Coalition Senators’ Dissenting Report

1.1 Coalition Senators of the Committee cannot agree with the recommendations of the majority report which attempts to disrupt and politicise a longstanding pillar of the government’s policy agenda, namely the decentralisation of Government jobs outside of Canberra, central Sydney and central Melbourne.

1.2 The relocation of Australian Public Service (APS) agencies and jobs has been a consistent and unapologetic part of the Federal Government’s commitment to ensuring the benefits of national economic growth is not restricted to our major cities through our decentralisation agenda.

1.3 This policy provides proven benefits to regional communities through the creation of local jobs, local economic diversification, and stimulation of regional economic growth.

1.4 Recommendation 4 of the majority report calls for government to prioritise a stable workforce for the Australian public service. It is our argument that decentralisation improves regional access to stable government jobs and related business opportunities.

1.5 Decentralisation is also about equity. Rural and regional Australians deserve government careers just as much as city people. Regional economies deserve government agencies just as much as capital cities do.

1.6 By locating government services and jobs in the regions, public servants are close to the people and industries they serve. The benefits go beyond service delivery.

1.7 Closer proximity to rural and regional communities and stakeholders supports greater understanding of the views, needs and experiences of citizens living and working in rural Australia. It reinforces the Government’s strong connection with regional communities and the land.

1.8 The Liberal National Government is leading by example and delivering for rural, regional and remote Australia to create long term careers and confidence to build sustainable local communities.

1.9 The decentralisation strategy enacted by the Liberal National Government will create more career opportunities for young people and enable them to stay in the communities they grew up in.

1.10 We know the flow on effect from relocating agencies will contribute to a region’s economic prosperity in the form of new employment opportunities, both direct and indirect.

1.11 In a recent recruitment round, APVMA received almost 300 applications for between 15 and 40 jobs. There were 79 applications from scientists all over Australia for 19 science jobs.

1.12 In addition, APVMA announced in July 2018 that they would have a unit of specialist scientists and decision makers who will work from Canberra. This will
ensure that APVMA fulfils its statutory obligations under the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code and maintain access to highly skilled scientific staff.

**APVMA Performance**

1.13 The latest available performance statistics (September 2018 quarter) released in November 2018, shows that the APVMA has significantly improved its performance, with 86 per cent of applications finalised within the legislated timeframes. This is the fifth straight quarter of timeframe performance improvement.

1.14 In the September 2018 quarter, APVMA commenced the assessment of 757 product, permit and active applications; and finalised 996 applications for products, permits and actives.

1.15 Results from the September 2018 quarter also show:

- Pesticide product applications at 80 per cent completed on time, up from 77 per cent last quarter.
- Veterinary product applications at 88 per cent completed on time, up from 84 per cent last quarter.
- Active constituent applications at 96 per cent completed on time, up from 95 percent in the June quarter and 82 per cent in the March quarter.

1.16 APVMA's latest performance statistics show the authority's performance continues to move in the right direction.

1.17 APVMA is also investing $10.1 million over three years to modernise their information and communications technology (ICT), which will further enable it to deliver improved regulatory services from Armidale.

**Glyphosate**

1.18 Australia has a robust system for regulating the use of agricultural chemicals, including glyphosate. We have confidence that the APVMA will continue to regulate agricultural chemicals using a scientific and evidence-based approach.