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Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senators,

Enquiry into the operation effectiveness and consequences of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (Location of Corporate Commonwealth Entities) Order 2016.

The Cooperative Research Centres Association wishes to bring to your attention some factors in relation to regional location of Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs).

Currently, only four of thirty-three CRCs are in regional centres, being:

- Sheep CRC, Armidale NSW
- Poultry CRC, Armidale NSW
- Energy Pipelines CRC, Wollongong NSW
- CRC for Contamination Assessment & Remediation of the Environment, Newcastle NSW.

The CRC for Northern Development, announced recently, will be established in Townsville, Queensland. Almost half of CRCs are in Melbourne.

In the past, more CRCs have been in regional Australia. For example, the Reef CRC in Townsville, the Rainforest CRC in Cairns, the Rail CRC in Gladstone and the Sustainable Tourism CRC in the Gold Coast. These CRCs located close to areas of expertise, and were encouraged (at least in some cases) by State government incentives to do so.

Regional location of CRCs does not cause disruption to existing organisations as CRCs are temporary companies, established for 7-10 periods (although some have had multiple terms up to 25 years). Headquarters of CRCs are small businesses of highly qualified professionals and they often organise national meetings. Very often, regional CRCs are associated with regional universities.

It is our observation that regional CRCs are highly effective. Having businesses and academics collaborate can be easier in regional centres than in very large cities with their inherent congestion and parking problems.

If Senators wish to encourage regional development through location of new businesses in an area, CRCs may be an effective means to do so. It is important that a critical mass of suitable businesses and academics exist (or can easily be attracted) in the area. If these circumstances exist, a CRC can be a significant boost to a local economy.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Tony Peacock FAICD
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: The Hon Barnaby Joyce, Deputy Prime Minister
The Hon Arthur Sinodinos AO, Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science