

**Submission  
No 9**

## **INQUIRY INTO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND A GLOBAL SYDNEY**

**Organisation:** Evocities

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The NSW Legislative Council's  
Standing Committee on State  
Development

# Inquiry Into Regional Development and a Global Sydney

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1 June 2017*



  
evocities  
REGIONAL CITY LIVING

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## 1. Terms of Reference

The NSW Legislative Council's Standing Committee on State Development is to inquire into and report on how Sydney's growing prominence as a global city enhances regional development in New South Wales currently, and in particular:

1. ensuring the regions benefit from the expansion of international trade, infrastructure, employment, tourism, innovation and research in the greater Sydney region
2. identify the sectors of the economy that can provide the greatest opportunities for regional development, including forecasts for jobs growth
3. how collaboration between levels of government, non-government and private sectors can assist the regions to benefit from Sydney's global position, and
4. any other related matter.

## 2. Introduction

The Evocities of Albury, Armidale, Bathurst, Dubbo, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga are pleased to provide an overview of their resident attraction initiative in response to the inquiry into how Sydney's growing prominence as a global city can enhance regional development in New South Wales. Together with an outline of the Evocities project and how the program actively contributes to the growth and development of six of the largest regional capitals, this report will also detail how a collaborative approach to investment in regional NSW will help the regions benefit from Sydney's enhanced position as a global city.

## 3. Background

Evocities marketing campaign and program of activities offers a proven formula to assist the NSW Government in managing Sydney's population growth and the increased pressure this places on public infrastructure, while also driving the sustainable growth and development in regional NSW.

Evocities is one of the most successful regional marketing campaigns undertaken in Australia, with over 2,995 families having relocated to date. It has attracted significant market penetration and delivered some fantastic key outcomes for all the cities involved. Indirectly, the Evocities project has raised the credibility of NSW inland regional cities with a range of different stakeholders and provides the cities with a collaborative model to achieve greater return on marketing investment.

Since the campaign launch, over 6,000 relocation enquiries have been generated via the Evocities website, the central online portal for the campaign. The Evocities website ([www.evocities.com.au](http://www.evocities.com.au)) is supported by an Evocities branded employment website ([www.evojobs.com.au](http://www.evojobs.com.au)).

Over the past seven years the Evojobs website has advertised over 33,000 local jobs, attracting over 1.9 million visits to the site. The Evojobs website is also utilised by local employers from the six cities to attract highly qualified candidates to their organisations and is equally useful in supporting population retention, with locals seeking employment or career changes accessing the site.

#### 4. Regional Development and Global Sydney

While Sydney's growing prominence as a global city creates potential for the city and state, it also raises many concerns for a city which is already facing infrastructure pressures caused by a rapidly increasing population. The Evocities program over the past seven years has been offering a sound approach to assisting the NSW Government in managing Sydney's population growth, by actively driving a population shift from capital cities to regional NSW, aiding the creation of skilled labour force, increasing workforce diversity and providing greater choice for investors and employees.

The Regional Australia Institute has recently released a report stating for every 100,000 Australians who choose to live in growing cities, rather than our big five capitals, an additional \$50 billion will be released into the economy over 30 years in reduced congestion costs<sup>1</sup>, further more it has been estimated that in Sydney congestion will cost \$8 billion by 2020 if nothing is done<sup>2</sup>. As such, if Sydney's prominence as a global city is to grow the NSW Government must consider initiatives like Evocities and invest in regional NSW by implementing policies which incentivise business to move to or invest in these regional growth areas.

By inspiring people and investors to relocate to regional capitals, you are not only reducing infrastructure pressure on Sydney, but also improving the cost of doing business and positively impacting on the lifestyle of individuals and families. By driving investment in regional cities you are

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<sup>1</sup> J. Archer, Regional Australia Institute, Great Small Cities, <http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/2016/10/economic-growth-requires-connected-regional-cities-not-factory-floors/>, Accessed 21 October 2016

<sup>2</sup> NSW Government, Building Infrastructure, <https://www.nsw.gov.au/premiers-priorities-list/building-infrastructure>, Accessed 21 October 2016.

adding to the cultural vibrancy of regional NSW, which in turn contributes to the mental and physical wellbeing of residents and ultimately leads to productivity gains and improvements.

