



15<sup>th</sup> September 2017

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

Progress Mid West represents a partnership of the three tiers of government (Local, State and Federal) and business and industry dedicated to growing the traded economy of Greater Geraldton and the Mid West region.

Our partnership includes the Mid West Development Commission, Regional Development Australia Mid West Gascoyne, City of Greater Geraldton, Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Pollinators Ltd.

Progress Mid West would like to indicate its 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 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.



As the State's most diversified regional economy according to the Shannon's and Equability Indexes in regional Western Australia, the Mid West has:

- 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 Port is the second largest grain export terminal in Australia, making it an established international export hub for mineral and grain commodities;
- 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 is located at Kojarena 30km east of Geraldton. Operated by the Australian Defence Force, the station is a major Australian signals interception facility, and is part of a worldwide system of satellite communications keyword monitoring known as Echelon.





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;
- 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; and,
- For its Mediterranean climate, stunning beaches and coastal amenities.



The Management Committee of Progress Midwest believes that decentralisation 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.





In line with the submission being provided through Regional Australia Mid West Gascoyne, Progress Mid West sees the opportunity to relocate departments that align with the specialisations and strengths of the Mid West region including the following:

- **Department of Agriculture** - given that of the Agriculture and Fisheries produced in Western Australia from in and around Geraldton includes \$668million worth of wild catch Rock Lobster; 85% of Australia's grain production worth \$2.5billion and significant livestock production;
- **Defence** - A pivotal location: a 1000km arc from Geraldton embraces Perth, Esperance to the south and Exmouth, the North West Shelf offshore gas province, and beyond Dampier to the north sitting outside of the North West tropical cyclone zone, with steady tides and deep water access.
- **CSIRO and Space** - The Square Kilometre Array, a **global next-generation radio telescope project involving institutions from over 20 countries**, will be the largest and most capable radio telescope ever constructed. With the world's largest data project in Geraldton's backyard it seems feasible that the project management team for the project could be located locally to work with local stakeholders on delivering the project.

A number of other CSIRO divisions could also find a home in Geraldton to leverage off the SKA project including:

- **CSIRO Astronomy;**
- **CSIRO Renewables and Energy; and,**
- **CSIRO Information Technology.**

We thank you for the opportunity provided to submit this submission and we trust that this might provide an appetite for the Committee to consider Geraldton as a viable option for the decentralisation efforts.

Trish Palmonari  
General Manager

