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Enquiries: Ross McKim

19 September 2017

Committee Chair
Select Committee on Regional Development and
Decentralisation
PO Box 6021
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBMISSION : REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CENTRALISATION

On behalf of the City of Greater Geraldton I would like to indicate strong support for Australian Government Agency decentralisation and would like to propose Geraldton as an obvious choice in Western Australia.

Located only an hour's flight north of Perth, Geraldton is the midway point between the State's capital and Broome. Geraldton is the regional service centre for Western Australia's most diverse regional economy, the Mid West region, with a thriving population of over 40,000.

The Mid West economy is underpinned by agriculture, aquaculture, mining, manufacturing and infrastructure and is home of the most significant global science project, the Square Kilometre Array.

Considered as one of Western Australia's top places to live, work, study or invest, Geraldton and the Mid West region has the potential to be home for a range of projects that build on existing strengths, as well as new and innovative enterprises.

Geraldton is known:

- For its fine food (Australia's crayfish capital) and supplies around 85% of Australia's cucumbers;
- For its Maritime heritage through the Batavia Story and its HMAS Sydney II Memorial;
- As an established international export hub for mineral and grain commodities;
- For affordable housing with most houses enjoying ocean views;
- For its diverse, culturally rich, skilled and entrepreneurial community;
- For its high quality schools, sporting events and healthcare infrastructure;
- For its Mediterranean climate, stunning beaches and coastal amenities; and





- Its higher speed internet than Perth thanks to being one of the first regional Australia cities to be connected to the NBN.

As per the submission made by Progress Midwest, we support decentralisation and believe it has many benefits including:

- Better connections with the regions will translate to a better understanding of the regions to improve policy;
- Alignment of agencies with a specialisation that is applicable to a particular region;
- Small agencies located in regional centres can have higher impacts;
- Regionally-located agencies would give confidence to the private sector and raises the benchmark for business and industry to do the same;
- The relocation of agencies to regions would provide opportunities for local employment to help retain population;
- Face to face regional engagement connects government to those its policies impact directly.

The Mid West region is the State's most diversified regional economy according to the Shannon's and Equability Indexes and Geraldton is its heart. The region boasts:

- one of Australia's most diverse mining provinces that includes talc, gold, lead, tin, tantalum, zinc, heavy mineral sands, iron ore, copper, clays, pigments, nickel, vanadium, titanium, gypsum, chromite, limestone, lime sands and manganese ore;
- the largest fishing industry in the State with a dominant rock lobster fishery, significant finfish and mollusc production and an emerging aquaculture sector;
- intensive and broad acre agriculture including significant livestock, cropping and horticulture production;
- an emerging renewable energy sector with high prospectivity for solar, wind, wave, geothermal and biomass generation;
- employment across all 19 major industry sectors with strength in construction, retail and health care, in addition to mining, fishing and agriculture;
- Geraldton is the second largest grain export terminal in Australia;
- Geraldton was the first regional area in the State to be connected with the National Broadband Network's (NBN) 'fibre to the premises' platform and will become the Point of Interconnect for all telecommunications activity in WA (north of Geraldton);
- The Australian Defence Satellite Communications Ground Station at Kojarena 30km east of Geraldton is operated by the Australian Defence Force and is part of a worldwide system of satellite communications keyword monitoring known as Echelon.

In line with the submission being provided through Progress Midwest, the opportunity exists to relocate departments that align with the specialisations and strengths of the Mid West region, in particular the following:

- Department of Agriculture;
- CSIRO;
- CSIRO Astronomy;
- CSIRO Renewables and Energy;



- CSIRO Information Technology; and,
- Defence.

We look forward to welcoming you to Geraldton on October 30 and trust that the above provides information for consideration of decentralisation efforts.

Yours sincerely

Ross McKim
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER