NSW Decentralisation Taskforce Report

April 2013

The Hon **Thomas George** MP

Deputy Speaker | Member for Lismore

5 April 2013

The Hon. Andrew Stoner, MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and
Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services
Level 30 Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Deputy Premier,

On behalf of the NSW Decentralisation Taskforce, I would like to thank the NSW Government for the opportunity to represent the views of regional NSW on the Decade of Decentralisation strategy to date and provide for consideration this report with recommendations to enhance and drive forward decentralisation efforts.

It gives me great pleasure to report a high level of enthusiasm and interest amongst regional and rural NSW stakeholders evident throughout the consultation, and I thank all of the people who took the time to prepare formal submissions and meet with us to share their often frank insights and suggestions.

The Taskforce also notes the resignation of the former Taskforce Chair, the Hon. Richard Torbay, on 20 March 2013 and recognises his contribution to this review.
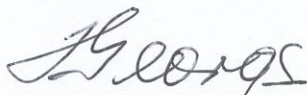
The Decade of Decentralisation strategy is a significant initiative for supporting regional NSW, and the Taskforce believes that the Government should be commended for putting in place policies and initiatives to build sustainable regional economies and communities.

This Report is intended to guide the Government in these endeavours and makes a number of recommendations to strengthen and provide better focus for the commitment to decentralisation and regional development.

The Report also identifies a number of issues raised by stakeholders which go beyond the remit of the Taskforce's Terms of Reference for further consideration by the Government.

The Taskforce provides this Report to the NSW Government for consideration and looks forward to the Government response to the issues raised.

Yours sincerely,

THE HON. THOMAS GEORGE MP
Member for Lismore
Decentralisation Taskforce Chair

Executive Summary

The NSW Decentralisation Taskforce was appointed by the NSW Government in November 2012 to undertake a review of the Decade of Decentralisation strategy and associated programs and policies to date, including the: *Regional Relocation Grant*; *Jobs Action Plan* (regional component); *Restart NSW* (regional component); *Resources for Regions*; and Government agency relocations. (For Terms of Reference, see Appendix 1.)

The NSW Decentralisation Taskforce ('the Taskforce') is comprised of the following regional and rural based members:

– The Hon. Richard Torbay MP, Member for Northern Tablelands (Taskforce Chair - resigned 20 March 2013);
– Greg Aplin MP, Member for Albury;
– Craig Baumann MP, Member for Port Stephens and Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Planning;
– The Hon. Thomas George MP, Member for Lismore and Deputy Speaker (Taskforce Chair); and
– Paul Toole MP, Member for Bathurst and Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Premier and Asia-Pacific Trade.

The Taskforce has undertaken a comprehensive consultation process which included receiving 67 written submissions. Additionally, targeted consultation sessions were conducted with a selection of stakeholders who were invited to private, face-to-face meetings with the Taskforce to engage in meaningful discussion. A number of self nominated stakeholders also met with the Taskforce during the consultation. The enthusiastic response of stakeholders was welcomed by the Taskforce, and a broad spectrum of regional interests was represented in this consultation process.

The Taskforce considers there to be three clear objectives of the Decade of Decentralisation strategy. These are:
1. to support the development and sustainability of regional economies and communities;
2. to attract investment and skills from metropolitan Sydney to regional NSW; and
3. to increase the opportunities for local communities in regional NSW to participate in Government decision-making.

Overall, stakeholders were broadly supportive of the Government's Decade of Decentralisation strategy. More specifically, feedback from stakeholders is that the *Regional Relocation Grant* and *Jobs Action Plan* programs were well intentioned but could be better focussed in order to achieve their objectives.[1]

It is the Taskforce's view that the *Regional Relocation Grant* needs to be refocussed to target regional skills shortages and tied to employment outcomes, and that the quantum of the grant should be increased in order to act as a real incentive.

A substantial budget allocation for this program remains unused, and it is the Taskforce's view that this allocation should be reallocated to other programs designed to support investment and job generation in regional NSW.

With regard to the *Jobs Action Plan*, the key critique by stakeholders related to the processing requirements of the program. Paper work requirements need to be streamlined to reduce red tape for business.

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[1] NSW Business Chamber, Country Women's Association NSW, NSW Local Government and Shires Association (LGSA), Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA), Regional Development Australia organisations (RDAs), Local Government, NSW Minerals Council, Foundation for Regional Development, and Evocities.

A number of stakeholders also raised issues relevant to payroll tax which go beyond the scope of this review, including:

– addressing the competitive payroll tax disadvantage for NSW businesses in areas bordering Queensland and Victoria;
– implementing differential payroll tax rates; and/or
– increasing the payroll tax threshold so that more businesses do not need to pay the tax.[2]

The Taskforce makes no specific recommendation relevant to these issues, but recommends them to the Government for further consideration.

It is also noted that many submissions argued that there is scope for the Government to increase its support for growing businesses, especially start-up businesses and small businesses, which are often vital to the prosperity of regional communities.[3]

An underlying theme of the review has been the need for improved marketing of regional development programs such as the *Regional Relocation Grant* and the *Jobs Action Plan*, and for an alignment between this marketing and the portfolio responsibility for regional investment attraction and economic development initiatives.

The Taskforce endorses these views and notes that there is also great scope to better market regional and country NSW more broadly, not only to Sydneysiders but also to international audiences. An integrated marketing effort is needed to attract investment and skilled workers to regional NSW.

The Evocities initiative, Country Living Expo and the Royal Sydney Easter Show are good examples of existing promotions of regional NSW. There is, however, a need for the Government to build a more comprehensive regional NSW marketing strategy in partnership with regional communities. The strategy could capitalise on the learnings of the Evocities campaign, which focuses on highlighting the comparable urban amenities of moving from metropolitan Sydney to a regional city while promoting the additional associated benefits of regional life. Any strategy needs to sell the message that regional NSW is where vibrant city and country lifestyles meet. Local community groups and regional organisations such as the Country Women's Association believe that marketing can be improved at every level. Moreover, Local Government and communities need to be actively involved in promoting their areas as a part of any Government initiated campaign. The Taskforce supports this view.

The Taskforce also takes the position that there is a compelling case for integrating broad marketing of regional NSW with more specific marketing designed to support business and skilled workers to relocate and contribute to the sustainable growth of regional NSW.

Restart NSW is widely supported and there was broad acknowledgement by stakeholders that the quantum of funding available for regional infrastructure was to some degree dependent on the funds realised through the Government's asset transaction program. A number of submissions, however, called for expanded eligibility criteria for infrastructure funding to include both hard infrastructure and soft infrastructure that can build communities, support economic growth and strengthen social cohesion. In this context, there were a variety of suggestions for improved regional planning, greater flexibility in funding local or regional projects that support sustainable economic and social growth, and increased representation of local stakeholders in decision-making.

The objectives and program parameters of the *Resources for Regions* program were generally supported by stakeholders. A number of submissions called for expanding the eligibility criteria to include Local Government Areas that are impacted by mining activity in neighbouring areas or

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[2] NSW Minerals Council, NSW Business Chamber, individual Chambers of Commerce, individual Local Government Areas like Wollongong City Council, and Country Women's Association (CWA) NSW.
[3] NSW Business Chamber, NSW Farmers, Local Government Areas like Young Shire Council, Cowra Shire Council , Bathurst Regional Council and Coonamble Shire Council.

workforce and resource movement. The Taskforce notes that announcements on this program made by the Government in February 2013 go some way to addressing these concerns.

Many stakeholders view Western Australia's *Royalties for Regions* program as a model to be replicated in NSW. However, the Taskforce acknowledges that the royalties stream in Western Australia is exceptional and that NSW does not enjoy royalties on this scale which can be used to support mining affected communities. There is, however, some scope for NSW to look at ways to further broaden access to the program, especially for areas which are indirectly impacted by mining.

A number of submissions pointed out that many regional communities host industries which are not subject to royalties but nevertheless provide significant benefit to the State. These communities also need support for critical infrastructure which supports regional supply chains.

