



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

**Australian Pesticides and
Veterinary Medicines Authority**

SPEECH

Thursday, 22 June 2017

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Brodtmann, Gai, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (10:06): Earlier this month, the Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee handed down its report into the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability (Location of Corporate Commonwealth Entities) Order 2016. This is the order that would give effect to the relocation of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority from Canberra to Armidale. The key recommendation coming out of the Senate committee report is that the order be revoked—yes, that the order be revoked. The report says:

The committee considers this government policy order is deficient in a number of ... areas. This order is opposed by stakeholders, the agricultural sector, and the regulator itself on the basis that it is 'all cost and no benefit'. Tellingly, the government's own cost-benefit analysis reached the same conclusion, finding no strategic or other benefits to the move.

'No strategic or other benefits to the move'. It continues:

This analysis also found that the benefit to Armidale from the move would be less than the economic loss to Canberra from losing the agency.

This report confirms again the Deputy Prime Minister's blatant and shameless pork-barrelling effort to retain his seat at the last election. The report says:

It appears that no other location was ever under serious consideration by the government. The committee received no evidence that other regions were consulted or provided with the opportunity to compete for the APVMA. Toowoomba, raised as an option in the Deputy Prime Minister's letter to the CEO of the APVMA, and preferred by the CEO in her reply, appears to have been dismissed very early.

I wonder why! It continues:

At the Canberra hearing, both the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the APVMA admitted that the Deputy Prime Minister did not request nor did they provide any information or analysis about the unsuitability of Toowoomba or the benefits that Armidale held over Toowoomba.

The lack of clarity regarding the decision-making process and the absence of a transparent selection process leads the committee to conclude that there is only one obvious driver for the decision, and that is political self-interest.

This is hardly a surprising outcome because the order is all cost, and the only benefit it delivers is the benefit to the Deputy Prime Minister's re-election prospects.

The Senate committee's report is just further proof that the Turnbull government's argument for decentralisation is a thought bubble with no substance. How many of the 38 per cent of government agencies here in Canberra does the Turnbull government want to get out of Canberra? How many thousands of public servants do you want to move from Canberra? Do you really want to decimate Canberra? Is that the objective here? Do you really want to fly in the face of Sir Robert Menzies's legacy? This report is damning.