

**Submission
No 43**

**INQUIRY INTO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
IN CENTRAL WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Pastoralists' Association of West Darling

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*Pastoralists' Association
of West Darling*

INDUSTRIAL UNION OF EMPLOYERS

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Submission

Inquiry into economic and social development in central western NSW

The Pastoralists' Association of West Darling (PAWD) an agri-political lobby organization which has been looking after the interests of landholders in the Western Division of NSW for over 104 years. PAWD members are principally involved in the production of wool, sheep cattle and goats. Bearing this background in mind, we make the following submission to the Standing Committee on State Development.

(a) The provision of health, education and cultural facilities.

It should be noted by the Standing Committee that non-government organizations, such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service, are independently building their capacity to deliver health services to remote Australia, and as such are worthy of support from Government.

(b) The reasons for population decline or growth in different areas.

Climate is the major driver of employment in agriculture in the Western Division, which obviously directly affects local population trends. The 2001-2009 drought reduced employment opportunities for rural workers, which in many cases have been lost permanently to the mining industry. Job vacancies that have opened up with the return of favorable seasons are not easily filled.

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Problems with the export trade in kangaroo meat have severely reduced the commercial take of kangaroos in recent years. The number of licensed kangaroo harvesters in NSW has halved in the past 12 months, and several kangaroo processing facilities have closed.

The taking of kangaroos for skins only has been banned since 1996, and PAWD is strongly in favor of having this ban lifted on social, economic and environmental grounds.

(c) The adequacy of transport and road infrastructure.

Most of the main roads in the Western Division are dirt, and their closure following rain seriously affects landholder's capacity to carry out their business activities. Deliveries of mail, fuel and food, as well as livestock transport have been interrupted for long periods of time by wet weather in the past 18 months, as neglected roads hold water for long periods of time. In some cases, landholders have foregone opportunities to benefit from premiums available in the marketplace as road conditions simply eliminate the possibility of delivering product at the most opportune time. Poor road conditions increase travel time for livestock, raising issues of animal welfare and fatigue management for drivers.

In addition to the needs of the pastoral industry, the unsealed road network is equally important to mining and tourism. The PAWD is hopeful that stakeholders from these sectors will also raise road conditions with the Standing Committee.

PAWD is strongly in favour of bituminising the remaining dirt sections of the Silver City Highway and the Cobb Highway, as well as increasing funding to the Roads and Traffic Authority to allow for overdue repairs to dirt roads in the region.

PAWD is working with other stakeholders to construct livestock spelling yards in Broken Hill, which has been without stockyards for over 8 years. Transport operators, pastoralists and stock agents need somewhere to unload stock when roads are closed. The movement of stock through the area was over 250,000 head of sheep and 30,000 head of cattle in one calendar year, any assistance in this matter would be appreciated.

(d) Ways to encourage development of local enterprises and the potential of the region overall.

Continuing to provide funding for Catchment Management Authorities is an excellent way for Government to encourage landholders to improve their enterprise, whilst at the same time generating favourable social and environmental outcomes. Landholders who make the most of opportunities to improve their businesses generate economic activity and local jobs, and have a greater capacity to withstand downturns in business and seasonal conditions alike.

PAWD recommends an increase in funding for Catchment Management Authorities for on ground works.

(e) The comparative level of government business activity located within the region.

The Pastoral Industry has seen a steady decline in government services related to Agriculture over the last ten years. Broken Hill in particular has lost offices dedicated exclusively to agriculture, with the last remaining DPI staff member now sharing office space with other departments and expected to do the job of four people. Agriculture appears to be chronically understaffed and underfunded. This sort of decentralisation may be good on paper but does very little for small communities who gain value from government departments through staff which bring families and growth to the district.

PAWD recommends that the Standing Committee reviews the number of government services removed from remote area service centres over the past decade, with a view to reinstating important services.

(f) Methodologies for local government to collectively cooperate to achieve increased infrastructure funding and economic growth.

PAWD would like to see stakeholders working cooperatively to achieve greater infrastructure funding which would lead to economic growth. As a non-government organization, PAWD can only suggest that local government representatives meet face-to-face to discuss common issues, as in-person interaction is the best way to achieve productive outcomes in a timely manner. More resources need to be put into impact statements taking into account the level of commodities produced in the area and the number of users of infrastructure which are not residents.

(g) Any other factor restricting economic and social development in central western New South Wales.

Land tenure for Western Lands Leaseholders; The security of tenure for holders of Western Lands Leases has come into question as a result of the Silverton Wind Farm negotiations and the resumption of State Forest to create new National Parks. Uncertainty will discourage investment in agriculture on Western Lands Leases. Landholders need to have confidence that their leases cannot be resumed without good cause or adequate compensation.

Compiled by:

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