Government agency relocations to regional NSW were strongly supported by a wide range of submissions as a means of stimulating sustainable and viable regional economies.

The Taskforce supports this view, but notes that agency relocations to date have had mixed success. Partial agency relocations and co-locations appear to be more successful than whole agency relocations to regional NSW. There is strong support for advanced planning with relevant stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of relocations based on meaningful businesses cases demonstrating a natural 'fit' of agency staff and host communities.

Recommendations

Regional Relocation Grant

1. The value of the *Regional Relocation Grant* needs to be increased so that it constitutes a more meaningful incentive for regional relocation. A notional value of $10,000 per grant is suggested for consideration.

2. The criteria for the *Regional Relocation Grant* should target people with skills in demand in regional NSW and be tied to secured employment.

3. The Government should revisit the *Regional Relocation Grant* criteria to minimise minor moves from 'metropolitan' cities to neighbouring 'regional' suburbs or post code areas (sometimes closer to Sydney) by tying the grant to secured employment.

4. The Government should reduce the budget allocation for the refocused *Regional Relocation Grant* to $20 million or 2,000 relocations per year.

5. The Government should consider re-allocating $20 million of the existing *Regional Relocation Grant* budget allocation to the *Regional Industries Investment Fund*, which has a clear objective to attract investment and support regional economic development outcomes.

Marketing Regional NSW

6. The *Regional Relocation Grant* needs to be marketed more assertively and this marketing is likely to be more effective if integrated into the broader marketing of regional economic development opportunities and programs.

7. NSW Trade and Investment should have lead responsibility for the policy development, administration and marketing of the *Regional Relocation Grant* and all other regional development programs. This will achieve better alignment of programs with portfolio responsibilities, and is likely to lead to improved regional development outcomes.

8. It is recommended that $6.5 million of the current funding allocation for the *Regional Relocation Grant* be re-allocated for a comprehensive regional NSW promotional marketing strategy to promote regional NSW to Sydneysiders and international markets.

Jobs Action Plan

9. There is a need to streamline the process for businesses to access the *Jobs Action Plan*. The current system is cumbersome and there are opportunities to significantly reduce the red tape for business access to the payroll tax rebate under this program.

Restart NSW

10. The Government should consider allocating a proportion of *Restart NSW* funds to an economic and social infrastructure support scheme, similar to *Resource for Regions*, for communities impacted by the supply chain demands of industries that do not generate royalties but make a significant contribution to the State.

11. It is suggested that the NSW Government consider introducing a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) model to secure a funding stream for communities impacted by supply chain demands of industries that do not generate royalties but make a significant contribution to the NSW economy.

Resources for Regions

12. There is scope for further consideration of widening the *Resource for Regions* eligibility criteria for 2014-15 so that more mining affected communities benefit from the program.

13. The NSW Government should consider renaming the *Resources for Regions* program to more clearly reflect that only communities affected by royalty generating resources industries are eligible - e.g. Resources for Mining Affected Regions.

14. The NSW Government should badge or brand *Resources for Regions* projects so that its funding contributions are more clearly articulated at the local level.

Government agency relocations

15. The NSW Government should plan and implement a clear strategy to relocate appropriate public sector functions and jobs to regional NSW to stimulate regional economic development and support regional involvement in decision-making.

16. The NSW Government should underpin the relocation of government business units and functions with strong business cases that match community needs and prospects for growth with regional servicing capacity and government functions. This will improve the prospects and sustainability of these relocations.

17. The NSW Government should consider not only whole agency relocations but partial agency and co-location of services and discrete core business functions that demonstrate a natural fit with the communities in regional locations.

18. State Owned Corporations, functions and jobs are also potential candidates for relocation to regional NSW and the Government should include these entities in its broader policy considerations on decentralisation.

Other issues

19. The NSW Government should further examine the following issues that fall beyond the scope of this review but still impact on regional NSW and are of relevance to the broader regional economic development objectives of the Decade of Decentralisation strategy:

– Potentially reduce cross border competitive disadvantage by reducing government charges such as licence fees and Workers Compensation premiums, and introducing a differential payroll tax threshold in areas where NSW business is at a demonstrable disadvantage compared to businesses in Victoria and Queensland.

– Examine the options for making electricity supply costs in regional NSW comparable to the cost of supply in Sydney and other well serviced metropolitan areas.

– The NSW Government establish a Coordinator General role to expedite the planning and approvals processes for the development of major projects in regional NSW.

– Examine opportunities for maximising online education in secondary, vocational and tertiary education in regional NSW.

Introduction

The Decade of Decentralisation strategy was an election commitment of the current NSW Government, and there have been a number of programs and policies implemented to further decentralisation efforts.

As an election commitment, the Coalition undertook to work with councils, shires and communities around NSW to ensure that regional communities play a bigger part in the future of NSW and managing predicted population growth.

This commitment included:

– actively pursuing strategies and policies to encourage decentralisation - steady and strategic growth in regions;
– identifying more public sector job opportunities to locate in regional areas;
– ensuring the services people need to make regional living attractive and viable are available and of high quality;
– giving back to local communities at all levels as much local decision-making and participation as possible, along with appropriate accountability and responsibility;
– inviting local communities to help identify more ways to shift decision-making to regions, cities, towns, neighbourhoods, schools and local health services;
– managing NSW's predicted population growth with a careful balance between green-fields, urban infill and regional housing growth;
– deploying Infrastructure NSW to assist in planning for the provision of major regional infrastructure; and
– working with local councils and shires to deliver the right priorities and the best value for local areas from the NSW roads budget.

Under the Terms of Reference for this Taskforce, the Government has undertaken to review the existing efforts in place to advance its decentralisation agenda. In particular, the Taskforce has focussed on the following programs and initiatives:

– *Regional Relocation Grant*
– *Jobs Action Plan* (regional component)
– *Restart NSW* (regional component)
– *Resources for Regions*
– Government agency relocations

Regional Relocation Grant

Under *The Regional Relocation (Home Buyers Grant) Act 2011*, a grant of $7,000 is available for relocation costs to applicants where the contract to purchase a regional home or vacant land is entered into between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2015.

This program aims to achieve 40,000 relocations to regional NSW over four years. It is administered by the NSW Office of State Revenue within the Department of Finance and Services.

In order to increase public awareness of the *Regional Relocation Grant* and uptake, a marketing campaign was undertaken in 2012 which included billboard advertising, advertising on public transport, as well as messaging through the *See Yourself in a New Life* marketing which was linked to the *Regional Relocation Grant* website.

Since its introduction, legislative changes have been made to the program to expand the scope of eligible applicants for the *Regional Relocation Grant*. Under these revised criteria, retiring people are eligible to claim the grant for selling their metropolitan home and moving into retirement home accommodation in a regional area.

Despite the marketing and legislative changes designed to boost uptake, from 1 July 2011 to 31 January 2013 only 2,670 grant applications were received and 1,711 approvals granted.[4] Given this take up rate, it is unlikely that the allocated budget for the *Regional Relocation Grant* will be fully expended.

While most stakeholders showed support for the objectives and intentions of the *Regional Relocation Grant*, a majority of stakeholders found the program acted more as a bonus rather than an incentive for people to relocate to regional NSW. It was usually argued that the low uptake demonstrated that the program was not as well targeted or as effective as intended.

The main criticism of this program in submissions focused on the grant not being tied to secured employment and the grant amount of $7,000 being too low to act as an incentive for skilled workers to relocate to regional NSW.

Several peak industry bodies and regional organisations stated the *Regional Relocation Grant* needed to be more tightly targeted. For instance, young skilled workers or professionals renting homes in metropolitan areas but interested in buying in regional NSW are currently ineligible for the grant. Most regional stakeholders indicated that regions wanted to attract young skilled workers and would welcome the grant being more accessible to this group.

