

## Senate Estimates May 2018 Opening Address – Dr Chris Parker

Thank you Chair.

Performance has improved for the third consecutive quarter at the APVMA.

79 per cent of assessments were finalised within statutory timeframes during the March quarter, up from 74 per cent in December and 58 per cent in September.

We've had some world first registrations that provide Australian farmers with priority access to new pest management tools for use in vegetables, cotton and livestock production.

Since March 2017, the authority has improved regulatory output, reduced the application backlog and is delivering more decisions within timeframes.

Twelve months ago, we were finalising an average, about 600 applications in the quarter. We are now finalising roughly 800 applications each quarter.

79 per cent of the 832 applications finalised between January and March this year were delivered on-time.

These gains are an absolute credit to our dedicated staff, and to our focus on improved process.

The performance improvements we have managed to-date give me confidence that the APVMA will meet the efficiency expectations of a world-class regulator operating from regional Australia in the long-term.

However, while we continue to operate on poor ICT infrastructure, and manage the risks we face in knowledge retention and staff separations, our performance will be volatile.

In May we published the APVMA digital strategy outlining our vision for a digitally enabled regulator by 2022. The \$10.1 million dollar investment announced in Budget 2018 will support us to realise our goals.

Setting up an enabling technology program to support that vision is now priority business.

Procurement is already underway for IT services and products with administered funds in 2018–19 to be directed towards; stabilising the APVMA’s existing ICT environment, transitioning to cloud based services and digitising our records.

Investment in the APVMA’s digital capability will play an important role in enabling a new business operating model and unlocking incremental productivity gains in scientific assessment and application management.

The site of our future leased premises in Armidale was announced in March.

Work has already commenced to excavate the foundations at 102 Taylor Street in Armidale.

The interim office at 246 Beardy Street has been refurbished to accommodate the staff already working for the APVMA in Armidale. With priority recruitment continuing, we expect this office to reach capacity in the next few months with 37 staff operating from Armidale.

To manage relocation risks, we are monitoring and anticipating resource gaps, recruiting to priority positions and working closely with our staff to ensure they are well supported.

Whether it is relocating to Armidale, teleworking, accepting a voluntary redundancy, or redeployment in the Australian Public Service, we continue to provide our staff with the information that they need to make decisions about their future.

We've provided increased certainty for those who choose not to relocate, outlining a path to keep working with the APVMA for as long as possible before accessing their chosen pathway to redeployment, retirement, voluntary redundancy or teleworking.

Work continues to capture and retain corporate knowledge and regulatory science capability in the APVMA, while also preparing a strong learning and development platform for our new Armidale workforce.

With our focus on improving operational performance, managing regulatory and business systems reform, and managing the phased relocation to Armidale, I am confident that we will meet the expectations of the agvet chemical industry while safeguarding Australia's people, animals, and the environment.