



Our Ref: #4445951

12 September 2017

Committee Secretariat
Regional Development &
Decentralisation Inquiry
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via email: rdd.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Submission for Regional Development and Decentralisation Select Committee's Inquiry for Regional Development and Decentralisation

Subsequent to the request received from Acting Chair Hume - Regional Development Australia Committee on behalf of the Select Committee, Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Inquiry into Regional Development and Decentralisation.

GMW is Australia's largest rural water corporation managing around 70 per cent of Victoria's stored water resources, around 50 per cent of Victoria's underground water supplies and Australia's largest irrigation delivery network.

GMW manages water related services in a region of 68,000 square kilometres, bordered by the Great Dividing Range in the south and the River Murray in the north and stretching from Corryong in the east down river to Nyah. We have more than 21,000 customers using over 39,000 services in northern Victoria. See Appendix for GMW's operational area map.

GMW provides a range of services to our customers and stakeholders:

- harvesting and storing
- managing the supply, delivery, and drainage of water for our irrigation and water districts
- providing flood protection, salinity mitigation and maintenance of infrastructure for our irrigation and water districts
- groundwater and surface water resource management
- providing for public recreational activities including houseboats and caravan parks.

GMW Response

Our comments are related to Regional Development and Decentralisation committee's Terms of Reference under the following headers:

- A. Best practice approaches to regional development, considering Australian and international examples**
- B. The decentralisation of Commonwealth entities or functions, as a mechanism to increase growth and prosperity in regional areas, considering Australian and international examples**
- C. Actions of the Commonwealth that would encourage greater corporate decentralisation and what can be learned from corporate decentralisation approaches.**

GMW supports the purpose and aspirations set out within the Inquiry into Regional Development and Decentralisation for a sustainable future and resilient communities. Vibrant communities and more regional job opportunities align with our objectives of attracting and retaining a skilled workforce.

A. Best practice approaches to regional development

- Water is the lifeblood of our irrigation-reliant region and GMW contributes to managing this resource. This makes us a major player in the Northern Victorian economy. We are at the start of a supply chain feeding primary production and bringing food processing companies to the region, along with thousands of jobs. We are also a large business in our own right, which in turn employs contractors and workers including those involved in the Connections Project.
- We are delivering the \$2 billion GMW Connections Project, funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth governments. This is the most significant upgrade to the region's irrigation infrastructure in its 100-year history and is the largest irrigation modernisation project in Australia.

The project will automate much of the water delivery network and replace ageing irrigation infrastructure, while reducing the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District (GMID) footprint and making water use sustainable by preparing us for future challenges and opportunities. It's creating hundreds of jobs for local contractors, designers, manufacturers and other water-related staff, and employs almost 20 per cent of our 779 full time equivalent (FTE) staff.

Upgrading the Goulburn Murray irrigation system will result in a more sustainable irrigation system and annual water savings of 429 GL as an important contribution to Victoria's commitment to the Murray-Darling Basin plan.

- We are developing our new strategic plan and this is due for release at the end of September 2017.

The Strategic Framework we have developed captures the nine goals and 18 outcomes representing our long term aspirations and operational objectives. These have been developed following an extensive consultation process where we listened to customers and stakeholders and understood what is important to them.

Our purpose is to support regional growth, contribute to the region's prosperity and by driving costs down, efficiently manage, store and deliver water, as well as where it makes sense to take a lead role. It is our objective to create the following opportunities:

- work closely with regional development authorities, various development forums, and councils to support shared objectives
- target investment growth in areas that would benefit our asset operations and existing customers
- support marketing the opportunities in our region more effectively
- provide leadership on water policy and sourcing water entitlements to support existing and new enterprises.

B. The decentralisation of Commonwealth entities or functions, as a mechanism to increase growth and prosperity in regional areas

GMW welcomes stronger regional presence of government agencies that we interact with including the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. Given the Goulburn Murray Irrigation Districts centrality to agriculture in Northern Victoria, consideration could be given as a location option.

C. Actions of the Commonwealth that would encourage greater corporate decentralisation and what can be learned from corporate decentralisation approaches

- GMW welcomes the opportunity to work closer with the Commonwealth to align government programs with the needs of our customers, stakeholders and the region. It is important that irrigated agriculture a key driver of Australia's agricultural exports to satisfy demand for our quality products.

We support a range of further education and training in our community through our community programs, as this helps meet our skilled labour requirements. We support to expansion of relevant programs.

