



# Regional Development *Australia*

MIDWEST GASCOYNE

## Committee Secretariat

Inquiry into Regional Development and Decentralisation  
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## Decentralisation to Geraldton, Western Australia

### Geraldton

Geraldton lies at the heart of a region with a diverse economy and many opportunities for agriculture, aquaculture, mining, manufacturing and infrastructure opportunities. Centrally located between Perth and Broome, the region has the potential to be a home for projects that build on existing strengths, as well as new and innovative enterprises.

Greater Geraldton has plenty on offer including:

- a bountiful and refreshing place to live, work, invest and play.
- a hotspot for fine food, maritime heritage and marine services.
- a regional hub for goods and services, accommodation, heritage, events, transport and logistics.
- an established international export hub for mineral and grain commodities.
- a region with established and untapped resources, with enormous capacity for growth.
- a single point of contact for investment enquiries and assistance.

Our City offers a multitude of opportunities to enhance the lifestyle experience:

- diverse, culturally rich, skilled and entrepreneurial community.
- high quality schools, sporting events and healthcare infrastructure.
- attractive climate, stunning beaches and coastal amenities.
- Affordable housing with median house price under \$300,000
- The City of Geraldton is the first WA regional city to be **fully NBN FTTP connected**.

Decentralisation has many benefits including:

- Better connections with the regions will mean a better understanding of the regions and will therefore improve policy
- Key targets could be those agencies with a specialisation that is applicable to a particular region

- Even a small agency would have a positive economic impact on a regional centre which might go unnoticed in Canberra
- Regionally-located agencies would give confidence to the private sector and sets a good example
- In addition to discussing the relocation of agencies, a key part of the agenda should be the placement of the bureaucracy in respect of an essential element in career progression
- The reach of government can be extended by using existing regional assets such as Regional Development Australia which is the government 'brand' for regional engagement and could host some functions of government
- Departments do not necessarily need to relocate entire functions, but could look at dispersing some tasks

## Opportunities for Departments to move to Geraldton and the Midwest include:

### Department of Agriculture

The Australian Government Department of Agriculture and Water Resources develops and implements policies and programmes to ensure Australia's agricultural, fisheries, food and forestry industries remain competitive, profitable and sustainable, and supports the sustainable and productive management and use of rivers and water resources. We have about 5000 staff working in offices, airports, mail centres, shipping ports, laboratories and abattoirs; located in regional centres, rural communities and capital cities.

It appears that the Department has only one office in WA. However, the Agriculture and Fisheries that are produced in WA in and around Geraldton include the most valued wild catch Rock Lobster industry in Australia worth \$668M and 85% of Australia's grain production, worth \$2.5B and significant Cattle production.

With WA dominating the Rock Lobster industry, Department of Agriculture staff involved in fisheries management may be best placed in Geraldton to work with the WRL fisheries.

The Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) is one of the world's leading grains research organisations, responsible for planning, investing in and overseeing RD&E to deliver improvements in production, sustainability and profitability across the Australian grains industry. Yet they are not based in WA where the majority of grains is produced.

### CSIRO and Space

With the world's largest data project in Geraldton's backyard it seems realistic for the management team to be located here where they can work with local stakeholders on delivering the project.

The Square Kilometre Array, or SKA, is a **global next-generation radio telescope project involving institutions from over 20 countries**. The SKA will be the largest and most capable radio telescope ever constructed. During its 50+ year lifetime, it will expand our understanding of the universe and drive technological development worldwide. Australia and southern Africa will each host different SKA components.

The SKA will produce more data per day in its network than the entire internet. The SKA will help the search for Earth-like planets, extra-terrestrial activity, dark matter and black holes — will be 10,000 times more powerful than any telescope currently used, with much of that capability to come from software and ICT design. There has been comments that 90% of the tech needed to deliver the 670M euro project is yet to be developed and the global consortium will have world leading people involved, creating many new opportunities not to mention greater understanding about the universe.

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

#### **CSIRO Astronomy**

We manage Australia's leading facilities for radio astronomy and spacecraft tracking, we're internationally renowned for our radio astronomy research and engineering expertise, and we're helping to shape the Square Kilometre Array.

#### **CSIRO Renewables and Energy**

Australia's growth and way of life is underpinned by access to affordable and sustainable energy sources. Find out more about our diverse portfolio of research.

#### **CSIRO Information Technology**

From smartphone apps and robotics, to wearable technology and next gen wireless, we're providing innovative information technology solutions that are helping to secure Australia's digital future.

Further, the Australian Government is looking at the opportunity for a Space Industry. Locating and building an Australian Government governance framework to support Australian space industry development needs to recognise opportunities from greater coordination and focus on realising the benefits of a holistic approach to Australian space activities. With Geraldton sitting central to the Kojarena Australian Defence Satellite Communication Station, The WA Space Centre which presently hosts two SSC satellite ground stations and the SKA/ICRAR facilities here and to be built in the future, a great start to any further investment in Space Tech

## **Defence**

A pivotal location: a 1000km arc from Geraldton embraces -to the south - the Perth metropolitan area and south-west coast, around the capes and east beyond Esperance and - to the north - Exmouth, the North West Shelf offshore gas province, and extending north beyond Dampier.

Seaside City in the Middle of Western Australia, but outside of the NW tropical cyclone zone, with steady tides and deep water access.

Geraldton would like to engage in discussions around increasing the opportunity for Australian and Allied naval vessels to visit Geraldton and potentially be based here. Discussions will be initially around the following points:

- Creating the opportunity to discuss interest in the concept, knowing that the outcome may be 5-10 years away.



- Creating interest in the American Department of Defence examining the potential to operate from a purpose built facility on the Mid Western Australian Coast.
- Seek consideration of discussions directly with the Australian and American Defence hierarchy of Oakajee as a Naval Port.

With the US verbalising its interest in increasing its presence in the Indian Ocean, the Geraldton Community would welcome the opportunity for Australian and US Defence operations from a potential Greenfield port site (Oakajee) and associated infrastructure in close proximity, such as the Geraldton Airport.

Geraldton already hosts strategic infrastructure such as the Australian Defence Satellite Communications Station (ADSCS) at Kojarena and we can see no reason why we can't build on our attractive location for other facilities.

Australian bases at Stirling and Fremantle are currently used for US Navy stopovers – but has limited access to major vessels due to draft constraints, the new Oakajee port, will be a deep water Port capable of accommodating the largest vessels and with input into the design, it could meet currently unmet requirements for the largest of vessels.

I trust the above provides some ideas for consideration of decentralisation efforts.

Yours faithfully



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