

HOW TO MAKE AUSTRALIA EFFICIENT

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Ron, your comments to The Hon. Tony Abbot and The Hon. Julie Bishop at our meeting stimulated my own thoughts on the issue. Please see below.

Imagine a huge conference room filled by public servants slaving away trying to save the world from the ravages of computer-predicted global warming. Can global climate be changed from a room in Canberra? No. This is surreal, pointless and inefficient. This room would not be smoke filled, use of robust language would result in counselling, participants would be drinking organic water and the non-synthetic carpets would be tofu stain-resistant. Meetings would finish five minutes before crib or knock off time. The term smoko would be banned.

Just think of how many folk would have to take stress leave after being employed for years to change the planet's climate only to discover that Nature does not obey Canberra's legislation. Why does a nation-bankrupting carbon tax only decrease global temperatures by 0.001°C by 2050? Can you imagine the consternation when bureaucrats finally learn that plants don't care whether their carbon dioxide food is from natural sources or derived from human activity? Carbon dioxide is carbon dioxide. To learn that plants just don't care could lead to an emotional breakdown followed by months of paid sick leave.

The greens, environmental activists, social engineers and bureaucrat advocates all want to change our way of life. Well so do I. My proposal does not take away your freedoms as theirs will, it actually would make your life easier and would save zillions. And my proposal is induced reality by decentralisation in order to make Australia more efficient. My decentralisation suggestions will work because bureaucrats would become part of the community they serve and would have a first hand understanding of the outcomes of their administration. If my decentralisation ideas did not work, it would not matter anyway because the bureaucracy would have been greatly reduced. Because many Australians live in the towns chosen for decentralisation, I can't think of any reason why bureaucrats would resign rather than relocate (unless, of course, they are very sensitive precious types). I suspect that there would be mass resignations from the public service. Thousands of private sector workers relocate each week so what's good for the goose is good for the gander. The only way to reduce the number of bureaucrats and to make the administration more efficient and in contact with reality is to move all the existing Federal government departments out of Canberra. Decentralisation would provide infrastructure where it is needed.

The sterling folk from **Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry** are concerned with eggs, fish, pigs, wine, cows, wool, grain, forests, horticulture, sugar, plant health

and biosecurity. None of these activities occur close to Canberra. A suitable place might be **Portland, Victoria**. It is a fishing town, an aluminium smelting centre and agricultural export port (mainly live sheep). It is close to the prime agricultural areas of western Victoria and moderately close to the Coonawarra wineries and plantation forests in South Australia. It is only the sugar industries that are not proximal. But they are not close to Canberra anyway. There are some wonderful scenic attractions in this part of Australia to be appreciated in time off. A weekend trip to the aluminium smelter would give a touch of reality about how the Australian economy needs large amounts of cheap energy to produce the taxation base for bureaucrats to put bread and wine on their tables. Maybe befriending an abalone fisherman would show how individuals lose jobs from decisions made by unknown bureaucratic faces out of contact with reality.

The most difficult placement is **Attorney-General's** portfolio. These folk administer the Federal police, administrative appeals, customs and border protection, native title, film classification and oodles of other really important things. Maybe a former penal colony like Norfolk Island is appropriate but for me the **Tiwi Islands, NT** is the pick place. This part of Australia is close to our northern neighbours hence they would be in the cauldron of borders, customs and native title. The port of entry into Australia could be the Tiwi Islands. This would solve congestion at SE Australian international airports. In those idle evening hours, maybe a few violent sexually explicit DVDs could be classified. Weekends could be spent watching the up and coming stars of the AFL, fishing, waiting for the next cyclone or just chilling out.

Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy is ideal for a rural town like **Wilcannia, NSW**. In the 19th Century, the broadband superhighway for Wilcannia and the far west of NSW was the Darling River. Remnants of the port facilities still exist, phones work most of the time, morning newspapers arrive in the afternoon and, if it were not for the repeater station, there would be no television or wireless. Each day, one bus goes east through town, another goes west. The pick up point is late at night at the one and only service station. A message could be passed as a result of leading by example: rural areas will not miss out on the latest communications. Offices could have a panoramic view of the dry Darling River and long-term employees would be able see the floods every 30 years. Workers might care to use their time off pig shooting, fishing, yabbing, noodling at White Cliffs or seeing the sights of Cobar or Louth, both only a short drive away (in outback mileage). A quiet weekend away from all the stress of Wilcannia can always be had at Emmdale.