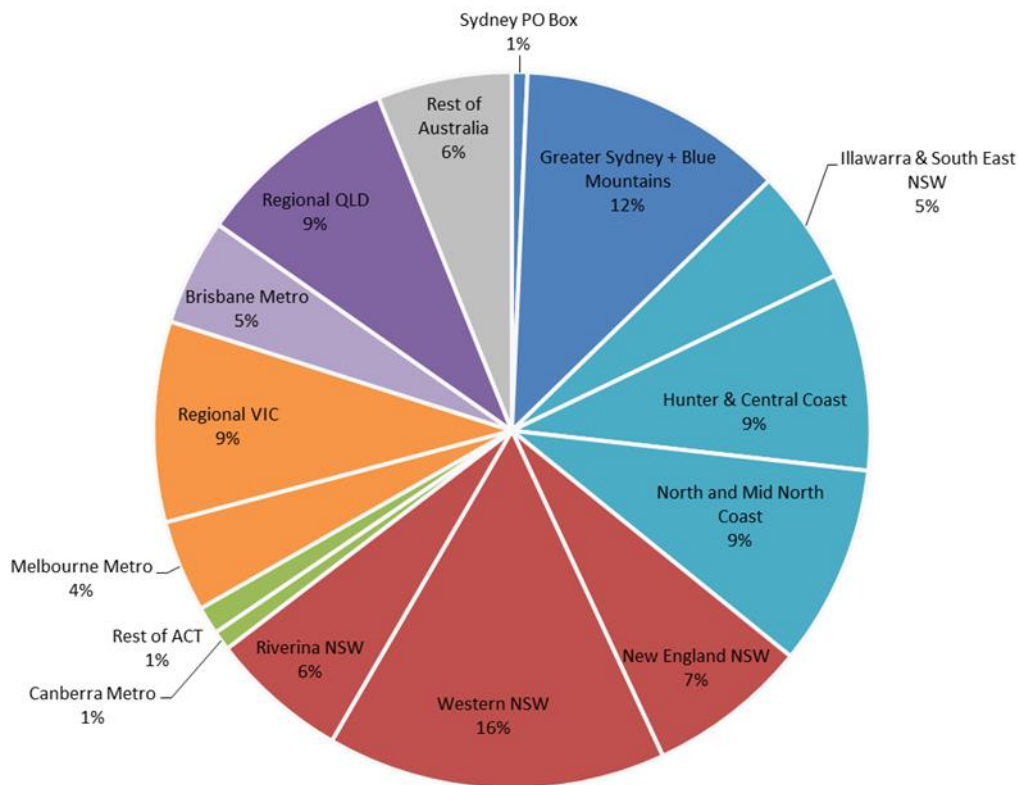
The core purpose of the Evocities campaign is to educate metropolitan residents about what regional NSW has to offer and combating long held misconceptions about regional city living. Evocities recognises that people are more likely to make the move if they understand that the services offered within regional capitals are similar to those offered in a capital city. As indicated by research conducted by Evocities<sup>3</sup>, relocators look for a critical mass of services and community vibrancy linked to population and progress. In turn, investing firms will look for the presence of quality, multi-skilled people and education systems as part of their investment decisions.

Data also supports the idea that once residents experience life in a regional city they are more likely to remain within the region rather than relocate to metropolitan areas. According to the Australia Post Movers Data, of those residents who are moving out of the Evocities, the majority are choosing to remain within regional NSW. Figure 1.0 shows which regions the residents are relocating to. From this graph you can see that the majority of residents (29%) leaving the Evocities are choosing to stay within regional NSW, another 23% are moving to coastal areas, while only 13% are relocating to Sydney.

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Sturt University, Awareness & Perceptions of Regional NSW and Attitudes Towards Relocation, March 2012

### Where Evocity Residents Are Relocating To



The OECD has recently found that countries with a greater network of cities or polycentric urban systems, have higher per capita GDP and are more likely to have a buoyant economy which can resist major negative economic or environmental impacts<sup>4</sup>. To create these cities and to have the regions benefit from the expansion of international trade, infrastructure employment, tourism, innovation and research in the greater Sydney region the NSW Governments aim must be to actively grow the regions and support infrastructure requirements in order to allow this to happen. If the regions can attract quality businesses, then they can attract the human capital necessary to lead successful organisations.