Stakeholders also noted the 'metropolitan' definition as applied to the major regional cities of Newcastle and Wollongong has led to an unintended distortion of the *Regional Relocation Grant's* impact. People are collecting the grant for relocating a short distance from a 'metropolitan' classified Local Government Area to a neighbouring 'regional' Local Government Area – for example, Wollongong to Shellharbour.

More generally, it was noted that many target communities were unaware of the grant and how to access it.

Stakeholders provided a range of options to modify the *Regional Relocation* Grant in addition to those described above, including:

– re-target the grant to allow businesses employing skilled workers from metropolitan areas in NSW, Australia-wide or internationally to be eligible, allowing them to offer more attractive salary packages;
– tie the grant eligibility to skilled workers filling identified skills shortages in regions;
– tie the grant to secured employment;
– allow skilled contractors that demonstrate ongoing employment contracts within an industry and wish to buy a home in regional NSW to be eligible;
– remove the requirement for home ownership in metropolitan Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong as a pre-requisite for qualifying for the grant;
– increase the grant to $10,000 (or other suitable level) to incentivise people to relocate; and
– reduce the target number of people relocated under the current scheme.

A range of stakeholders, from peak industry bodies to regional organisations, councils, shires, and community organisations, provided views on the types of programs that would better serve regional NSW. There was strong support, for example, for programs such as the *Regional Industries Investment Fund* that provides proactive and growth-focused support for businesses and communities. It also allows greater flexibility to address barriers to sustainable growth, recognising the particularities of regional economies and that support needs to be tailored to regional needs.

The Taskforce has considered the views of stakeholders regarding better ways to structure and utilise the *Regional Relocation Grant,* and believes there are ways to enhance it so that it can help to meet targets in the *NSW 2021 State Plan*, including increasing the share of jobs in regional NSW and grow the regional NSW population by 470,000 by 2036.

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[4] Data provided by NSW Office of State Revenue.

In order to achieve the sustainable growth, creating new jobs and attracting more skilled workers and families to regional NSW, the Taskforce advises that effective decentralisation efforts depend on secured employment, supporting hard and soft infrastructure projects, and ensuring reliable services and amenities.

It is the Taskforce's view that the *Regional Relocation Grant* is one tool for supporting regional growth, but that the grant should be increased to $10,000. The overall budget allocation for the program should be reduced to $20 million to support a reduced target of 2,000 relocations per year.

This would allow for the remaining $26.5 million budget allocation for the *Regional Relocation Grant* to be redirected to schemes that can more effectively facilitate sustainable growth such as the *Regional Industries Investment Fund,* as well as to improved marketing of regional development programs. While some of this proposed marketing allocation needs to be directed to the *Regional Relocation Grant,* it is proposed that the funding support a broader integrated marketing strategy for regional and country NSW which targets not only to Sydneysiders but internationally audiences also.

Regional Industries Investment Fund

The *Regional Industries Investment Fund* is a key element of the NSW Government's commitment to attracting investment and driving economic growth in regional New South Wales.

NSW Trade and Investment provides facilitation services to businesses and communities through its regional office network to help secure new business investment and economic development projects in regional New South Wales. The *Regional Industries Investment Fund* is a key tool to augment this work and bring strategic projects to fruition by providing financial support for business investment, local infrastructure and economic development projects that promote economic and social outcomes for NSW.

The *Regional Industries Investment Fund* is designed to complement programs like the *Jobs Action Plan* and helps regional businesses leverage other program assistance through referrals and facilitation. The *Regional Industries Investment Fund* program is currently under review by NSW Trade and Investment, with the review to be finalised by mid-2013.

The 2012-13 NSW Budget allocation for the *Regional Industries Investment Fund* in 2012-13 is $43.854 million. However, the Taskforce understands that a substantial portion of this allocation currently fulfils legacy program commitments made by the previous Government and existing agreements in place to support economic development projects in regional NSW. This significantly reduces funding available for new projects in regional NSW.

The Taskforce therefore supports enhancing the budget allocation for the *Regional Industries Investment Fund* to support investment proposals with strong businesses cases in regional NSW that focus on job creation; address skills shortages or bring infrastructure with common user benefits to local communities.

Integrated marketing of regional development programs

It has been clear in this review that there is strong support for linked marketing of Government regional development programs. The Taskforce notes that awareness of the *Regional Relocation Grant* and *Jobs Action Plan* is not as widespread as it could be. For example, although the *Jobs Action Plan* is only promoted by the NSW Office of State Revenue website and at NSW Office of State Revenue Payroll Tax Seminars, the level of stakeholder awareness of the program was similar to the more highly marketed *Regional Relocation Grant.*

The NSW Office of State Revenue is the unique and highly specialised administrative and compliance arm of the NSW Public Sector. Marketing of programs is not this agency's core business and should not be an additional responsibility.

There is a need for a more sophisticated marketing approach that promotes a suite of regional development programs and information to skilled workers and business at every level. This would best be delivered by NSW Trade and Investment, which has the necessary expertise to do this and can also integrate this marketing effort into broader investment attraction activities.

More broadly, the Taskforce is of the view that portfolio responsibility for policy development and implementation of all regional development programs should logically reside with the Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, who has overall responsibility for achieving the outcomes of Government's decentralisation strategy.

Marketing regional NSW - where vibrant city and country lifestyle meet

Marketing regional and country NSW, not only to Sydneysiders but also to international audiences, is an important step in attracting investment and skills to regional NSW. Evocities, Country Living Expo, and the Royal Sydney Easter Show are good examples of existing promotions of regional NSW. There is, however, a need for the Government to build a more comprehensive regional NSW marketing strategy in partnership with regional communities. The strategy could utilise some of the techniques and messaging of the Evocities campaign, which focuses on the attractions of moving from one city to another city with a comparable lifestyle, whilst emphasising the additional benefits to be had from enjoying the ease of regional life.

Existing Government resources can also be better leveraged to benefit economic development outcomes for regional communities. For example, the NSW Trade and Investment Country Embassy can be more actively promoted to users in regional NSW, thus enabling them to use this as a gateway to reaching metropolitan and international business opportunities.

Any marketing strategy needs to sell the message that regional NSW is where vibrant city and country lifestyles meet. Local community groups and regional organisations such as the Country Women's Association believe that marketing can be improved at every level and that Local Government and communities need to partner with Government to actively promote their areas to attract investment, skilled workers and visitors.

In order to achieve these objectives the Taskforce makes the following recommendations.

Recommendations

1. The value of the *Regional Relocation Grant* needs to be increased so that it constitutes a more meaningful incentive for regional relocation. A notional value of $10,000 per grant is suggested for consideration.

2. The criteria for the *Regional Relocation Grant* should target people with skills in demand in regional NSW and be tied to secured employment.

3. The Government should revisit the *Regional Relocation Grant* criteria to minimise minor moves from 'metropolitan' cities to neighbouring 'regional' suburbs or post code areas (sometimes closer to Sydney) by tying the grant to secured employment.

4. The Government should reduce the budget allocation for the refocused *Regional Relocation Grant* to $20 million or 2,000 relocations per year.

5. The Government should consider re-allocating $20 million of the existing *Regional Relocation Grant* budget allocation to the *Regional Industries Investment Fund*, which has a clear objective to attract investment and support regional economic development outcomes.

6. The *Regional Relocation Grant* needs to be marketed more assertively and this marketing is likely to be more effective if integrated into the broader marketing of regional economic development opportunities and programs.

7. NSW Trade and Investment should have lead responsibility for the policy development, administration and marketing of the *Regional Relocation Grant* and all other regional development programs. This will achieve better alignment of programs with portfolio responsibilities, and is likely to lead to improved regional development outcomes.

8. It is recommended that $6.5 million of the current funding allocation for the *Regional Relocation Grant* be re-allocated for a comprehensive regional NSW promotional marketing strategy to promote regional NSW to Sydneysiders and international markets.