There are certainly some places in Australia that could do with a bit of global warming. One of these is **Queenstown, Tasmania** where I enjoyed a white Christmas in the 1960s. To site **Climate Change and Energy Efficiency** in Queenstown would remind workers that a bit of global warming can do no harm and that there are some places where the sun does not shine enough for solar energy. Workers could walk over the hill to work from Gormaston (as folk did in the past) as part of energy efficiency leadership and they might think twice about siting inefficient wind farms in their own back yard to exploit the roaring forties. As part of leading by example, the Department of Climate Change and

Energy Efficiency in Queenstown would have no heating. Tasmania's employment is dependent upon cheap long-term reliable base-load energy, something that solar and wind cannot provide. Weekend activities could rotate around The Empire and sightseeing at Zeehan and Strahan. The odd lobster or two from Granville Harbour with a Tasmanian Pinot to enlarge the bureaucratic bulge would be a fringe benefit. Tullah and Rosebery are suggestions for a quiet private weekend if the stress of incessant bureaucratic toil becomes too much.

The ideal place for **Defence** is **Katherine, NT**. Some 5% of Australians live in 50% of the country, the north. Huge wealth is generated from northern Australian mining, beef and agricultural industries yet the infrastructure is third world. Try using a mobile phone. Try getting television reception. Try to drive from A to B in the wet. Try getting health care when it is needed. The productive parts of northern Australia have little or no defence. If Defence fanned out from Katherine across the north, infrastructure would be improved, the wealth-generating assets of Australia would be protected and any invasion from the north would be stopped before it reached Canberra. Why a hostile force would want to occupy Canberra is beyond me but can you imagine the blind confusion of a hostile force entering the gates of Canberra only to find that all government departments had been decentralised. Moscow memories. Weekends in a place where there are sporting speed limits must surely be an attraction for the boys as would a bit of barra fishing, camel riding and target shooting. I understand unbranded cattle make great steaks for Grand Final BBQs. I also understand that it is hard to tell sometimes whether the beast was branded or not. Gorge trips are a must when visitors come. For those in the military promoted to desk jobs, a bit of weekend croc shooting would keep their eye in.

Where does one site **Education, Employment and Workplace Relations**? For me, the ideal place would be **Laverton, WA**. Far too many here do not have the education and employment opportunities of other Australians and Laverton is proximal to mines, haulage roads, indigenous settlements and stations where safety and workplace relations are vital. First hand experience for administering policy would be vital. It is only a hop, step and a jump to Kalgoorlie to see the School of Mines in action and work place relations operating at the Superpit, mines and smelter. Although Laverton is not in northern Australia, maybe there could be discussions about how permanent centres with higher education could be established to service the north. Weekend activities are just too numerous to mention. Picnics at the Giles weather station, lost weekends in Kalgoorlie or a visit to the White House in Leonora come to mind. One can even step back in time to feel the ghost of an American president at the Sons of Gwalia. It doesn't get any better than that, does it?

Apologies to the rest of Australia but there is really no competition for **Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**. It has to be **Halls Creek, WA**. What a unique opportunity to experience first hand every single aspect of this portfolio in just one small town. A one-stop shop is just too good to be missed. Halls Creek is closer than Canberra for administration of the Tiwi Land Council and it is a line ball whether Canberra or Halls Creek is closer for administration of the Torres Strait Regional Authority. In order to fully

understand administration details, there should be two shifts with the day shift at 6am-3pm and the afternoon shift at 3pm-midnight. The 9-hour shift is a compromise between the 12-hour shift that most in reality land work and a Canberra working day. A quiet lonely walk home at midnight after work would sharpen up afternoon shift thinking on policy. Spare time could be spent in the beautiful Kimberleys, tourists pay huge amounts to visit such attractions and the opportunity to live in the middle of paradise I am sure just could not be resisted by bureaucrats. Bungle Bungles here we come.

