical Fees and Benefits

**25 April 1980:** An inquiry into fees for medical benefits purposes was announced. The inquiry would be conducted by Mr Justice J. T. Ludeke, and would be held in public except when Ludeke decided to receive confidential evidence. Following the inquiry it was announced on **18 July 1980** that an average increase in fees of 9.6 per cent would apply from 1 November 1980. The increases varied over the several components of the fee schedule (9.8 per cent in pathology; 9.7 per cent radiology; 9.5 per cent general practitioner services, consulting physician services and specialist surgery; 9.4 per cent other services). **19 August 1980:** The Budget provided for the extension of medical benefits to children requiring orthodontic treatment of cleft lips or pal-

ates. **23 December 1980:** The government announced a 9.6 per cent increase in optometrical fees for benefit purposes, taking the fee for an initial consultation to \$23.50.

## Nursing Homes

**15 May 1980:** The Government introduced Bills to amend the National Health Act and the Nursing Homes Assistance Act to provide penalties for persons who give false or misleading information to the Commonwealth, and to require nursing home proprietors to furnish audited financial statements. These provisions had become necessary because unscrupulous proprietors were using misinformation as a means of gaining approval for fee rises. Assent to the two Bills was reported on 10 September 1980. **22 October 1980:** New levels of benefits for nursing home accommodation were announced to take effect on 6 November 1980. The weekly benefits would be NSW and ACT \$126.70; Victoria \$187.60; Queensland \$117.95; SA and NT \$170.10; WA \$112.00; and Tasmania \$130.55. The extended care benefit remained the same.

## Health Personnel

**25 June 1980:** The Minister for Education announced the Government's decisions concerning the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Nurse Education and Training (Sax Report). Although the Government supported a 'Qualitative improvement in nurse education and training through the upgrading and rationalisation of hospital based nursing schools' it decided against expanding the intake into Colleges of Advanced Education basic nursing programs. However, it supported expanded CAE post basic education and CAE-hospital co-operative arrangements. **25 July 1980:** The Second Report of the Committee of Officials on Medical Manpower Supply was released. The report provided an overview of medical manpower supply and made the following recommendations, which were accepted by the Government: (1) That there be no change to the current arrangements limiting the immigration of doctors to Australia and that patterns of doctor migration be reviewed regularly by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and the Department of Health; (2) That the Commonwealth Depart-

ment of Health seek agreement with the State health authorities on the numbers and organisations of intern training positions in each State; (3) That there should be no overall reduction in medical school intakes but that universities should review their intakes in consultation with the appropriate State authorities, and (4) That the Commonwealth Department of Health seek agreement with State health authorities on the number and type of specialist training positions. **10 October 1980:** The Tertiary Education Commission decided to fund a chiropractic course under the States Grants (Tertiary Education Assistance Act) for the first time. The course would be held at the Preston Institute of Technology and its fifty students would be eligible for Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme allowances. **13 October 1980:** It was announced that funds would be made available for 350 further places in CAE basic nursing programs. This would bring the national total to at least 1100 places and would provide for one extra college-based course in Queensland and one in Tasmania.

## Domiciliary Nursing Care Benefit

**19 August 1980:** The Budget provided for an increase in the rate of Domiciliary Nursing Care Benefit to \$3 per day.

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