Jobs Action Plan

The Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme - Jobs Action Plan is designed to give businesses an incentive to expand their enterprises and employ new workers. Businesses that employ additional staff and increase the number of full-time equivalent employees for a period of at least two years may receive a $4,000 payroll tax rebate under the scheme. For part time employees, the rebate is provided on a pro-rated basis, based on the full time equivalent hours.

The *Jobs Action Plan* aims to:

–   Provide a payroll tax rebate of up to $4,000 per employee for the first 100,000 new payroll tax paying jobs in NSW.
–   Pay the rebate in two equal parts, at 12 months and 24 months after the employment commences.
–   Apply to the first 100,000 new jobs created from 1 July 2011.
–   Target 40,000 jobs in non-metropolitan NSW and 60,000 in metropolitan areas (including Newcastle and Wollongong).

The *Jobs Action Plan* commenced on 1 July 2011 and is legislated to end on 30 June 2013. The legislation provides for the Minister for Finance and Services to extend the scheme beyond this date, depending on whether the target numbers of new positions is achieved. The *Jobs Action Plan* is administered by the NSW Office of State Revenue within the Department of Finance and Services.

Since the *Jobs Action Plan* was initiated, approximately 18,300 applications have been received, of which approximately 2,700 have been withdrawn or declined. An estimated 3,200 payroll tax rebates were paid from 1 July 2012 to 31 December 2012. [5] Of the registrations to date, 79 per cent of positions were metropolitan and 21 per cent regional positions.

To date there has been no legislative amendment to the *Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme - Jobs Action Plan 2011 Act*. And the cost of this initiative is estimated at around $330 million in gross terms over the life of the program.

A majority of stakeholders support the aim and intention of the *Jobs Action Plan*, but most cited limitations preventing the grant from acting as an incentive to grow jobs in regional NSW. The rebate of $4,000 over two years was considered too low an incentive to justify either the paperwork involved or the extra salaries, recruitment and advertising costs for hiring additional employees. The rebate was often viewed as a bonus for employers already intent on hiring new employees.

Administrative burdens, including the requirement to fill out separate forms for each new employee, were cited by numerous stakeholders as a disincentive for companies to claim the rebate.

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[5] Data provided by the NSW Office of State Revenue.

As many submissions pointed out, with most small to medium-sized enterprises falling under the payroll tax threshold, a vast majority of regional businesses do not, in fact, qualify for the rebate.

A large number of submissions made more general points on the impact of NSW payroll tax on regional business. Some common positions were to call for across the board payroll tax cuts, lifting the payroll tax threshold, reducing the number of businesses paying the payroll tax and/or introducing differential payroll taxes for border areas disadvantaged by lower cross-border tax rates.

To address these issues, stakeholders suggested a variety of responses, including raising the payroll tax threshold to remove any disincentive to growth for companies sitting at the cusp of qualifying for payroll tax. Additional suggestions to improve take-up rates for the payroll tax rebate of the *Jobs Action Plan* included better marketing and promotion of the program, reducing the paperwork involved, introducing batch lodgements, raising the level of the rebate, and reducing the timeframe eligibility to one year to capture contract workers.

Stakeholders noted that the *Jobs Action Plan* is not well marketed, with current marketing restricted to website guidelines and administrative information and general Payroll Tax Seminars conducted by the NSW Office of State Revenue.

The Taskforce strongly supports cutting red tape for the program to incentivise and encourage business to create new jobs, especially in regional NSW.

Should the NSW Office of State Revenue continue to deliver this scheme, then it should be supported to deliver it with improved marketing led by NSW Trade and Investment, an agency with the appropriate expertise.

The Taskforce agrees with the NSW Business Chamber that the only possible grounds for differential payroll tax rates within NSW would be in cross border areas where NSW businesses are at a demonstrable competitive disadvantage compared to neighbouring Queensland and Victorian businesses. While the issue of differential payroll tax thresholds is beyond the remit of the Taskforce, it is noted as a proposal for further consideration by the Government.

In order to enhance the *Jobs Action Plan* the Taskforce makes the following recommendations.

Recommendations

9. There is a need to streamline the process for businesses to access the *Jobs Action Plan*. The current system is cumbersome and there are opportunities to significantly reduce the red tape for business access to the payroll tax rebate under this program.

Restart NSW

Restart NSW was established by the NSW Government to fund infrastructure projects that will build the capacity of the NSW economy and be a basis for continued growth and innovation. Infrastructure NSW has been established as the key advisory body which has the responsibility for developing NSW infrastructure strategies and recommending projects which align with government priorities.

Funding for *Restart NSW* is dependent upon the State's asset transaction program, and the quantum of funding available will be the result of sale and/or long term lease arrangements secured for major government assets.

The Government is committing 30 per cent of *Restart NSW* funding to regional and rural infrastructure projects. This includes acting on a recommendation by Infrastructure NSW in the

State Infrastructure Strategy, whereby the NSW Government reserved $135 million from *Restart NSW* for the *Bridges for the Bush* program.

Bridges for the Bush aims to improve road freight productivity by replacing or upgrading bridges over the next five years across 17 key locations in regional NSW. These upgrades will save the state more than $200 million in economic, social and environmental costs over the next 30 years. *Bridges for the Bush* is part of an integrated program of works being delivered over the next five years which includes a $277 million investment to upgrade grain rail branch lines to enhance freight productivity in regional NSW.

Stakeholders strongly support *Restart NSW* and commonly argued for more funding to be made available for a greater range of infrastructure projects. There are calls for increased funding for infrastructure even in areas that have benefitted from well received *Restart NSW* funded priorities under *Bridges for the Bush.*

It is clear from the submissions received that there is also a common understanding of the vast scope of state-wide hard infrastructure demand, including but not restricted to roads, rail, air, broadband, telecommunications, water security, and affordable energy. The Taskforce was impressed by the honesty of stakeholders in acknowledging the difficulty of meeting all infrastructure needs, especially in remote areas, and the limitations to funding the backlog of hard infrastructure.

In this context, stakeholders supported improved strategic planning to identify priorities for *Restart NSW* funding allocations. Suggestions for further improvements include reviewing Commonwealth, State, Local and Regional planning to deliver integrated planning and decision-making for regional services and infrastructure.

The Taskforce acknowledges some of these planning issues are being addressed through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Regional Development Australia Council, which is developing a cross-jurisdictional approach to infrastructure investment and delivery in local communities.

Communities affected by the supply chain demands of industries that do not generate royalties are also requesting greater investment in infrastructure. In this context, there are calls to expand the scope of *Resources for Regions* or introduce a similar program to be funded within *Restart NSW* to support the infrastructure requirements of communities that host industries that bring significant economic benefit to NSW. One example cited in submissions is the need to upgrade timber haulage routes to improve the sustainability of softwood timber industry clusters. [6]

The Taskforce has noted one stakeholder suggestion that introducing a modified Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) model could provide a partnership based funding stream to contribute to the management of infrastructure demands at the local level.

Some stakeholders maintain that in order to achieve sustainable growth the definition of infrastructure under *Restart NSW* needs to be expanded to include both hard and soft infrastructure. Soft infrastructure has various definitions but generally focuses on capacity building for communities to boost growth, attract investment and improve living standards. Some of the examples provided included:
– advocating for timely roll out of the National Broadband Network to facilitate online secondary, vocational and tertiary education options for young people in remote, rural and regional areas;
– assisting Local Government and communities to identify skill shortages and then ways of supporting skilled migrants and their families to fit in and settle in regional NSW; and
– reversing the declining staffing levels in the health sector by increasing the number of regional graduates and doubling the tied medical scholarship program to 6 years for regional and rural NSW placements.

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[6] Tumbarumba Shire Council and Albury City Council.

The Taskforce met with Infrastructure NSW and is encouraged by the state-wide strategic planning being undertaken in preparation for the release of funds once the sales and/or leasing arrangements of NSW assets are realised. Infrastructure NSW is also mapping supply chains, identifying gaps and barriers, and identifying why some infrastructure systems (e.g. freight) have dramatically improved due to partnership approaches.

