



**RCCIWA (Inc)**

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28<sup>th</sup> April 2015

Committee Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Attention: Tim Watling

**RCCIWA Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Future Role and Contribution of Regional Capitals to Australia**

The Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry of WA (RCCIWA), is a member based organisation representing 41 Chambers of Commerce or Business Associations in regional Western Australia. Our members represent over 9000 businesses that are either regionally located or have regional operations and businesses. This submission draws on the feedback, experience and examples contributed by all of our regional business communities since the inception of RCCIWA in 1999. This submission does not address all of the issues identified in the Terms of Reference individually, but rather details the collective sentiment of business communities in regional Western Australia.

**The Importance of Strong Regional Capitals in Western Australia**

It is the long held belief of RCCIWA, that in order to support and grow all viable regional towns in Western Australia, the regional capitals must be developed and strengthened so they can be true regional cities with larger populations that will in turn deliver a critical mass justifying further investment. These cities should be able to provide at a minimum:

- Access first class health service
- Access to education, training and development at all levels
- A well supported and attractive environment for businesses to operate
- Strong social and community infrastructure

This would then give people living in regional Western Australia access to all of the services they would require, without having to travel to the metropolitan area. We know that the reason many people leave a regional town or city and move to the metropolitan areas is because they feel they had to, not because they want to. It is usually either for education, health, social amenities or ease of doing business reasons, as it has become impractical to stay where they are.

If the regional capitals are larger and therefor able to sustain the provision of the above factors as a minimum, it is our view that regional populations would more robust, resulting in a better population spread for the whole state, therefore taking the pressure of the Perth metropolitan area which is struggling with the issues associated with population growth. The solution to many of the problems that Perth is facing because of population growth will be found in developing towns and cities in Regional Western Australia. Having strong regional capitals would underpin this strategy.

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*The Voice of Regional Business in Western Australia*

We would suggest that regional cities are selected to become larger regional capitals based on their capacity for growth, their location and their industry sector opportunities. A focused approach with a long term strategic view needs to be applied in developing the regional capitals, utilising the experience and examples gained from the regional capitals on the Eastern side of Australia which are true satellite cities that deliver all of the essential services needed to sustain and grow their broader regional populations.

It is also important to note that regional Western Australia is where the economic generators and producers of this state are located, so planning for a population that supports all of these industry sectors is crucial.

### **Priority Issues**

In order to build strong regional capitals in Western Australia the following issues are critical:

- **Long Term Strategic Planning**

It is our view that Western Australia has often been reactive in terms of planning. Developing and maintaining a long term vision for all regional capitals in Australia, and ensuring it is adhered to and developed over time should be a priority.

- **Proactive Policy Setting**

Effective policy setting at a national level, with particular focus on transport infrastructure, Broadband access and telecommunications, migration laws, tax reform and environmental protection that will enable constructive forward planning.

- **Co-ordinated Approach to Funding**

The competitive nature of funding to all Local Government Authorities often results in a narrow and disjointed wider approach to the use of this funding. This also creates possible duplication of services being delivered. If a co-ordinated approach to funding was employed it is our belief that the government would get a much better return on its investment and funding would produce better long term outcomes.

- **Internet Access and Telecommunications**

Reliable and efficient access to broadband and telecommunications in regional WA is the number one issue of concern to all regional towns and cities in Western Australia. This is an essential utility that will provide the mechanism for delivery of specialised health services, education, business growth and opportunities and social amenities. It also provides an effective solution to the isolated nature of many regional towns. This will connect the state and afford less reasons to leave a regional area.

- **Tax Reform**

The RCCIWA believes that any changes to Australia's taxation system must include changing the GST distribution methodology, decreasing the regulatory burden of tax to small businesses and creating a fiscal and taxation environment that attracts investors and creates business confidence.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry.

*Ron Mosby*  
Ron Mosby  
**President**

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**CEO**



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