



Australian Senate Inquiry Into Rural Poverty

Circulated by
Gregor_The_Beggar

Contents

Introduction	3
Background	4
Inquiry Findings	5
Proposed Action	22
Conclusion	25

Introduction

Rural Poverty has been a steadily increasing issue in modern Australia and throughout the entirety of the modern world. The disparity of wealth between urban and rural zones, primarily caused by lack of access to job opportunities or simply lack of proportional or appropriate investment into rural areas, has caused an increase of rural poverty in recent times. This Senate Inquiry, called by Senator Gregor_The_Beggar, wishes to therefore investigate Rural Poverty in its entirety and open up submissions from members of the public as to potential solutions in relation to individual states or regions.

The Committee has undertaken significant questioning of those who have been involved with the Committee's testimony stage and has found important information directly from representatives and members of the public as to the extent of rural poverty. Key issues have been highlighted surrounding job opportunities, healthcare and a host of other policy standpoints alongside crucial recommendations which have been made with the support of testimony.

Every recommendation within this report has been supported in some part by either the testimony of a member of the public or representative or through the submission of evidence by varying parties during the course of the procedures. In total, the Committee received nearly 100 comments pertaining to varying subjects, matters and discussion points in regards to rural and regional poverty and five submissions of information for the consideration of the Committee.

The Committee would like to thank all of the participating individuals, the ABC, Aljazeera, Rural Health and the Australian Council of Trade Unions for the information provided for this Committee.

Background

In Australia, there is a large population of the rural population which are considered to live in abject poverty. In broad terms, those living outside of main urban centers have a higher percentage of the population living in conditions of poverty at 13.1% according to published statistics. Every state except for New South Wales and Western Australia has a significantly higher percentage of their rural population living in conditions of poverty compared to those in their capital cities. This is most apparent in communities in particularly remote areas, areas with low access to education, areas with low access to healthcare and areas without much opportunities. As 1/3rd of Australia's population lives within a rural or regional area, this is a supremely important issue for consideration by the Senate in terms of representation.

This comes from a background of intense interest due to the fact that as of right now, rural and regional Australia has become a political hot topic. More and more parties and movements of today are focused on rural and regional Australia and uplifting those communities so the ability to find out the solutions to one of the biggest crises facing that community is vitally important.

It is well known that poverty is driven by a host of factors. Accessibility to jobs, public transport, housing, energy costs, goods and services costs and a host of other issues are at play for this Committee to discuss. Particularly notable is the differences between regions in regards to poverty as well, especially in regions of focus such as the Far North of Queensland.

The Committee will consider all forms of poverty in rural and regional Australia, how it compares to urban zones and hopefully find recommendations from there. This will require the testimony of those from all across Australia and the gathering of information from a host of sources to relate to this issue. The Committee will find what poverty is, how it relates to rural and regional Australia and steps to address poverty within these communities.

Inquiry Findings

The Committee undertook two stages of its inquiry, first the questioning of a variety of different expert testimonies and Parliamentary figures and secondly the consolidation of various reports by different organizations relating to the inquiry matter at hand. The Committee aimed to answer three questions during the length of the Inquiry and all questions and their responses will be analyzed from their own merit and perspective as well as against these three questions. The three questions this Committee sought to answer are

- The Extent of Rural and Regional Poverty within Australia.
- Testimony as to the effects of Rural and Regional Poverty upon other sectors within Australia.
- Potential Solutions for differing regions of Australia and broad national policy which could be implemented to solve the issue.

We will firstly examine the general questioning which was undertaken and discuss everything which was raised during the length of these discussions. This examination phase was open to all members of the public and those who had already been questioned. Despite this, we only received the testimony of a single Member of the Public and more should potentially be done to address this issue in the future and incentivize more members of the public to participate in these forms of hearing.

The first question is the following by the Prime Minister, Model-Slater who asked;

↑ [-] **model-slater** - Prime Minister | Senator for Victoria | Greens • 1 point 10 days ago

↓ To the members of the public, do they believe that poor access to healthcare and education play a major role in contributing to rural poverty?

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

↑ [-] **TheSensibleCentre** • 1 point 6 days ago

↓ Lack of education certainly plays a role in this, as does the general professionalisation of our economy. Back in the day, out in Gippsland, people used to be able to get a job with the SEC without a ten year degree.

That has since changed with the privatisation of the SEC. Now, the coal mines offer far less jobs at far greater pay, specifically for those with specialised training and education. This has reinforced a significant divide between the rural poor and the rural rich, creating a wealthy cadre who are significantly better off than the rest of the population.

