



Relocation of Government Bodies to Regional Areas

Senate Inquiry

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PO Box 607 Hamilton NSW 2303
91 Parry Street, Newcastle West 2302
P: 4969 9600 | F: 4969 9620

info@hunterbusinesschamber.com.au
www.hunterbusinesschamber.com.au

Introduction

The Hunter Business Chamber is the largest regional business chamber in Australia and was established in 1886. The Chamber independently represents almost 2,000 member organisations to all levels of government and is the peak industry association in the region, reflecting the interests of all business sectors.

The Hunter Business Chamber works as an integral part of the NSW Business Chamber network and represents business at local, state and federal level to advocate for an improved operational climate for businesses in this region.

The Hunter is well recognised as the home to Australia's most resilient and diverse regional economy. The Hunter region in NSW just north of Sydney covers over 31,000 square kilometres and has over 660,000 people or 9% of the state's population.

An unparalleled cross section of industry calls the Hunter region home. Newcastle is the eighth largest city in Australia and is renowned for being the world's largest coal export port. The contribution to the region, state and nation from the port's operation has grown exponentially over the past ten years.

Newcastle, as the second largest city of NSW and the capital of the Hunter, has the ability to be a world class city, given its coastal location and close connections to the resource engine room of the Hunter Valley. A range of complementary and emerging industries, such as renewable energy technologies, medical research, the defence industry, tourism and the digital economy also have a bright future with the right platform for growth in place.

Key points

The Chamber made submission to the 2013 Decade of Decentralisation Strategy stating in part: *"The Hunter Business Chamber supports the notion that key regional centres can provide attractive and viable options for the relocation of certain government departments. The Chamber has recognised that the Hunter Region has benefited from this type of initiative in the past.*

Existing urban centres across the Hunter provide good amenity and have a clear ability to accommodate further growth from both private enterprise and public agencies."

The Hunter has continued to grow since this time and is well placed to accommodate further growth boasting the following amenity:

- Strong and diversified property market with a vibrant regional capital (Newcastle) supported by office markets in other regional centres including; Maitland, Raymond Terrace and Charlestown.
- Proven track record in accommodating and sustaining government agencies and operations that have been either relocated to or grown organically in the region.

- Highly connected economy with strong transport links (M1, regional airport, national rail links) and locally supported state transport network (buses, train, ferry and light rail under construction).
- Digitally connected with a range of centres boasting NBN capability.
- Diversified, loyal and large workforce supported by a range of world class education, training and research facilities including; the University of Newcastle, Hunter TAFE, John Hunter Hospital (teaching hospital), Hunter Medical Research Institute and Newcastle Institute of Energy and Resources.
- A strong primary and high school network including state selective schools across academic excellence, sports and performing arts (only fully selective performing arts school outside of Sydney).
- Relatively stable and diversified property market which can facilitate staff relocation in and economically viable and sustainable manner across a wide variety of housing styles and submarkets, and a
- Business profile spread across small, medium and large global businesses capable of supporting the commercial needs of business based in the region and further afield.

Conclusion

The Chamber recognizes that regionally based government bodies have the ability to contribute substantially to regional and state economic performance and would welcome any further engagement regarding this inquiry.

Contact

For further information please contact:

Anita Hugo

Policy & Public Affairs Manager

02 4969 9600

info@hunterbusinesschamber.com.au