The Taskforce commends the NSW Government for this strategic approach to addressing state-wide infrastructure demand and long-term capacity building.

In order to strengthen the current approach to prioritising infrastructure needs throughout regional NSW the Taskforce makes the following recommendations.

Recommendations

10. The Government should consider allocating a proportion of *Restart NSW* funds to an economic and social infrastructure support scheme, similar to Resource for Regions, for communities impacted by the supply chain demands of industries that do not generate royalties but make a significant contribution to the State.

11. It is suggested that the NSW Government consider introducing a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA) model to secure a funding stream for communities impacted by supply chain demands of industries that do not generate royalties but make a significant contribution to the NSW economy.

Resources for Regions

Under the *Resources for Regions* program, up to 3 per cent from *Restart NSW* is being allocated to mining affected communities to help deliver improved local infrastructure. Administered by Infrastructure NSW, this program is designed to reinvest in communities that help to generate NSW's mining wealth.

In 2012-13, allocation for funding under the *Resources for Regions* program was based on an Economic Assessment of Mining Affected Communities. The economic assessment process guides long term investment decisions by comparing State revenue raised from mining affected communities with NSW Government expenditure on local infrastructure and services in those communities.

The first economic assessment categorised mining affected Local Government Areas as follows:
– Tier 1 (royalties above $5000 per capita)
– Tier 2 (between $500 and $5000 per capita)
– Tier 3 (between $10 and $499 per capita)
– Tier 4 (non-mining royalties below $10 per capita)

Most mining communities in NSW were found to have received more funding per capita than those unaffected by mining. Although, the assessment found that two Tier 1 mining affected Local Government Areas, Singleton and Muswellbrook, received less capital and recurrent funding per capita than the NSW State average.

These two mining affected communities were prioritised for Round One *Resources for Regions* funding and approximately $10 million was allocated in the 2012-13 NSW Budget for the following infrastructure projects:
– Muswellbrook Hospital Emergency Department Upgrade ($4 million);
– Herbert Street Bridge Replacement,
– Broke ($1.9 million);
– Bridgeman Road and New England Highway Intersection Upgrade ($2 million); and
– Pioneer Road Extension, Hunterview ($2 million).

Throughout the Taskforce consultations a number of Local Government stakeholders that did not receive funding under the *Resources for Regions* program in 2012-13 were hopeful of qualifying in future funding rounds. This included communities with existing mines, those with mines currently in development, as well as those impacted by the transit of mining related goods and workers. The commonly expressed view was for a broadening of the criteria of the funding program.

In February 2013 the NSW Government did, in fact, announce that it had repeated the economic assessment process to inform the investment program for 2013-14 and proposed making a number of changes to the *Resources for Regions* program. The changes address several issues raised during consultations.

The tiered approach to evaluating mining affected communities has been changed to better reflect the differences between Local Government Areas regarding mining activity and royalties received:
- Tier 1 (above $10,000 mining royalties per capita)
- Tier 2 (between $2,500 and $10,000 mining royalties per capita)
- Tier 3 (between $500 and $2,500 mining royalties per capita)
- Tier 4 (between $10 and $500 mining royalties per capita)
- Tier 5 (below $10 mining royalties per capita - 'not mining affected')

In 2013-14, funding will be allocated to approved projects in communities defined as Tier 1 and Tier 2: that is, Cobar, Lithgow, Mid-Western Regional, Muswellbrook, Narrabri, and Singleton Local Government Areas.

Additionally, the definition of what constitutes a 'mining affected community' has been expanded to include Local Government Areas that neighbour active mining areas and are often used as transport corridors or accommodate people that work in mining areas. In 2013-14, Newcastle Local Government Area qualifies under this definition.

Application of the broader definition of mining affected communities under Round Two of the *Resources for Regions* program in 2013-14 will help to address some of the issues that have arisen in communities that are indirectly impacted by mining.

To promote innovative ways of delivering community infrastructure, *Resources for Regions* project nominations are also being invited from a wider range of proponents, including local councils, community groups, local businesses and non-government organisations.

Projects which involve partnerships are being encouraged, and the funding will extend social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, recreational facilities and childcare services in mining affected communities.

Many stakeholders viewed Western Australia's *Royalties for Regions* program as a model to be replicated in NSW. However, the Taskforce acknowledges that the royalties stream in Western Australia is exceptional and that NSW does not enjoy a royalties on this scale which can be used to support mining affected communities.

To some extent at least, community perceptions about the NSW program could be addressed by renaming the program so that it clearly identifies that the communities being supported are mining affected. There is also scope for the Government to more clearly identify infrastructure being supported under the program.

Additionally, the Taskforce concurs with the views expressed by some communities, that funding support needs to be provided in advance of emerging demand pressures on infrastructure. Some communities point to the fact that significant mining approvals are now moving into the developmental phase, and there is a therefore a strong likelihood that their communities will feel infrastructure pressures in the future. A well designed program will deliver support for infrastructure before these pressures become a burden to communities and an impediment to future growth.[7]

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[7] Mid-Western Regional Council, Namoi Councils, NSW Association of Mining Related Councils, and NSW Minerals Council.

To further enhance decentralisation efforts, the Taskforce makes the following recommendations.

Recommendations

12. There is scope for further consideration of widening the *Resource for Regions* eligibility criteria for 2014-15 so that more mining affected communities benefit from the program.

13. The NSW Government should consider renaming the *Resources for Regions* program to more clearly reflect that only communities affected by royalty generating resources industries are eligible - e.g. Resources for Mining Affected Regions.

14. The NSW Government should badge or brand *Resources for Regions* projects so that its funding contributions are more clearly articulated at the local level.

Government agency relocations, co-locations and partial relocations

As part of the Decade of Decentralisation strategy, the Government has committed to reducing its Sydney CBD footprint. Decentralisation aims to stimulate economic growth and long-term job generation - which can be achieved by relocating public sector jobs to targeted centres.

Government agency relocations to regional NSW are overwhelmingly supported by a wide range of stakeholders, including several Business Chambers, Local Government Areas and regional peak bodies. Submissions also advocated a number of forms for these decentralisations of government functions, ranging from the relocation of whole agencies to the relocation of business units, co-locations of functions with similar functions delivered by other tiers of government, and other forms of service delivery which involve a regional presence of some kind.

Whilst whole of department agency relocations were generally advocated by major regional cities, sub-regional towns tended to favour partial relocations or boosting opportunities through shared or co-location of various agencies and services. More than one Local Government Area argued for the strengthening of regional centres through the location of government business units, while extending this economic stimulus to sub-regional towns through co-locating various levels of government services and staff through other models of service delivery (e.g. One-Stop-Shops).[8]

The relocation of the Infringement Processing Bureau (now part of the State Debt Recovery Office) to Maitland from Blacktown was cited in submissions as an example of a successful decentralisation of government functions that focused on specific functions suitable for relocation, core staff willing to relocate, and local capacity to fill jobs arising from the move. Several stakeholders also gave positive feedback on the partial location of a business unit within the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (now part of Transport Roads and Maritime Services) to Glen Innes.

Almost every Local Government submission not only supported but actively promoted their Local Government Area for government agency relocations. Some Local Governments favoured co-locating a range of government services and representatives to service either a region defined by reasonable travel time or defined by geographical boundaries[9].

Areas with a history of partial agency relocations such as Lismore, Armidale, Dubbo, Bathurst, Wollongong, Albury, Eurobodalla, Coffs Harbour and Ballina sought the expansion of the reach and scope of their existing agencies and services base to grow their regions and attract highly skilled workers and business. Other Local Government Areas such as Parkes and Goulburn Mulwaree highlighted the importance of synergies and relocating specific parts of agencies that fit

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[8] Ballina Shire Council, Young Shire Council, Junee Shire Council, Goulburn Mulwaree Shire Council, Eurobodalla Shire Council.
[9] Young Shire Council, Blue Mountains Shire Council and Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise.

with their region and complement identified needs. Most Local Government Areas see agency relocations as the basis for reversing economic contraction in their area.