I would caution against further professionalisation of our economy. Sending every rural teen to get a four-year degree and then come back to take up a job isn't going to magically solve our problems, even if that education is free. We should instead focus on increasing opportunities that don't require a tertiary education.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

This first question, surrounding lack of education and healthcare access, was responded by the Member for Canberra TheSensibleCentre, someone called up to the Committee to discuss the Jarvis Bay region initially but seems to have made herself available for questioning and raises a very interesting point about the inefficiencies of prioritizing rural education as a sole solution to alleviate rural poverty. The Member for Canberra raises the point that to alleviate rural poverty, jobs and opportunities for jobs is likely the best solution for it. This will be noted in the findings of the report.

↑ [-] **Gregor_The_Beggar** - President | DPM | Sen. for New South Wales | Country Labor • 1 point 10 days ago

↓ To the members of the public,

Do you believe that any mining related taxation could potentially result in serious job loss and therefore perpetration of the poverty cycle in rural areas and do they support the schemes proposed which would seek to offer payouts back to mining workers over job loss?

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [edit](#) [disable inbox replies](#) [delete](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [distinguish](#) [reply](#)

↑ [-] **mikiboss** • 1 point 6 days ago

↓ To the Senate President, I submit that while there are always concerns for taxation, a tax based on mineral and resource rents would not, in general, be a prospect for job losses. This was referenced in the now quite old and dusty Henry Tax report, which found that not only would a tax levied on the rents of mining be in our economic interest, it was unlikely to raise the prospects of sovereign risk of capital flights, as it would be levied on *rents*, rather than on wealth.

Simply put, it is unlikely that a tax on rents of mineral resources would cause sovereign risk or job losses, because such taxes collect a constant share of the rent under varying economic conditions, rather than a specific set value.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

↑ [-] **TheSensibleCentre** • 1 point 6 days ago

↓ The mining industry takes up a significant portion of rural Australia, but it is hardly the be all and end all. I believe many seem to think it is the only industry in the regions, just imagining a land of mines as far as the eye can see.

That said, yes, we must acknowledge the contribution of the mining sector to the rural economy. I don't believe that mining related taxation will lead to significant job losses, but yes, I would support a scheme that offers payouts to mining workers who lose their jobs due to mining taxation.

We must accept, however, that the mining industry cannot remain forever. The brown coal mining industry, for example, will have to wind down, and every government has a requirement to plan for that. While of course we require black coal for steel production, and rare earth minerals will be vital in producing sustainable technologies, there are some mining operations that will need to wind back. That does mean people will lose their jobs; that much is inevitable.

What isn't inevitable, however, is that those job losses are permanent. If governments are willing to step up to this challenge and have a plan in place, then it can be ensured that job losses are minimal and former mine workers are transferred to new jobs.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

↑ [-] **ARichTeaBiscuit** • 1 point 7 days ago

↓ Clerk,

Unfortunately due to the inherent greed at the centre of our capitalist model, such a tax will likely result in job losses, however, we can engage in payouts and targetted economic stimulus to reimburse miners and support sustainable job development in areas impacted by these cuts.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

The next question asked to the Members of the Public was that in relation to any potential Mining Tax. Two respondents have either represented or presently represent communities with a high amount of mining workers and so this question was answered with expert opinions as to the matter. The first matter for consideration is whether a mining tax of some form is supported by the community or whether it would lead to job loss. Two of the three respondents highlighted their belief that a singular mining tax

will not lead to widespread job losses, with one (Former Prime Minister Mikiboss) citing the findings of the Henry Report in regards to the Mining Tax proposals' capacity to affect jobs. However, concerns were noted by the Committee from the Member for Capricornia about their belief that mining related taxes could cause job losses, however they stated they would still support the tax regardless. The second part of the question, about the payouts offered to miners, was answered by two of the respondents. The Member for Capricornia stated that payouts to miners must occur if we are to implement a mining tax of some form. The Member for Canberra however, while they stated they do support the proposed payout program, did highlight another interesting point for Committee consideration. They highlighted the status of the mining industry as a whole as being a sunset industry, an industry in their beliefs will inevitably end up dying. They highlighted the need for the Government to be ready to respond to that industry death and the need for the Government to invest into future-proofing jobs in other sectors in preparation. This will be noted in the final report.