- GMW is committed to support decentralisation initiatives and new investment through leadership in water sector and recreational interest/businesses based around water assets.

There are significant economic and social benefits realised through the recreational use of waterways. The social and economic community benefits associated with recreational activities are recognised in the Victorian Government's Water for Victoria Plan, which contains actions to support recreational use of waterways and storages.

In addition to direct benefits, growth in the recreation industry will potentially bring many indirect benefits to the region, with increased employment and visitors leading to improve livability in regional Australia.

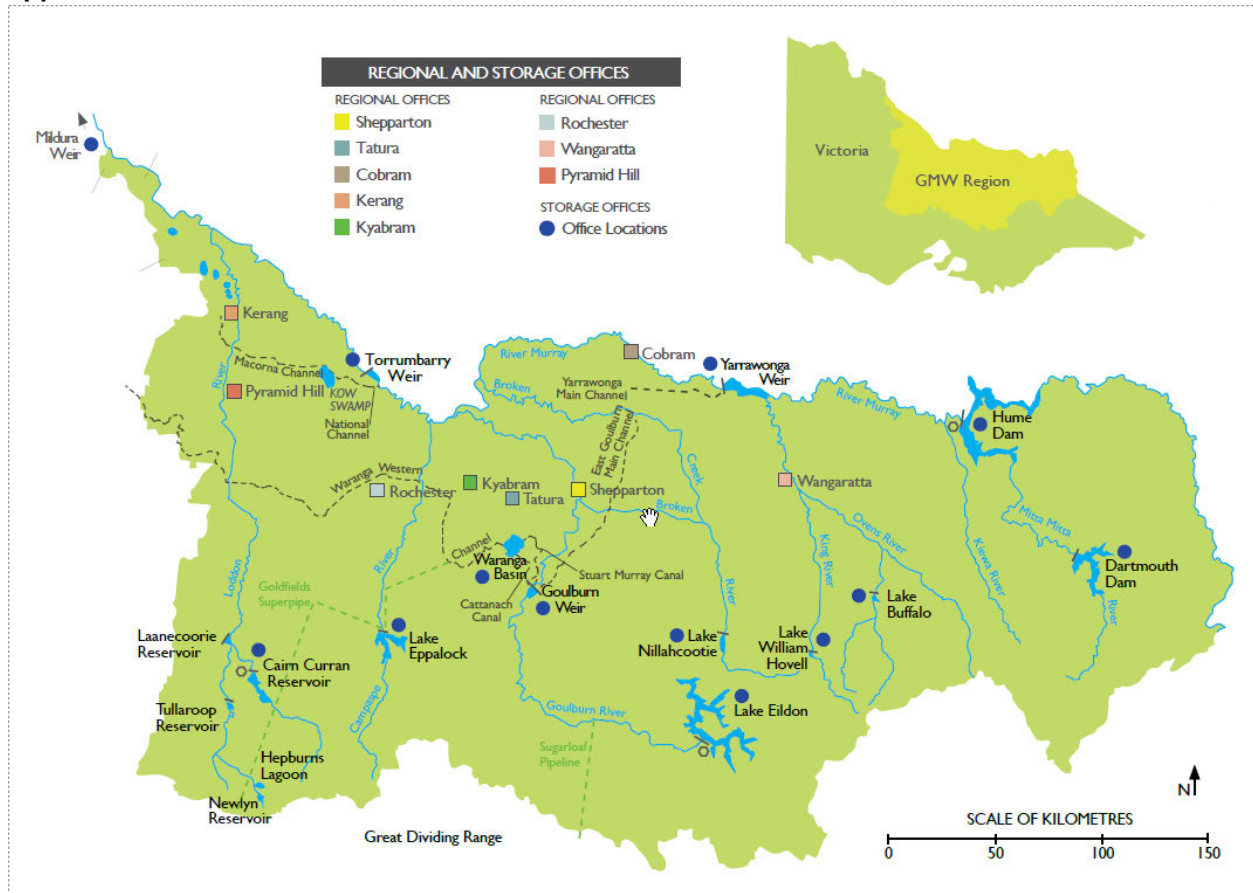
GMW looks forward to continued collaboration with the Regional Development and Decentralisation committee, enquiries on GMW's submission can be directed to:

Graeme Hannan, Manager Sector & Corporate Policy,

Yours sincerely

Pat Lennon
Managing Director, Goulburn-Murray Water

Appendix 1



GMW's operational area