



March 2017

**SUBMISSION TO SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

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

Charles Sturt University



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Terms of Reference

The following Terms of Reference (ToR) were provided by the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration:

On 8 February 2017 the following matter was referred to the 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;
 - 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;
- d) Any other related matters.

Key Recommendations

1. Consideration be given to CSU's recommended measures to maximise chance of success in any relocation:
 - a. Early identification of potential locations for relocation, accounting for infrastructure and other related critical requirements;
 - b. Early cooperation, and consistent engagement between agency or body to be relocated and representatives of the relocation community in question (i.e. local government, other appropriate bodies etc);
 - c. Consideration of potential partners or hosts for relocation, such as universities; and
 - d. Consideration of related issues in relocation of government agency and employees to rural or regional locations i.e. housing, schooling, and related social infrastructure availability and access.
2. Policy discussions regarding the most effective forms of targeted investment in rural and regional Australia continue, to ensure opportunities available are seized for the benefit of local communities, and the national as a whole.



Charles Sturt University

Charles Sturt University (CSU) is Australia's largest regional university, with more than 39,000 students and approximately 2100 FTE staff. Established in 1989, the University traces its roots to the formation of the Bathurst Experimental Farm and Wagga Wagga Experimental Farm in the 1890s. In one form or another, research, innovation and education has been integral to the University's character and mission for more than a century.

CSU is a unique multi-campus institution with campuses at Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Canberra, Dubbo, Goulburn, Manly, Orange, Parramatta, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga, as well as various study centres.

The University's commitment to the development and sustainability of rural and regional Australia is informed by the unique research focus undertaken, and the partnerships it has formed with each of its campus' local communities, local industry, and with the broader regions it serves.

CSU offers a comprehensive suite of research and academic training programs that focus on addressing rural and regional labour market needs, growing regional economies, and preparing students for the jobs of the new economy through rural and regional Australia.

Particularly in health and medical related disciplines, CSU seeks to address key training and equality of access issues across our rural and regional footprint, ensuring the critical supply of health professionals into local markets.

As one of Australia's largest online and distance education providers, CSU has been able to leverage its course profile and special expertise in professional education to deliver nationally available study programs supporting labour market skills development regardless of student location.

Our rural and regional foci, as well as strength in online and distance education, position's CSU as a leading institution in providing higher education opportunities to first-in-family applicants, mature aged students, as well as those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Increasing participation of Indigenous Australians in higher education has been a key focus area of the University's mission and ethos. CSU consistently works in collaboration with Indigenous communities across our footprint to ensure access and develop links into the University. Our position as one of the top Australian universities for Indigenous participation is proof of our strong background in this regard.

The success of the University is demonstrated by its sector-leading performance in work-integrated learning, graduate employment and graduate incomes. Underpinning this success is the close links that the University has forged with industry, both regionally and nationally.

For example, the University is internationally recognised as a leader in work-integrated learning with students spending extended periods in employment with our industry partners as part of their degree learning and applying their knowledge in practice.

Research excellence, with a strong commitment to addressing the complex regional needs through innovation, has long been at the centre of CSU's mission.



As evidenced by the recent Excellence in Research for Australia results (ERA 2015), Charles Sturt University is recognised internationally for competitive research strengths in agricultural science, horticultural production, food and wine sciences, crop and pasture production, veterinary science, animal production, education, curriculum and pedagogy, environmental science, applied ethics, philosophy, religious studies, criminology, nursing and marketing.

CSU has a proud tradition of delivering high-quality research that creates new knowledge, benefits people's lives, enhances the profitability of regional industries and helps communities grow and flourish. Through its Higher Degree by Research programs, CSU is training the next generation of researchers and professionals who use critical thinking and seek to influence the world for the better.

The recently announced AgriSciences Research and Business Park (AgriPark), to be located on the Wagga Wagga campus, exemplifies our industry focus. The AgriPark will feature International agricultural companies, knowledge-rich agribusinesses, market-focused food producers and organisations, innovative SMEs and a university working collaboratively to tackle complex global issues.

Today, CSU continues a 100-year tradition of engagement and leadership with our local communities, of research and innovation in collaboration with industry, expansion in the educational opportunities offered to our diverse student body, and preparing students for employment markets emerging with the evolution of regional and the national economy



Term of Reference A

CSU has no comments regarding the process of the making of the referred to order.

Term of Reference B

CSU's approach to, and perspective on, the current Federal Government's policy of relocating corporate Commonwealth entities with agricultural policy or regulatory responsibilities to rural and regional communities across Australia has been informed by our institutional experiences.

As Australia's largest rural and regional university, CSU identifies as part of its primary mission to play an active role in the expansion and development of rural and regional economies across our footprint. As a leading university in teaching and research of agricultural science, we have engaged with state and federal governments, and their agencies in the broader agricultural and regulatory space.

CSU Experience

Perhaps uniquely amongst respondents to this inquiry, CSU is already home to the first of the Commonwealth entities to have been relocated to a rural or regional centre.

In August 2016 the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) began the process of relocating to the CSU Wagga Wagga campus, the University's primary campus for the study of agriculture and agricultural science. Their office first reopened 19 September. Throughout discussions with the Federal Government and RIRDC management, the CSU Wagga Wagga campus was identified as an ideal location.

As described by RIRDC Managing Director John Harvey in testimony to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Legislative Committee during supplemental Estimates hearings in 2016, the relocation to CSU Wagga Wagga offered a number of critical advantages. These included monetary efficiencies that could be redirected into critical research and output, common interest research and development programs, and capacity and skills buildings collaboration. Further, Mr Harvey identified potential practical work experience opportunities for undergraduate students in the field.