↑ [-] **KarlYonedaStan** - Sen. for the Northern Territory | Greens • 1 point 10 days ago
↓ To members of the public - what role can trade unions better play in alleviating rural poverty in rural areas?
permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

↑ [-] **TheSensibleCentre** • 1 point 6 days ago
↓ Thanks to previous reforms, namely the legalisation of solidarity actions, the Australian union movement is much stronger than ten years ago. Unions have the ability to negotiate with bosses and work together to rise wages for workers.
While it's hard for rural workers to organise as effectively as workers in the city, due to their relative isolation, they are often able to directly threaten vital supply lines which can lend power to their strikes.
Australia should maintain its union laws and look into ways to strengthen the power of labour unions.
permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

↑ [-] **ARichTeaBiscuit** • 1 point 7 days ago
↓ Clerk,
I believe that trade unions can provide a vital role in helping rural communities, both through their support for workers rights and better pay but also through the connections they make with their communities and the solidarity they offer.
permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

The next question was asked by the senator for the Northern Territory who asked for members of the public to discuss the role of trade unions in alleviating rural poverty. Both of the respondents agreed that trade unions play an important role in protecting the rights of workers in rural and regional areas from supposed exploitation, agreeing that unions need to play a more important role in rural workplaces. This will be noted in the findings of the report.

- ↑ [-] **Inadorable** - Senator for Tasmania | Greens • 1 point 10 days ago
 ↓ To members of the public - would you rather your region is used for the well-being of the locals and that your pristine environments are maintained, or do you want them to be exploited for the benefit of a few?
[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)
- ↑ [-] **TheSensibleCentre** • 1 point 6 days ago
 ↓ Rural Australia is one of the most beautiful environments in the world. Governments should make every attempt to preserve that environment for future generations.
 Particularly when it comes to massive overseas corporations, we don't want them sullyng a country that none of their board members will ever live in.
[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

The Senator for Tasmania asked a question on whether Members of the Public believe that their land should be used for common good or be exploited by the few. While it is the opinion of the Chair that this question is rather politically loaded and motivated, the response was a full consensus from the one respondent agreeing that they would rather prioritize local well-being.

- ↑ [-] **Inadorable** - Senator for Tasmania | Greens • 1 point 10 days ago
 ↓ To members of the public - would you say that public transport in your region is a viable alternative to the car?
[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)
- ↑ [-] **ARichTeaBiscuit** • 1 point 7 days ago
 ↓ Clerk,
 In cities such as my hometown of Bundaberg, it is quite possible, however, for those in rural communities it is virtually impossible which is why advancements in electric vehicles is so important.
[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)
- ↑ [-] **TheSensibleCentre** • 1 point 7 days ago
 ↓ In Canberra's core, yes. However, I remember from my time in Nicholls that vast swathes of this country lack a reliable public transport option.
 If the Inquiry wishes to address this, I'd like to emphasise that it's entirely possible to fix. While we can't have a bus linking two isolated farms, we can have bus linkages from rural centres to regional centres, where frequent and reliable train services could offer passage to the city.
[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

The next question, again by the Senator for Tasmania, asked members of the public whether or not public transport connections in their electorates were a viable alternative to motor vehicular transportation. Both of the respondents highlighted that it is impossible for rural Australians to travel through the means of public transport, particularly in remote Victorian settlements. One of the Members of the Public highlighted this as a need for support for electric vehicles, a topic we will discuss later in the report, while another offered the opinion that bus routes should ultimately connect between remote towns and regional centres, whereupon train connections can ensure rapid transit to places of high employment opportunities such as cities. This will be considered in the findings of the report.

↑ [-] **Inadorable** - Senator for Tasmania | Greens • 1 point 10 days ago

↓ To members of the public - would you agree that services in rural areas are both lacking in quality when compared to urban counterparts, as well as inaccessible for many?

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

↑ [-] **TheSensibleCentre** • 1 point 6 days ago

↓ I admit this is anecdotal and comes from my experience living in rural and regional Australia, and whether this is a trend would be something for the Inquiry to look more closely at, but it would certainly seem that health services are becoming harder to access.

Increasingly, clinics are ceasing to offer bulk billing and switching over to mixed billing practices, where only pensioners can access bulk billing. This is hugely detrimental to the health of poorer Australians, who might choose to avoid attending the clinic rather than paying the costs associated.

When it comes to specialised treatment centres, many simply don't exist. It requires people to make long journeys into the city to see somebody without a huge waitlist, and this trip is often inaccessible to poorer Australians who cannot afford to drive.

It is necessary that services in rural and regional Australia be expanded, in order to improve quality of life.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

↑ [-] **ARichTeaBiscuit** • 1 point 7 days ago

↓ Clerk,

I believe the fact that many rural Australians have to travel hundreds of kilometres for certain services speaks to the nature of the rural-urban divide in Australia.

Of course, the last SDP-led government supported by the CLP was able to start work on improving rural services and encouraging medical staff to stay in rural areas but i think we've still got a long way to go before the gap is tightened.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

The Senator for Tasmania asked her final question to the general members of the public when she asked them about potential inequality of services between rural and urban Australia. This was in regards to a wide host of different services from healthcare, education or other key parts of what are considered crucial Government infrastructure. Both of the respondents agreed there was inequality in services between rural and urban areas, including testimony of those having to travel hundreds of kilometres to access particular services. The Member for Canberra however highlighted areas of reform which could be undertaken such as in the field of bulk billing expansion in rural and regional areas alongside specialized treatment centers for rural and regional areas. This will be considered in the findings.

