

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

From: Regional Development Australia Pilbara

‘Economic Development’ is the process of expanding the size of the economy so that greater wealth flows to the community. It is usually measured in terms of increases in jobs and income, but also includes improvements in livelihoods that encompass the quality of life (education, health, lifestyle, culture and environment) and overall community wellbeing.¹

Economic development requires actions and making choices based on a shared understanding by the stakeholders on the benefits and outcomes.

Economic development cascades down from National economic policies and strategies (such as on foreign direct investment, trade agreements, employment legislation, taxation etc) to State policies and actions (such as infrastructure investment, education and health) to Local Government (such as Lobbying, Business Attraction, Engendering Partnerships, Planning, Research, and Land Development).

For those working in the regions, a good start is to focus on how the agents of change (government, the mining companies, community groups and others) can effectively invest in community to help build local capacity. This requires a holistic approach and it is equally important to understand how the cities and the regions interact.

With particular reference to the Pilbara - mining towns and regions are unique: they require different economic development approaches from other regional communities. Even where mining is the economic driver, much of the wealth is often not retained locally and investment in community is sometimes lacking.

The Pilbara has a number of broad economic objectives:

- Increase the population to over 140,000 by 2035;

¹ Adapted From: Lennon. S, *Leveraging Economic Sustainability and Prosperity from Resources*, Economic Development – The Quarterly Journal of Economic Development Australia, Summer 2013 Vol.6. No. 1

- Build the population of Karratha and Port Hedland into cities of 50,000 people, and Newman to 15,000, by 2035, with other Pilbara towns growing into more attractive, sustainable local communities;
- Broaden the economic base through the promotion, fostering and growth of new industries and businesses;
- Build upon and add value to the strengths of the foundational industry to deepen regional economic activity; this can include physical value adding to raw materials, increased capture of upstream supply chains expenditure in the region or innovative use of existing infrastructure and economic capacity; and
- Investment in activities, infrastructure, facilities and services that catalyse and enable the private sector and the community to grow and prosper in order to make the Pilbara an attractive place to live, work, invest and visit.

In this context, there is a vital need to have a sustainable and consistent participation by Federal Government agencies in the regional locations of Australia such as the Pilbara. The Pilbara has benefitted from considerable infrastructural and social investment from the WA Royalties for Region programme, resulting in cities and towns offering a range of education, health and recreational facilities that were previously in short supply.

The City of Karratha in particular has been transformed into a modern and vibrant urban environment with a new townscape, excellent recreational centre, a modern health precinct under construction and a variety of modern education facilities. There are also new modern housing offerings, an international grade airport and of course its proximity to Australia's major trading partners.

What is missing is a substantial government presence that could facilitate the economic diversification discussed above. Given that not only is the Pilbara the most important export region for Australia but also is in the throes of developing its agricultural hinterland, it would be a timely signal of the confidence and trust in its development if Federal agencies placed it high on their list of potential sites for relocation.

