

15 February 2017

The Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee
c/- Senator Bridget McKenzie
Parliament House
Canberra

Dear Senators,

I note that the above Committee is examining the possibilities of moving government departments and instrumentalities to regional areas to take pressure off our capital cities, and to assist in the much needed development of regional centres. Some work has already been done in this area or is in the process of being brought about currently. (Examples include the ATO branch offices in places such as Albury; the current move of Veterinary Services from Canberra to Armidale).

There have been some missed opportunities in the past. An example is the note printing works of the Reserve Bank which was moved at great expense from an inner area of Melbourne to an outer area of the same city in the 1970s, when logically it should have been relocated to a regional centre.

Some State government instrumentalities have been decentralized in recent years, but there is certainly plenty of opportunity for this to be more widely adopted. In Victoria, it makes little sense to have the County Fire Authority based in Melbourne. Parks Victoria, also headquartered in Melbourne, could operate successfully in a regional centre, especially as there are no National Parks in the metropolitan area, but many large ones across Victoria. My own regional city, Wangaratta, for example, would be well placed as it is in close range of the most extensive National Parks in Victoria.

I cannot speak for other States, and I am aware that many of the instrumentalities I have mentioned come under State rather than Federal jurisdiction, but perhaps the Federal government can lean on the States to be pro-active in advocating serious decentralization for the good of our very crowded large cities, and the long overdue need for regional development. Apart from the social benefits, the cost of infrastructure to cope with our burgeoning capital cities, must surely make decentralization a viable economic proposition.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Twitt OAM