

In addition, we will continue to invest in new models of care designed to relieve pressure on our acute hospitals and improve services in local communities.

More than \$27 million in State and Federal funding will be provided over the next four years for Integrated Care Centres and Community Health Facilities in Launceston, Clarence, Kingston and Glenorchy.

Mr Speaker, for a number of years, workers in the social and community services industry, such as those employed by non-government organisations in the disability sector, have fought for better wages.

This is a fundamental issue of equity and fairness, and the Tasmanian Government supported the equal pay case when it went before Fair Work Australia.

We welcome the decision granting equal pay, which is also vital for the sector to remain sustainable and attract staff.

To help NGOs funded by the State Government meet the extra salary costs, we will provide additional grant funding of \$3 million in 2012-13, rising to \$12 million in 2015-16.

I urge the Australian Government to at the very least match Tasmania's efforts in this important area.

Education

Mr Speaker, raising and educating our children is the most important investment any government can make.

In 2012-13, my Government will continue to improve outcomes for young Tasmanians from early childhood to adulthood.

Our four-year program to build 11 Child and Family Centres around the State will be completed with construction of the final four centres at Chigwell, Derwent Valley, Burnie and George Town.

The CFCs already open are providing invaluable parental support and health and education services for young children.

Capital funding of \$10 million will be complemented by a further \$454 000 to employ staff in the final stages of what has been a \$34.5 million investment in Tasmanian children, families and stronger communities.

Improving literacy and numeracy of course remains a major focus for all schools.

In the early years, the successful 'Launching into Learning' initiative will continue with funding of \$5.9 million to ensure all schools with primary students are supported.

Full coverage of the 'Raising the Bar, Closing the Gap' program has now been achieved across all primary and secondary schools, and the initiative will receive funding of \$11 million in 2012-13 and \$44 million over the next four years.

The quality of our teachers is a key factor determining educational outcomes for our children.

Initiatives in 2012-13 to help support better teaching include:

- the Empowering Local Schools program, which will provide \$2 million for up to 22 schools so they can decide how best to improve teaching and learning; and

- a new Professional Learning Institute, at a cost of \$1.7 million in 2012-13, which will deliver high quality professional learning for school-based and departmental staff.

Mr Speaker, the debate over the viability of schools in the face of declining enrolments has been well documented over the past year.

School communities want a clear and transparent process that allows adequate time to voluntarily assess their needs and options.

Consistent with the Government's acceptance of the recommendations of the School Viability Reference Group, funding will be provided to support and further encourage school communities to move towards more viable outcomes for their children and young people.

A new School Transition Fund will be established with initial funding of \$3.5 million over two years to support capital works and improvements at school sites.

Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment

Mr Speaker, my Government's massive investment in irrigation will continue in 2012-13 with a further \$52.1 million allocated in State and Australian Government funding.

Major works over the next 12-months will include irrigation schemes in the Midlands, the Lower South Esk, the South East and Upper Ringarooma.

When the program ends in 2015, \$220 million in public funds and \$100 million in private sector investment will have seen 11 schemes completed across the State, creating jobs and helping primary producers realise their vision of Tasmania as a food bowl.

To the same end, the Government will also support primary producers involved in intensive farming to transition out of sow stalls and battery hens, recognising growing consumer demand for products that are sensitive to animal welfare.

The Intensive Animal Farming Development program will provide \$2.5 million over two years to enable industry to transition and better respond to changes in market and consumer demand, with further details to be developed in consultation with industry in the coming months.

A number of other initiatives to be funded through the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment will help to protect and enhance Tasmania's unique environment, including:

- \$2.6 million over the next four years to develop and introduce new legislation to improve the protection and management of Aboriginal heritage, while providing clarity for landowners and developers;
- \$5.7 million in 2012-13 to bring together the fox eradication program, weed management and invasive animals resources into an integrated Invasive Species Branch;
- \$780 000 to implement the tripartite agreement to ban non-biodegradable plastic bags; and
- \$240 000 to support existing work to prepare a new framework that will provide certainty around planning, management and protection of Tasmania's coastline.

These initiatives are evidence of the benefits of co-operative government and I look forward to them being progressed in the coming months.