As announced in the 2008-09 Budget, the Australian Government will commence a significant new package of initiatives laying the foundation for implementing its long-term commitment to increase Australia’s international development assistance to 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2015-16.

The Access to Clean Water and Sanitation initiative aims to provide increased access to clean water and effective sanitation services as well as improving water security by protecting freshwater sources. The initiative will support a substantially increased investment in sanitation services while also expanding the provision of sustainable and safe water supply systems, especially for the poorest groups in partner developing countries. It will support a growth in investment in urban and peri-urban water and sanitation services along with further investments in rural water supply and sanitation programs.

The initiative will invest $300 million over three years. This will include $8 million in 2008-09, $100 million in 2009-10, and $192 million in 2010-11.

The initiative will focus geographically on the Asia-Pacific region and Africa. It will build on existing successful programs and partnerships as well as developing new partnerships with multilateral and international organisations and non-government organisations.

As part of this investment the Australian Government will support a range of activities identified in consultation with key partner organisations and developing countries. Activities under the initiative include:

- **Urban Water and Sanitation**
  - Improved efficiency and capacity of water utilities, especially in the provision of services to poor communities.

- **Rural Water and Sanitation**
  - Improved water and sanitation systems for small rural towns and increased service delivery capacity of sub-national governments; and
  - The promotion of improved hygiene behaviour through school-based education programs and innovative approaches such as “community-led total sanitation”.

- **Water Security**
  - Protection of freshwater sources of drinking water and increased storage capacity through various approaches, including water safety planning.