Considering that Australia is kept alive by mining and agriculture and that some 1,500 permits, approvals and agreements are necessary to start a new employment- and wealth-generating mining project, there is huge competition for the siting of **Finance and Deregulation**. Luina, Tas., Tennant Creek, NT, Roxby Downs, SA, Kalgoorlie, WA, Parabadoo, WA, Telfer, WA, Mount Isa, Qld, Alpha, Qld and Weipa, Qld all received a certificate of commendation. It was only by a short margin that **Gladstone, Qld** was chosen. Around Gladstone, new proposed mining projects are bound up for years by red and green tape, the coal mines are proximal, sugar farming is on the coast with beef cattle inland and the aluminium refinery and coal loader are right at the back door. Each minute these activities are stopped by regulation costs the country and trainees would be required to get work experience at the mines, smelter and loader before entering the bureaucracy. Gladstone's activities help to keep Canberra financed and this can only be appreciated first hand. There are endless weekend activities on the water, visits to coal-fired power stations and weekends in Mount Morgan for those wanting quiet time away from the bustle.

Asia needs to be close for **Foreign Affairs and Trade**. We need to continually shake hands and kiss babies with our near neighbours and if it were not for daily ship loads of iron ore, coal, concentrate, refined metals and LNG to Asia, then we could not afford to buy our mobile 'phones, iPods, iPads and Toyotas. The ideal place is **Port Hedland, WA**. It is only a 3-hour flight to Singapore, one can view trains unloading and ships loading while thinking how towns like Port Hedland contribute to the GDP. Maybe in a quiet reflective moment, a bureaucrat might look across the Indian Ocean, think of West Africa and deduce that all could be very quickly lost in northern Australia because of bureaucratic impediments. Restful weekends can be spent fishing, viewing petroglyphs, train spotting or just chilling out at Karratha, Roebourne or Dampier. A step back in time at Cossack would be a great weekend. Weekend trips to Mount Tom Price, Parabadoo or Mount Newman may even be part of work duties and, if wangled right, could be paid for by the taxpayer. For entrepreneurs, there are some great real estate investment opportunities in Port Hedland. However, there is just a little administrative problem.

The **Commonwealth Parliament** definitely should not be in Canberra. It must be held all over the country in town halls, CWA meeting rooms, Mechanics' Institutes and public libraries with the occasional sitting on river banks, clay pans, salt lakes and sand dunes. A sitting in a large open pit such as Mt Whaleback would be classy. Cabinet may even do what the Maldives did for a publicity stunt and hold a meeting underwater. The air supply would guarantee a

short meeting. Prime Ministers would not have to be stabbed in the back, tampering with the air tanks would easily do the job. Local pubs are often the places for outback public meetings and a little bit of lunatic soup imbibed before question time would make it even more entertaining. This would allow politicians to meet the taxpayer in the ultimate public gallery. Politicians would not be required to have an expensive Canberra office where they could hide while parliament sits. The great benefit of a feral parliament is that the media circus would have to spend a large amount of time in inland Australia and this may then broaden their life experiences, balance their reporting and give them some perspective as to how a dollar is generated. That would be a plus. If the media did not chase parliament all over rural and outback Australia to get their stories, then that would also be a plus. A feral parliament is clearly a win-win-win scenario.

Fair Work Australia, the Federal Court, the Family Court and the High Court are all administered by **Courts**. Why build an ugly above-ground building in Canberra when one can be excavated for a profit? My recommendation therefore is **Cooper Pedy, SA**. Courts would be proximal to areas such as Woomera where there are Commonwealth-State considerations. Litigation with the UK regarding cleaning up atomic bomb sites requires a short drive to the bomb sites, the town is close to aboriginal lands for land claims issues, close to uranium mines for environmental litigation and in the heart of an area where many folk disappear with no trace, don't pay child maintenance, escape arrest warrants or have a dodgy past. Imagine the tourist attraction of having the High Court of Australia in a dugout. During long boring hearings, judges could pick out a bit of colour from the walls of the court house. One presumes that the folk from Courts are civilised and play golf. The golf course at Cooper Pedy has a "Keep off the grass" sign. Now, how civilised is that? Other civilised weekend activities could be at William Creek, Marree and Lyndhurst. A visit to Farina is a must, it shows how quickly climate has changed naturally and how decisions made on short-term thinking have been economically disastrous.

With **Health and Ageing**, I go to my sentimental favourite. It is **Broken Hill, NSW**. It is no different from many rural towns with an ageing and decreasing population, increased strains on the health system and a lack of health care investment. Rural populations do not have the health care and longevity of city populations and the challenge would be to reverse this situation starting with a soft target. Bureaucrats could run a book as to whether their child would be born in Broken Hill, born mid air in a RFDS plane or born after airlifting to Adelaide. This all depends upon whether an obstetrician is in town or not. The RFDS base allows workers to see rural health first hand. Maybe a summer time trip with the RFDS landings and takeoffs at 10 stations and hamlets in a day would sharpen up decision-making. What a place for time off. One could go up the river for fishing and yabbing, there are many places to see if aboriginal culture is in your blood and, for the sensitive artistic types, Broken Hill has more art galleries than pubs. Sunsets over the Mundi Mundi are so emotionally taxing that revival at Silverton is necessary. I am told that the St Patrick's Day and Silver City Cup race meetings are pretty good but I can't remember.

Human Services handle Centrelink, child support and Medicare. Of course, the western suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne come to mind as do the northern suburbs of Adelaide but the real problems lie in complex rural societies. **Coen, Qld** is the outstanding choice. The great attraction is that it has tropical foods, endless protein from the land and sea and a climate that would make bureaucrats wonder why they suffered Canberra winters for so many years. Most of the community on the Cape would be clients of Human Services and there is every reason for the bureaucrats to know their clients personally rather than deal with pieces of paper, endless spreadsheets and mind-numbing meetings. And what a place for recreation with the wild rivers, pristine wilderness and proximity to numerous tropical paradises. If an overseas weekend trip is contemplated, then I recommend Thursday Island. The opportunity to work long hours to accumulate flexi time would also be a great attraction.

There are some good possibilities for **Immigration and Citizenship**. Christmas Island was short-listed. Another possibility was using the deserted Baxter Camp at Woomera for headquarters but the odds on favourite drew the barrier. We should never have scuttled HMAS *Adelaide*. It could have been moored off **Ashmore Reef** as a one-stop shop to meet and greet illegals. This would allow rapid on-site processing thereby avoiding illegals hanging around detention centres for years and then burning them down. Of course, the large guns would have to be dismantled as they would frighten off illegals coming to Ashmore Reef. With the HMAS *Adelaide* moored at Ashmore Reef, naval patrols could do what naval patrols should be doing rather than answering mobile 'phone calls from illegal boats once they are in territorial waters. This would streamline processing and, if the illegals' 'phone batteries were dead, HMAS *Adelaide* would be visible from miles away. Public servants could do what a very large number of other people do, fly-in fly-out and live in a dry camp. There are daily helicopter FIFO trips to the rigs from Learmonth, bolting on a few extra fuel tanks may get the choppers to Ashmore Reef. FIFO requires long shifts for many days in a row with no relaxation time but I am sure that public servants could unwind by dropping a line over the stern and watching the brilliant sunsets. Now that is reality.

Infrastructure and Transport should really be sited where there is no infrastructure and transport. The problem with such a siting is that this happens to be most of Australia so the choices are endless. Administration could be managed with conference calls and Skype, except in the wet season, dust storms and times when the lines are down. This is almost always. This mobile-free zone would enable bureaucrats to concentrate on work and minimise social 'phone calls during work hours. Why should meetings be held in a sterile room in Canberra when they could equally as well held at **Rabbit Flat, NT**? I know of one large building there that could be used as a conference venue. This portfolio administers rail, air and marine activities and associated safety. Landing at Rabbit Flat has a heroic aspect to it so every landing would be a first hand experience of air safety. The north-south rail line is not too far away and it is only a short trip to visit where the infrastructure hubs should be in northern

Australia. As for weekends....well, where do I start? The choices are infinite. What about an intimate weekend at Fitzroy Crossing?

There are a couple of towns in Australia that have really punched above their weight with **Innovation, Industry, Science and Research**. Differential froth flotation was invented in Broken Hill but **Mount Isa, Qld** certainly takes the cake with the invention of new smelting, grinding and flotation processes. Innovation, science and research are certainly absolutely vital for deep high temperature mining, ventilation, smelting, underground safety and communications, the successful release of wealth from fine-grained ores and novel transport systems. With new projects on the horizon (e.g. Merlin molybdenum-rhenium deposit south of Cloncurry), all the firepower needed should be close at hand. The choices of weekend activities are daunting. Fishing up the Gulf and in the rivers, horse riding, water sports, supporting the impoverished Irish Club and the annual world famous rodeo. Weekend trips to Dajarra, Mary Kathleen, Cloncurry and Tennant Creek could offer a private get away from all the stress of bureaucratic life in Mount Isa.

The office of the **Prime Minister and Cabinet** must remain in **Canberra, ACT** as a memorial to our stupidity. We need to have memorials surrounded by reality. We converted a perfectly good productive sheep paddock into the national capital. Sheep paddocks produce wealth, Canberra consumes wealth as shown by the fact that the economic growth of Canberra was higher than the primary producing state of Western Australia. *Quelle scandal!* To have this office in Canberra is commensurate with its administration of all sorts of trusts, museums, galleries and libraries. Maybe bureaucrats could work in a glass office so Japanese tourists could stand outside and view first hand the frenetic pace of administration of our museums. And as for public service recreational activities in Canberra, I am at a loss to think of something. Maybe they could visit their own galleries, libraries and museums as part of self-assessment.

Where are **Resources, Energy and Tourism** all rather close to each other? No contest. It is **Chillagoe, Qld**. There are active and old metal mines, active and old marble quarries and old smelters in and around town. Coastal tourists have now discovered Chillagoe. Geoscience Australia has already left its footprint in the Featherbed Ranges and would feel at home in a town where there is already a vibrant geological community. Direct Perth-Cairns flights go overhead and would remind public servants that they must administer offshore petroleum safety with occasional hands on visits to the West. They could even use the Immigration and Citizenship choppers for hopping from one offshore rig to another. Chillagoe is the pick spot for public service recreation. The Walsh offers swimming and fishing without worrying about salties (although the Johnson River crocs can give you a bit of a heart start). During the wet when the roads are closed, town activities rotate around the caves, The Hub, John and Donna Burton's Post Office, the old smelters, the old Red Dome mine and the defunct railway station. The Big Weekend rodeo and races is the social event of the year. No point in leaving Chillagoe at weekends, everything is there.

Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities is a bit of a mouthful. They deal with Antarctica, botanic gardens, Bureau of Meteorology, water and the Great Barrier Reef. There is just no place proximal to all these responsibilities. Heard Island was pipped at the post by **Walhalla, East Gippsland, Victoria** because it has Antarctic-like winters, there are pristine cool temperate forests that are essentially God's botanic gardens, there are numerous large rivers where water is unused and flows to the sea and it was only a few hundred million years ago that there were Great Barrier Reefs in East Gippsland. It was only 100 million years ago that Gippsland was joined to Antarctica, which then was covered by temperate rainforests. Who says climate does not change naturally? As for the Bureau of Meteorology, we get weather everywhere so it matters not whether they are in Walhalla, Warburton or Woop Woop. Much of the water from Gippsland is for cooling of thermal coal power stations in Yallourn, without this water the lights would be off in Victoria and there would be no drinking water for Melbourne. Recreational activities vary from wood chopping to fly fishing and fossicking to bushwalking (although one has to be a bit careful as stumbling onto a forest cash crop can create difficulties). The summer forest fires provide wonderful sunsets. Twin town holidays could be taken in Regensburg, the home of the mythical Walhalla in Germany.

The name Marble Bar conjures up a romantic image of a marble-lined bank with underground gold ingot-filled chambers, serenity and wealth. The Ironclad at Marble Bar also suggests that there is a Fort Knox equivalent at Marble Bar. And that is certainly the case. Many have entered the Ironclad and have never been known to leave. This romantic infrastructure should be exploited. **Marble Bar, WA** is clearly the perfect place for **Treasury**. The Australian Taxation Office would be well suited for Marble Bar, the high tonnage of duplicate records could be stored securely in old underground mines and the Australian Mint could make coins from local gold. A large amount of Australia's wealth is collected in the Pilbara so the taxation office would be close to its core business. Recreation could be intertwined with formal visits to Karratha, Mount Newman, Mt Tom Price, Parabadoo, Port Hedland and Argyle. If one wanted a very private dirty weekend away, then I recommend Nullagine (but you have to book well in advance).

Rural, outback and northern Australia is doing its bit to make Australia efficient, prosperous and habitable. Now it's Canberra's turn to show some leadership.