However, some submissions also made the point that agency relocations must lead to service improvements and be based on solid business cases that match growth areas with agency needs. Where possible a fair and equitable criterion for agency relocations to the regions is also advocated by a number of submissions[10].

One suggestion supported by a variety of interest groups on the basis of there being 'a good regional fit' was to relocate a range of fire, emergency and volunteer services and functions from Sydney to regional NSW. The Taskforce notes that the proposal has the potential to develop into a business case based on sustainability, operational benefits and the alignment of skills and interest for staff, communities and functions.

Many submissions noted the need for advanced planning with relevant stakeholders to ensure sustainability and a good cultural fit of relocating staff and their families into communities. Investing in hard and soft infrastructure is advocated as a way of making relocations sustainable.

The Taskforce understands that a substantial body of work already exists within the NSW Government on the decentralisation of CBD based government agencies and jobs. A review of agency CBD accommodation commitments expiring in the next five years has been conducted, and opportunities to relocate these agencies out of the Sydney CBD have been identified.

Relocations of government functions to regional areas can provide a stimulus to regional economies and can also be a way of giving local communities a way of participating in government decision-making. Further work needs to be undertaken to identify possible business functions which could relocate to regional areas. Prime targets for agency relocations to the regions are likely to include:
- whole business units with a "regional focus";
- call centres which rely on enabling telecommunications infrastructure;
- shared service centres;
- other State-wide services capable of being provided remotely; and
- non-specialist services.

There are, however, cost implications associated with some agency or business relocations which need to be taken into account in the supporting business cases for these initiatives. For example, there is a limited amount of large vacant office space in most non-CBD markets, particularly in regional markets. Lease pre-commitments and joint ventures are some delivery methods that could underpin relocations, but they also may involve relatively high costs to Government in some locations.

In the past, regional relocations have also sometimes resulted in high staff turnover with the consequent loss of productivity, corporate knowledge and added costs from redundancy and recruitment. These impacts are likely to be higher with relocations to regional centres compared with other Sydney metropolitan centres.

As noted in some submissions, there are opportunities for Government to be more creative and consider alternative models for bringing government business functions to regional locations. Options suggested by submissions include: devolving more services to Local Governments, establishing multi-departmental teleworking hubs in outer metropolitan or regional NSW to capitalise on advances in technology, as well as other forms of co-located service delivery such as one-stop-shops.

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[10] NSW Business Council, Coffs Harbour Business Chamber, various Local Government Areas, Country Women's Association (CWA) NSW and Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA).

Stakeholders support enhanced agency relocation planning in cooperation with local communities that must take responsibility for identifying and competitively marketing their strengths and needs to attract the identified skilled workforce and agencies they want.[11]

Provided these initiatives are implemented efficiently and with a clear understanding of the 'best fit' with regional communities, there are potential benefits for regional NSW in that they can:

– boost regional centres as competitive cities that drive the regional economy by maximising technological advances, investing in hard and soft infrastructure, and attracting other businesses;

– build the capacity of sub-regional towns and make them more connected to regional centres and metropolitan Sydney; and

– possibly strengthen rural or remote areas with a satellite relationship to a major regional centre.

Recommendations

15. The NSW Government should plan and implement a clear strategy to relocate appropriate public sector functions and jobs to regional NSW to stimulate regional economic development and support regional involvement in decision-making.

16. The NSW Government should underpin the relocation of government business units and functions with strong business cases that match community needs and prospects for growth with regional servicing capacity and government functions. This will improve the prospects and sustainability of these relocations.

17. The NSW Government should consider not only whole agency relocations but partial agency and co-location of services and discrete core business functions that demonstrate a natural fit with the communities in regional locations.

18. State Owned Corporations, functions and jobs are also potential candidates for relocation to regional NSW and the Government should include these entities in its broader policy considerations on decentralisation.

Other issues

A number of submissions raised issues which fall beyond the scope of this review, but are nevertheless worthy of further consideration by the Government.

For example, many submissions raised the cost of doing business and approval pathways in regional locations as impediments to economic development.

Numerous stakeholders raised the issue of the competitive disadvantage for businesses operating in regions bordering Victoria and Queensland due to payroll tax differentials between states and called on the Government to consider a number of ways of addressing this.

The cost of electricity provision to regional users was a specific matter identified by several submissions. Despite reform and rationalisation of the energy provider market, many regional businesses feel that these costs remain higher than for competitors located in metropolitan areas.

More broadly, reliable and affordable essential services are key to ensuring sustainable growth and attracting businesses, skilled professionals and their families to regional NSW.

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[11] Armidale Dumaresq Council, Bega Valley Shire Council, Goulburn Mulwaree Shire Council, Ballina Shire Council, Country Women's Association (CWA) NSW, Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA).

The approvals process for major projects was raised as an issue that impacts particularly on major investors. Delays and the complexity of approvals can prove to be prohibitively costly and can act as a disincentive to investment in regional NSW. It is therefore suggested that the establishment of a Coordinator General role with specific mandate to advise and liaise with industry, all levels of government and regional stakeholders on major projects be considered by the NSW Government

It is further recommended that the Government refer a number of issues raised which were outside the Taskforce's Terms of Reference to portfolio ministers for further consideration. These include specific matters in relation to:

– water security;
– housing;
– planning;
– transport; and
– workers' compensation insurance costs.

Recommendations

19. The NSW Government should further examine the following issues that fall beyond the scope of this review but still impact on regional NSW and are of relevance to the broader regional economic development objectives of the Decade of Decentralisation strategy:

– Potentially reduce cross border competitive disadvantage by reducing government charges such as licence fees and Workers Compensation premiums, and introducing a differential payroll tax threshold in areas where NSW business is at a demonstrable disadvantage compared to businesses in Victoria and Queensland.

– Examine the options for making electricity supply costs in regional NSW comparable to the cost of supply in Sydney and other well serviced metropolitan areas.

– The NSW Government establish a Coordinator General role to expedite the planning and approvals processes for the development of major projects in regional NSW.

– Examine opportunities for maximising online education in secondary, vocational and tertiary education in regional NSW.

Conclusion

The Taskforce considers that there are three clear objectives of the Decade of Decentralisation strategy:
1. to support the development and sustainability of regional economies and communities;
2. to attract investment and skills from metropolitan Sydney to regional NSW; and
3. to increase the opportunities for local communities in regional NSW to participate in Government decision-making.

The Decade of Decentralisation strategy is a significant initiative for supporting regional NSW and building sustainable regional economies and communities.

There are, however, a number of ways in which this effort can be better focused and enhanced. This report is intended to guide the Government in delivering programs and policies that can deliver better outcomes for regional communities.

Working in partnership with local communities, Government can put in place the initiatives that will increase the vitality of regional communities and open up opportunities for growth and a more prosperous future.

Appendices

Terms of Reference

NSW Decentralisation Taskforce

By March 2013 the NSW Decentralisation Taskforce will provide a report to the Deputy Premier and the NSW Government which will provide advice on the Decade of Decentralisation Strategy and associated policies and programs including:

1. Regional Relocation Grant
2. Jobs Action Plan (regional component)
3. Restart NSW (regional component)
4. Resources for the Regions
5. Government agency relocations

In giving effect to the above, the Taskforce will:

1. Consult with stakeholders including, but not limited to, the Association of Mining Related Councils; Country Women's Association – NSW; Evocities; Foundation for Regional Development; NSW Business Chambers; NSW Farmers Association; NSW Local Government and Shires Associations.

2. Examine other relevant review processes which have been, or are being, undertaken at the local, State and Commonwealth levels in relation to these issues.

3. Examine how existing Government facilities in regions can be better leveraged to advantage regional communities and regional based businesses.