Notably, subsequent to the process of this move, media coverage¹² at both a local and national level has further demonstrated the contribution and positive impact the relocation of RIRDC has had to the Wagga Wagga community and surrounding areas – the stated aim of the Federal Government's policy. Public statements by RIRDC employees, as well as members of the Wagga Wagga Council and community leaders point to the relocation of RIRDC as a critical investment in the continued growth of Wagga Wagga, and the broadening of its economic and social infrastructure.

From the CSU perspective, the co-location has been welcomed and adds a richness to the campus.

Success Measures for Relocation

Given the above example, and unique position of the University to comment on the relocation of government agencies following in-practice experience, the RIRDC relocation provides a number of key lesson for success in any future relocation.

¹ See "Wagga Wagga: a rural renaissance town running over with optimism," *The Australian*, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/wagga-wagga-a-rural-renaissance-town-running-over-with-optimism/news-story/b90afc997ab24c77705d83e9ed23c34b>

² See "Entrepreneur Belinda Allitt among new breed of Wagga bureaucrat", *The Daily Advertiser*, <http://www.dailyadvertiser.com.au/story/4506774/belinda-blazing-a-trail/>

- Early identification of potential locations for relocation, accounting for infrastructure and other related critical requirements;
- Early cooperation, and consistent engagement between agency or body to be relocated and representatives of the relocation community in question (i.e. local government, other appropriate bodies etc);
- Consideration of potential partners or hosts for relocation, such as universities; and
- Consideration of related issues in relocation of government agency and employees to rural or regional locations i.e. housing, schooling, and related social infrastructure availability and access.

While CSU acknowledges the discussion regarding potential relocations of government agencies or bodies is a unique consideration in each case, we argue the RIRDC example may provide a general blueprint to success, and the factors in this.

Engagement with Cross-Border Investment and Relocation

In the development of this submission, CSU has also engaged with Regional Development Australia – Murray (RDA Murray) on their input into the inquiry, and areas of joint interest in the Albury-Wodonga region.

The below text was provided by CSU to RDA Murray for inclusion in their submission, and is reproduced here as further evidence of commitment by CSU to rural and regional development across Australia, including through the potential relocation of government entities to rural and regional communities.

“Working in collaboration and consultation with local government, social and community stakeholders, other education providers as well as industry, CSU will seek to increasingly play an active role in the development and continual improvement of Albury-Wodonga and the surrounding regions’ economic, social and cultural landscape.

Through partnership and mutual buy-in CSU and local stakeholders including RDA Murray will be best positioned to realise the multitude of opportunities over the forthcoming decade. Moreover, the same partnerships will also work towards providing the necessary infrastructure required to approach and engage with the various challenges, both social and economic, that arise during this period.

Though the next decade will bring a number of challenges, as well as opportunities, for CSU and the local region it is also possible to identify important areas for potential collaboration to nurture the growth and resilience of the area. These include:

- *Supporting the Albury and Wodonga communities to drive long-term economic development by building on industry-relevant research achievements in the region in a variety of fields.*
- *Playing an active role in developing a skilled workforce, aligned with industry and economic requirements of the local community, through provision of education and training, as well as*



continuing to build on the strong profile of CSU course availability and planning of courses to meet local needs.

- *Significant contribution to supporting local industries to adapt and thrive in changing environmental conditions through research findings.”*



Term of Reference C

CSU has no comment regarding the application of the policy to the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority.

Term of Reference D

As referred to in the University's response to ToR B, see above, a primary objective of CSU's mission and University Strategy is to positively impact our local communities, and work in a collaborative manner to expand rural and regional economies, as well as related social infrastructure. This is evidenced by our approach to courses and educational direction, working with local partners to determine the needs of the local labour market moving forward, and ensuring these are met. Partnered with this is an ethos of for the public good – including a focus on the social issues facing those communities we are a part of.

As has previously been stated by CSU, including in our response to the previous Senate Inquiry into the Future of Regional Capitals, and in various public forums, the University believes that government investment in rural and regional Australia is key to capturing the opportunities of growth currently available. If successful, such investment will play a key role in the continued expansion, evolution and broadening of the national economy; the key driver of living standards and employment opportunities.

The relocation of corporate Commonwealth entities with agricultural policy or regulatory responsibilities presents one potential opportunity to make such investment. In rural and regional communities, the impact of the relocation of such agencies, and their staff has a substantial multiplier effect. This effect is felt economically, but also in less measurable social and community outcomes.

However, CSU acknowledges that any such relocation must be made in a targeted manner. The critical work undertaken by Commonwealth entities with agricultural policy or regulatory responsibilities remains key to the continued health and prosperity of the agricultural sector in Australia.

As evidenced by the most recent economic growth figures, agriculture sits as one of two leading drivers of economic growth for the nation. This must be supported, with the work undertaken by such agencies in support of such outcomes not endangered by a lack of planning or strategic approach.



Summation

With a strong commitment to the future sustainability and prosperity of rural and regional Australia, CSU welcomes this discussion of avenues for Federal Government investment and support of this aim. Given the population, infrastructure, economic and sustainability challenges Australia faces in the forthcoming decades, real, targeted investment in our rural and regional communities will be vital to Australia continuing with high living standards and economic prospects.

Drawing on our experience in the RIRDC relocation, CSU believes such actions present one potential avenue for rural and regional investment. However, as argued above, this must be undertaken in a targeted sense, with all advantages and disadvantages considered. Given the critical role played by the agricultural sector, both as the food bowl of the nation, and as a driver of export income, continued research, success and growth of this sector must not be endangered.

CSU welcomes continued discussion of this subject, as well as its broader implications for the nature of investment in Australia's rural and regional communities. While rural and regional centres across Australia continue to grow, it is only through targeted, strategic investment and support that maximum benefit will be achieved for the residents of those communities, the industries in those areas, and the broader Australian public.