

The Senate Committee Secretary,

Lachlan Shire Council has an area of 15,000 square kilometres and a population around 7,000 of which 16% identify as Indigenous. It is located in the Central West area of New South Wales and is some 500 kms west of Sydney. It is a very rich agricultural area and in addition to grain is a significant producer of sheep, wool, beef and cotton. The main towns in the Shire are Condobolin and Lake Cargelligo with smaller villages at Tottenham, Tullibigeal, Fifield, Burcher and Albert.

With regard to the Terms of Reference the following points are offered.

- * Staff moving to regional areas need to be provided with a community of sufficient size to ensure that high quality education, sporting and social / cultural activity can be undertaken. **Reason:** The relocation or future employment of staff has to consider the interaction of family members and the development of children both from an educational and social outcome. Families will not relocate where they feel or believe that the relocation will detrimentally impact on the future development of the family overall.
- * Staff moving from a city environment require support for elderly family members. **Reason:** Many families maintain a traditional family support network based on culture or an economic need to support elderly family members. The relocation and employment of people with high skill levels has to consider the impacts on an extended family and that the regional location has a high level of social support and accommodation for the aging family member.
- * Staff moving to regional areas that have children or adults in the family with a disability require high level and long term support systems to be available. **Reason:** Today we have high expectations that a community can provide a high level of support for family members with a disability. Although the Government has commenced the roll out of NDIS across the country, not all communities have the high levels of support required to provide respite, education, employment or long term day care services required by people in a regional area. If the staff member cannot maintain a working career due to unavailable or limited service provision or the service is not to an acceptable standard, then the staff member will become dissatisfied or will not relocate.
- * Staff moving to regional areas can financially benefit from the relocation. **Reason:** A person moving from a city environment may be able to sell their property and purchase another at generally a much lower price for a similar building. However if the redeployment of staff is rapid, then the receiving community will adjust up the sales price and rental prices to reflect a higher level of demand that may even out the value or increase it to a rate where there is little to no advantage to the staff member. The transfer of staff should be a planned transition to not over heat the local economy and therefore disadvantage not only the employee but also the local residents who will also have to meet a rising market demand and cost.
- * Timed transition should be considered to allow staff to move over a five year period or to allow new staff to be employed and trained that will be based permanently at the new location. **Reason:** Many older staff will find the move away from family and friends a much harder road than a young person with no dependants. Unless the regional location suits the retirement of the employee, then major resistance will likely occur. By a transitioning of the office from a major site to a minor site, it will allow a level of stability to result and older employees to slowly determine their future. All replacement positions should be advertised

for the new site only and the old office location should be considered for relocation to smaller and smaller premises to encourage change.

- * How does Lachlan Shire Fit into a Regional Centre? It doesn't but it can benefit from the relocation of people to nearby regional centres such as Dubbo, Orange and Griffith as this improves medical, social and educational services that residents can travel to and to take advantage of these improved services. Lachlan Shire would support a Federal Government Department relocation to its area but reality is that a research office from agriculture or chemical testing would be of greater benefit.

Council would be pleased to host a hearing for the Senate Committee in Condobolin or Lake Cargelligo and provide further evidence of the advantages of decentralisation to regional areas. Should you require any further details please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

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