Taskforce Members

The membership of the Taskforce is as follows:
1. The Hon. Richard Torbay MP, Member for Northern Tablelands (Chair – resigned 20 March 2013)
2. Mr Greg Aplin MP, Member for Albury
3. Mr Craig Baumann MP, Member for Port Stephens
4. The Hon. Thomas George MP, Member for Lismore (Chair)
5. Mr Paul Toole MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Deputy Premier

Consultation Process

On 18 January 2013 The Hon. Andrew Stoner MP, Deputy Premier and The Hon. Richard Torbay MP, Taskforce Chair called for formal submissions to be made on the NSW Government's *Have Your Say* consultation hub. Apart from the detailed information on the *Have Your Say* website and NSW Trade and Investment website, the Taskforce used media releases, formal letters, individual Taskforce member's local media columns and newsletters, and follow up emails to target regional peak industry bodies, regional organisations, and community organisations for their comments on the NSW Government's decentralisation efforts to date. The views of individuals and other interested parties were also welcomed. The Taskforce also held media conferences with local print, radio and television in both Tamworth and Albury.

At close of business as at 8 March 2013, the Taskforce had received 67 formal submissions.

The range of contributors submitting their comments on the Decade of Decentralisation included: peak industry bodies such as the NSW Business Chamber, peak regional organisations such as several Regional Development Australia bodies (RDAs) and several Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCs), individual Councils and Shires, special interest groups such as the Association of Mining Related Councils, political parties, individuals, Evocities, and more.

The Taskforce held a series of targeted consultation sessions during February and March 2013, starting in Tamworth on Wednesday 13 February 2013 and ending in Albury on Wednesday 6 March 2013. There were also three consultation sessions held in Sydney on 18, 25 and 28 February 2013. Meetings were held with 30 stakeholders representing regional peak industry bodies, regional organisations, business stakeholders, local and peak community organisations, specific interest groups, individuals, Local Government and State Government agencies. Stakeholders included the Association of Mining Related Councils, Country Women's Association NSW, NSW Business Chamber, NSW Farmers, and the NSW Local Government and Shires Association.

Stakeholders invited to make submissions

Direct communication was made to the following stakeholders seeking submissions

1	Stuart Murdoch – Regional Services Manager	NSW Farmers
2	Emily Colless - Regional Services Manager	NSW Farmers
3	Darren Greentree - Regional Services Manager	NSW Farmers
4	Alix McFarland - Regional Services Manager	NSW Farmers
5	Michael Burt - Regional Services Manager	NSW Farmers
6	Dave Banham - Regional Services Manager	NSW Farmers
7	Stephen Galilee – Chief Executive Officer	NSW Minerals Council
8	Kristen Keegan – Chief Executive Officer	Hunter Business Chamber
9	Mike Leask – Chief Executive Officer	Illawarra Business Chamber
10	Daniel Farmer – Regional Manager	Central Coast Business Chamber
11	Paul Cox – Regional Manager	Central West Orana Region – NSW Business Chamber
12	Kellon Beard – Regional Manager	Mid North Coast NSW Business Chamber
13	Ben Foley – Regional Manager	Murray-Riverina NSW Business Chamber
14	Kellon Beard – Regional Manager	New England North West NSW Business Chamber
15	John Murray – Regional Manager	Northern Rivers NSW Business Chamber
16	Michelle Caruso – Regional Manager	Sydney South West Business Chamber
17	Geoff Starr – Regional Manager	Sydney North West – NSW Business Chamber
18	Paul Jamieson	Mandurah Hunter Indigenous Business Chambers Inc
19	Ken Corbett – Chairman	Tourism Industry Council NSW
20	Andrew Jeffries Executive Officer	Tourism Industry Council NSW
21	James Shearer – Chief Executive Officer	Blue Mountains Tourism Ltd
22	Robyn Abernethy	Central Coast Tourism
23	Lucy White – Executive Officer	Central NSW Tourism
24	Sheridan Ferrier – Executive Officer	Tourism Hunter Inc
25	Graham Perry – Chief Executive Officer	Inland NSW Tourism
26	Sarah Anderson – Executive Officer	Lord Howe Island Tourism Association
27	Mark Francis – Executive Officer	Murray Regional Tourism Board
28	Linda Tillman – Executive Officer	Riverina Regional Tourism
29	Peter Sheppard – Chief Executive Officer	Tourism Snowy Mountains
30	Tom Phillips – Executive Officer	South Coast Regional Tourism Organisation
31	Bill Gillooly AM – Secretary-General	Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires
32	Cr Doug Eaton – Chair	Central Coast Regional Organisation of Councils (CCROC)
33	Jennifer Bennett – Executive Officer	Central NSW Councils (CENTROC)
34	Roger Stephan – Chief Executive Officer	Hunter Councils Group
35	Christine Winning – Executive Officer	Macarthur Regional Organisation of Councils
36	Cr Jan McWilliams – Chair	Mid North Coast Group of Councils
37	Stephen Bartlett – Executive Officer	Namoi Regional Organisation of Councils
38	Cr Maria Woods – Chair	New England Local Government Group
39	Ann Lewis – Executive Officer	Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils
40	Carolynne James – Executive Officer	Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
41	Belinda Barlow – Executive Officer	Orana Regional Organisation of Councils
42	Julie Briggs – Executive Officer	Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils
43	Ray Stubbs – Executive Officer	Riverina and Murray Regional Organisation of Councils
44	Ben Taylor – Executive Director	Shore Regional Organisation of Councils
45	Don Cooper – Executive Officer	South East Regional Organisation of Councils
46	Lesley Scarlett – Executive Director	Southern Councils Group

47	Cr John Faker – President	Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
48	Cr Wendy McMurdo – Chair	Sydney Coastal Councils Group Inc
49	Kerry Bartlett – Executive Director	Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
50	Cr Colleen Fuller – Chair	Association of Mining Related Councils
51	Margaret MacDonald-Hill – Executive Officer	Association of Mining Related Councils
52	Cr Karen McKeown – President	Australian Local Government Women's Association, NSW
53	Jocelyn Cameron – Secretary	Executive Committee – CWA NSW
54	Frank Pezzimenti	Rotary International – The Rotary Foundation
55	Rob Oerlemans – Executive Officer	Lions Club International
56	John Dawson	Central Coast – Regional Development Australia
57	Gaye Hart – Chair	Hunter - Regional Development Australia
58	Eddy De Gabriele	Illawarra – Regional Development Australia
59	Elizabeth McGregor – Acting Chair	Mid North Coast - Regional Development Australia
60	Ian Tiley	Northern Rivers - Regional Development Australia
61	Fiona Hatcher – Executive Officer	South Coast - Regional Development Australia
62	Sandy Morrison	Central West - Regional Development Australia
63	John Walkom	Orana - Regional Development Australia
64	Kym Fuller	Far West - Regional Development Australia
65	Peter Crowe – Acting Chair	Murray - Regional Development Australia
66	Tom Watson	Riverina - Regional Development Australia
67	Ken Prendergast	Southern Inland - Regional Development Australia
68	Mal Peters	Northern Inland - Regional Development Australia
69	Peter Bailey – Chief Executive Officer	Foundation for Regional Development Ltd
70	Heather Taylor	Albury Evocity
71	Tony Broomfield	Armidale Evocity
72	Rob Harrison	Tamworth Regional Council
73	Tracey Squire	Albury City Council
74	Gretchen Armitage	Bathurst Regional Council
75	Dirk Dowling	Dubbo City Council
76	Stephen Sykes	Orange City Council
77	Mark Crompton	Tamworth Regional Council
78	Peter Adams	Wagga Wagga City Council
79	Kevin Abey – Executive Officer	Evocities
80	Cr James Treloar – Evocities Spokesperson	C/of Tamworth Regional Council
81	Shane Burns – General Manager	Armidale Dumaresq Council
82	David Cushway – General Manager	Guyra Shire Council
83	Paul Henry – General Manager	Inverell Shire Council
84	Lotta Jackson – General Manager	Tenterfield Shire Council
85	Tom O'Connor - General Manager	Uralla Shire Council
86	Jack O'Hara - General Manager	Walcha Council
87	Hein Basson - General Manager	Glen Innes Severn Council
88	Max Eastcott – General Manager	Gwydir Shire Council
89	Rick Warren – General Manager	Coonamble Shire
90	Robert Campbell – General Manager	Gunnedah Shire Council
91	Robert Hunt – General Manager	Liverpool Plains Shire Council
92	David Aber – General Manager	Moree Plains Shire Council
93	Pat White – General Manager	Narrabri Shire Council
94	Rachel Sherman	Warialda and District Chamber of Commerce
95	Geoff Nye	Tenterfield Chamber of Commerce
96	Andrew Hope	Quirindi Chamber of Commerce, Tourism and Industry
97	Derek Lodge – Executive Officer	Gunnedah District Development Board

