

## Senate Estimates April 2019

### Dr Chris Parker (APVMA) – Opening Address

Thank you Chair.

When I started as CEO of the APVMA in June 2017, we were faced with a disrupted workforce, poor timeframe performance, very poor IT infrastructure and a parlous financial position. Some of these issues had been long standing at the APVMA.

I am pleased to take this opportunity to report to the Senate that we have made significant progress across all these challenges.

We have seen over recent quarters a consistent and improved trend in our assessment performance, with 85% of applications being approved within timeframe in the December quarter of 2018, compared with a low of 58% in the June quarter of 2017.

While this improvement in overall performance is encouraging, we acknowledge that there is more we need to do, particularly around the approval of the more complex applications.

Our efforts to relocate the organisation to Armidale by mid 2019 continue to progress well.

We now have around 90 staff based in Armidale and our interim offices are at capacity.

Our permanent office remains on track for completion by mid-2019 and our recruitment efforts are continuing to ensure we have the staff we need in Armidale by the middle of the year. These staff will be supported by the staff in the Canberra satellite office.

We continue to support our departing staff at every step of the way. In February, 45 of our remaining ongoing staff in Canberra opted to take voluntary redundancies and 5 chose redeployment in the public service.

We've been capturing the corporate knowledge of these departing staff through active knowledge retention strategies and the digitisation of thousands of files.

The APVMA has been allocated \$10.1 million over three years to implement the APVMA's Digital Strategy. We're putting that funding to good use, stabilising, modernising, and transforming our enabling technologies.

We have improved our budget position and as we look to the future, we continue to work on our new Cost Recovery Implementation Statement, which will enable us to have sustainable resourcing for our very important work of ensuring agricultural chemicals and veterinary medicines are safe and effective.

Work is progressing well on the CRIS process and we will be consulting with industry and stakeholders over the coming months.

I believe that the future is a positive one for the APVMA. We have faced the challenges we have had with resilience, good humour and hard work. The organisation is on a much better footing than it was 2 years ago and I look forward to working with staff to firmly establish ourselves as a world class regulator based in regional Australia.

As I have said at previous estimates, all of this has only been possible through the dedication of our hard working staff, past and present. To them I say thank you.