

Chapter 1

Introduction

Referral

1.1 On 8 February 2017, the following matter was referred to the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee for inquiry and report by 9 May 2017:

The operation, effectiveness, and consequences of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (Location of Corporate Commonwealth Entities) Order 2016*, with particular reference to:

- (a) the process leading to the making of the order;
- (b) the policy of relocating corporate Commonwealth entities with agricultural policy or regulatory responsibilities, including:
 - (i) the identity of corporate Commonwealth entities that could be affected,
 - (ii) the policy's effect on the ability of affected entities to perform their functions, and
 - (iii) economic, environmental and capability implications of the policy;
- (c) the application of this policy to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, including:
 - (i) the plan for relocation, and
 - (ii) the ability of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority to perform its functions from its new location, and any consequent risks to:
 - (A) human and animal health,
 - (B) productivity and profitability to the agriculture and fisheries sectors,
 - (C) chemical industries, and
 - (D) Australia's trading reputation; and
- (d) any other related matters.¹

1.2 On 9 May 2017, the Senate agreed to extend the reporting date until 9 June 2017.²

1 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 25—8 February 2017, p. 854.

2 *Journals of the Senate*, No. 39—9 May 2017, p. 1304.

Conduct of the inquiry

1.3 The inquiry was advertised on the committee website at www.aph.gov.au/fpa. The committee also directly contacted a number of relevant organisations and individuals to notify them of the inquiry and invite submissions by 10 March 2017. Submissions received by the committee are at Appendix 1.

1.4 The committee held a public hearing in Canberra on 11 April 2017 and Townsville on 19 May 2017. A list of witnesses who provided evidence to the committee is at Appendix 2. The Hansard transcripts may be accessed through the committee's website.

Focus of the committee

1.5 The committee wishes to stress that the focus of the committee inquiry, as per the terms of reference, has been the order and its application to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).

1.6 The committee notes that there have been a number of campaigns to shift the focus of this inquiry. The committee is aware of a letter that was sent to regional councils encouraging people to get involved in the inquiry that was seen by many as urging regional councils and towns to make a bid for federal agencies to move to their areas.³ The results of this can be seen in many of the submissions. A copy of this letter is at Appendix 3. A form letter campaign was also set up through the *getoutofthecity* website. The committee published a copy of this form letter on its website. Some of the form letters included short additional comments which the committee received as correspondence.

1.7 The committee did not consider it appropriate to deviate substantially from the clear terms of reference that were agreed by the Senate.

Structure of the report

1.8 This report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 examines the policy and consultative process leading to the order, and the order itself;
- Chapter 3 looks at the effects of the order on the performance of the APVMA; and the government's proposals to mitigate the disruption and risks inherent in the relocation; and
- Chapter 4 draws together the conclusions and recommendations of the committee.

Acknowledgements

1.9 The committee thanks all the individuals and organisations that made submissions to this inquiry and appeared at the public hearings.

3 Noel Towell, 'Bush towns to bid for Canberra departments', *Canberra Times*, 11 February 2017; Doug Dingwall, 'Regions pitch for government departments in APVMA Senate inquiry', *Canberra Times*, 14 March 2017.