Written submissions received

No:	Name: Organisation or NSW agency	Name: Individual
1		Ian Rufus
2	Australian Stable Population Party	
3	Bingarra and District Vision 2020	
4		Steve Bowler
5		Joe Endean
6		David Abernathy
7	Bland Shire Council	
8		Jennifer Capel
9	Country Women's Association – Grafton Branch	
10	Central Tablelands Water County Council	
11		Siri Gamage
12	Mid-Western Regional Council	
13	Dubbo City Council/Evocities (see 47)	
14	Lismore City Council	
15	Narrandera Shire Council	
16	Combined Development Group	
17	Namoi Councils	
18	Country Women's Association – Wallangra Branch	
19		Tom Livanos
20	Young Shire Council	
21	Association of Mining Related Councils	
22	Bega Valley Shire Council	
23	Ballina Shire Council	
24	Parkes Shire Council	
25	MoveCorp Australia Pty Ltd	
26	Change Agent nb Pty Ltd	
27	Far West Community Legal Centre Inc	
28	Coonamble Shire Council	
29	Regional Development Australia (RDA) Far South Coast Inc	
30	Regional Development Australia (RDA) Southern Inland	
31	Tumut Shire Council	
32	Armidale Dumaresq City Council	
33	Albury City Council	
34	Goulburn Mulwaree Council	
35	Tumbarumba Shire Council	
36	Wollongong City Council	
37	Cowra Shire Council	
38	Lithgow City Council	
39	Regional Development Australia (RDA) Orana	
40	Evocities	
41	Eurobodalla Shire Council	
42	Australasian Railway Association	
43	Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise	
44	Bathurst Regional Council	
45	Regional Development Australia (RDA)	

	Hunter	
46	Regional Development Australia (RDA) Northern Rivers	
47	Dubbo City Council/Evocities (see 13)	
48	Tenterfield Shire Council	
49		Robyn Phillips
50	Junee Shire Council	
51	NSW Business Chamber	
52	Shoalhaven City Council	
53	CENTROC NSW Councils	
54	Coffs Harbour City Council	
55	NSW Minerals Council	
56	Regional Development Australia (RDA) Mid North Coast	
57	Local Government Association of NSW and Shires Association of NSW (LGSA)	
58	Regional Development Australia (RDA) Southern Inland	
59	Telstra	
60	Coffs Harbour Chamber of Commerce	
61	Christian Democratic Party	
62		Isabel Strutts
63	Hunter Chamber of Commerce	
64	Riverina and Murray Regional Organisation of Councils (RAMROC)	
65	Tweed Shire Council	
66	Regional Development Australia (RDA) Riverina	
67	Volunteer Fire Fighters Association (VFFA)	

Stakeholders participating in consultation meetings

Date	Place	Stakeholder
13 Feb 2013	Tamworth	Guyra Shire Council (New England Councils) • Cr Hans Heitbrink (Mayor) • David Cushway (General Manager)
13 Feb 2013	Tamworth	Association of Mining Related Councils • Don Tydd (Executive Officer)
13 Feb 2013	Tamworth	Namoi Councils • Cr Col Murray (Mayor – Tamworth Regional Council and Chair – Namoi Councils)
13 Feb 2013	Tamworth	CWA Montella Group • Bev Apery • Ann Marr • Michelle Eggins • Wendy Marsh
13 Feb 2013	Tamworth	Tamworth Business Chamber • Tim Coates (President) • Lorraine Boyce (Secretary) • Marjolyn Thomas (Executive Officer)
13 Feb 2013	Tamworth	Evocities • Kevin Abbey (Executive Officer) • Cr James Treloar (Evocities Spokesperson)
18 Feb 2013	Sydney	NSW Trade and Investment • Tony Sansom (Regional Director, Hunter – Central Coast) • Malcolm St Hill (Business Development Manager)
18 Feb 2013	Sydney	Infrastructure NSW • Jenny Davis (Executive Director)
18 Feb 2013	Sydney	Office of State Revenue (OSR) • Gary Edgenton (Manager Regional Office) • Rhonda Kable (Assistant Director Operations)
18 Feb 2013	Sydney	NSW Treasury • Bruce Freeland (Director – Revenue and Inter-Governmental Strategy Branch)
18 Feb 2013	Sydney	RDA Hunter • Todd Williams (Executive Officer)
18 Feb 2013	Sydney	RDAC • John Tate (Deputy Chair)
25 Feb 2013	Sydney	Local Government Association of NSW and the Shires Association of NSW (LGSA) • Shaun McBride (Senior Strategy Manager – Finance, Infrastructure and Planning)
25 Feb 2013	Sydney	Australian Local Government Women's Association, NSW Branch Inc (ALGWA) • Julie Griffiths (President)
25 Feb 2013	Sydney	Young Shire Council • Stuart Freudenstein (Mayor) • Peter Vlatko (General Manager) • Debbie Evans (Economic Development Officer)
25 Feb 2013	Sydney	Country Women's Association NSW (CWA NSW) • Elaine Armstrong (President) • Donna Wilkins (Executive Officer) • Colleen Fuller (Gunnedah CWA)
28 Feb 2013	Sydney	NSW Minerals Council • Stephen Galilee (Chief Executive Officer)

28 Feb 2013	Sydney	NSW Business Chamber • Craig Milton (Policy Advisor) • Luke Aitken (Senior Manager Policy)
28 Feb 2013	Sydney	NSW Tourism Industry Council • Andrew Jefferies (Executive Officer) • Ken Corbett (Chair)
28 Feb 2013	Sydney	Dubbo City Council • Cr Mathew Dickerson (Mayor) • Dirk Dowling (Manager Economic Development)
28 Feb 2013	Sydney	Foundation for Regional Development • Peter Bailey (Chief Executive Officer)
28 Feb 2013	Sydney	NSW Farmers • Angus Gidley-Baird (Policy Director – Economics and Rural Affairs)
6 Mar 2013	Albury	RAMROC • Michael Keys (A/General Manager – Albury City Council and Executive Officer – RAMROC)
6 Mar 2013	Albury	Albury City Council • Tracey Squire (Manager Economic Development and Tourism)
6 Mar 2013	Albury	Wagga Wagga City Council • Rod Kendall (Mayor) • Dr Peter Adams (Director Commercial and Economic Development)
6 Mar 2013	Albury	Ettamogah Rail Hub • Col Rees (Owner) • Phil Clements (General Manager)
6 Mar 2013	Albury	Bland Shire Council • Jeff Stien (Senior Economic Development and Tourism)
6 Mar 2013	Albury	NSW Business Chamber • Ben Foley (Regional Manager) • Paul Goonan (Regional President)
6 Mar 2013	Albury	Norske Skog • Ernie Hacker (Mill Manager) • Michael Machin (Business Development Manager)
6 Mar 2013	Albury	RSM Bird Cameron • Andrew K Graham FCA (Director – National Head of Business Solutions)
6 Mar 2013	Albury	WHK (Accountants, Business and Wealth Advisory Specialists) • Chris Penny (Principal)
6 Mar 2013	Albury	Albury Northside Business Chamber • David Koschitzke (Chair) • Scott Mann