By creating a positive employment environment and gaining an influx of new workers a cultural change will emerge in the cities. Cultural change and diversity encourages the development of new value-adding sectors to the regions, which create facilities to improve the lifestyle of local residents, ensuring population retention, as well as increasing attractions to build the tourism market.

Along with incentivising business the NSW Government also needs to ensure connectivity to the regions is made a priority, including hard infrastructure; quality roads, to help to overcome the issue of distance, as well as mobile towers and the NBN network to provide technological connectivity, for business and individuals.

<sup>4</sup> Regional Australia Institute, Deal or No Deal – *Bringing Small Cities into the National Cities Agenda*, April 2016 p.6

## 5. Regional Development and Jobs Growth

The Evocities are self-sufficient, vibrant cities with the economic capacity and business diversity to support a host of vibrant and dynamic industries. Currently the largest industries by employment in the Evocities include, Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail and Education and Training; accounting for almost 49,000 jobs<sup>5 6</sup>. It is these industries as well as Public Administration and Safety which have also shown the largest increase over the past five years.

The Evocities economies are diverse and well structured; they all support multiple industries which afford them the resilience against any major industry crashes. However, each city does have its own uniqueness whereby its locality or historic capabilities allow it to service some industries more efficiently than others. As a whole the Evocities have a combined population of over 285,000, with some cities servicing catchment areas up to three times their size, therefore service industries including superior health and education facilities are not only required but could also be supported and provide opportunity for major jobs growth.

Regional NSW, including the Evocities show a higher youth presence than the capital cities along with an ageing population<sup>7</sup> and therefore growth in Health Care and Education and Training would not only create opportunities for regional growth but also help to service current residents; enhancing population retention and relieving ongoing pressure on Sydney hospitals and universities.

## 6. Collaboration

The Evocities concept is unique in that it is not individual cities selling themselves, but, for the first time, six regional city councils working together. Each of the six cities has and continues to dedicate money and resources to funding the campaign. Previously, Evocities has also received funding from corporate sponsors, the NSW State Government and the Federal Government.

The combining of funds and resources means the PR, advertising / marketing and digital elements of the campaign, which focuses on the benefits of living in an Evocity, have far greater impact than a campaign run by individual cities on their own. The cities have also dedicated considerable resources to welcome and support new residents.

The Draft Central West and Orana Regional Plan, references the Evocities campaign as an initiative which has 'helped to lift median incomes, encourage business growth, increase tourism and grow

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<sup>5</sup> Profile ID "Employment By Industry (Total)", [economy.id.com.au](http://economy.id.com.au) (accessed 3 May, 2017)

<sup>6</sup> Remplan "Economic Profile", [economicprofile.com.au](http://economicprofile.com.au) (accessed 3 May, 2017)

<sup>7</sup> Regional Australia Institute, Deal or No Deal – *Bringing Small Cities into the National Cities Agenda*, April 2016



participation in community groups'<sup>8</sup> the Regional Plan also recognises the impact that both Federal and State Government support has had on the success of the campaign with increased funding and dedicated resources.

The Evocities project is the perfect example of how collaboration between levels of government can be successful and is necessary when working towards shared goals. The Evocities campaign reflects critical identification of regional priorities by local communities, Councils and regions, and proactive investment in those priorities. The continuing collaboration between the six cities has not only worked to enhance the impact of the marketing campaign, but also united the cities in presenting a single voice on matters of mutual interest and driving sustainable growth to each of their respective cities.

## 7. Conclusion

Evocities focus is population building because it is understood that progress is linked to population numbers and the human capital which accompanies it. Whilst the campaigns focus is on the six regional capitals the outputs flow through to the surrounding regions. Hence, if the regions are to truly benefit from Sydney's global position, the NSW Government needs to continue to collaborate with the regional capitals and local government; creating initiatives which complement campaigns like Evocities.

By creating incentives for Sydney based companies to relocate to regional areas, expanding public services, enhancing health, education, transport and communication facilities, the regional capitals suddenly become more marketable and campaigns like Evocities will have even greater success.

Long term if focus is placed on the right initiatives, regional NSW will not only continue to forge more resilient economies but become major players in a strong state and national economy.

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<sup>8</sup> NSW Government Planning and Environment, Draft Central West and Orana Regional Plan, April 2016, p.77