↑ [-] **dyljam**  • 1 point 11 days ago

↓ To members of the public - do you believe that rural Australia has suffered from the COVID-19 pandemic more adversely than urban Australia? If so, why?

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)


↑ [-] **ARichTeaBiscuit** • 1 point 7 days ago

↓ Clerk,

If you have to travel anywhere between 100 or 200 kilometres to get medical care or visit a supermarket then I think it's fair to say that COVID-19 will have more of an impact on you compared to urban Australians who can more easily access these services.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

The Senator for Western Australia asked their first question following this surrounding whether members of the public believed that rural Australia suffered from COVID-19 more adversely than urban Australia. The Member of the Public agreed to this and highlighted travel time to access services.

↑ [-] **dyljam**  **Sen. for Western Australia | SDP Senate Leader** • 1 point 11 days ago

↓ To members of the public - what have your experiences, of the experiences of those you know, of accessing social welfare payments in rural Australia?

permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

↑ [-] **ARichTeaBiscuit** • 1 point 7 days ago


↓ Clerk.

I understand that those in rural communities can have difficulties accessing bank and postal services which has a negative impact on their ability to access social welfare payments.

It could also be said that the current safety net doesn't adequately cover the increased costs associated with rural life, so in addition to improving access to banking and postal services we should also explore further support payments to rural communities to help cover increased fuel and food costs.

permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

The next question by the Senator for Western Australia was about gaining access to social welfare payments in rural Australia. The member of the public responded by stating the need for increased banking and postal service rollout in rural and regional areas and through the need for further support payments to cover fuel and food costs in rural Australia.

↑ [-] **dyljam**  **Sen. for Western Australia | SDP Senate Leader** • 1 point 11 days ago

↓ To members of the public - what perceptions or personal experiences do you have of unemployment and poverty in rural Australia?

permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

↑ [-] **ARichTeaBiscuit** • 1 point 7 days ago

↓ Clerk.

When travelling to rural Capricornia I understand that the issue of rural poverty is twofold, the first is unemployment issues which usually stems from a simple lack of viable jobs in the area which in itself can often be linked the demise of a single business which was the main source of employment in the region.

Secondly, the issue relates to the higher cost of certain products and services such as fresh milk and electricity and the additional pressure this places on pensioners, the unemployed and those in low paying jobs.

If we are to reduce poverty in rural Australia then I believe that we must spur economic development in our rural areas either through some manner of subsidy or direct state intervention, and we must certainly work to reduce the cost of goods which could be met by working to reduce the cost of transport and storage for local businesses.

permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

The Senator for Western Australia then asked for Members of the Public's perception surrounding unemployment in rural Australia. The Member for Capricornia in attendance responded that there was a twofold issue of rural poverty in the region of Capricornia and it was jointly through unemployment issues and the high cost of living which worked together to cause rural poverty, through denying individuals with the means to earn an income and then having higher costs of living than other regions. This

combines with the lack of welfare access highlighted earlier in this report and the combination of these two will be discussed in the reports findings.

- ↑ [-] **model-slater** - Prime Minister | Senator for Victoria | Greens • 1 point 11 days ago
- ↓ To all members of the public. We have a spectrum of ideologies on this inquiry, and some strong advocates for the increasing, and also the decreasing of welfare and benefits. What role do you all see welfare playing in combatting rural poverty? What reforms are necessary in your view and why?
- [permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)
- ↑ [-] **ARichTeaBiscuit** • 1 point 7 days ago
- ↓ Clerk.
- I find the notion that simply reducing benefits will have a positive impact on reducing poverty to be ludicrous, especially, as many rural communities rely on such payments to make ends meet due to the simple lack of jobs.
- I don't think anyone wishes to be stuck on welfare but instead of punishing people for being unemployed, we should help support them find new forms of employment.
- [permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)
- ↑ [-] **TheSensibleCentre** • 1 point 8 days ago
- ↓ It's really quite simple. Cutting welfare increases poverty. It doesn't drive investments in jobs, as some might claim. All it does is leave people without a way out of the pit of poverty.
- Of course, we don't want welfare to just be a hand out, it needs to be a hand up. There are plenty who fall onto hard times through no fault of their own, and they end up in pretty dire circumstances. Welfare provides a necessary lifeline for getting out of those situations. Particularly in rural areas, where there are weaker community services and less access to vital facilities, welfare is a desperately needed lifeline.
- [permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

The final question was asked by the Prime Minister and Senator for Victoria Model-Slater who inquired as to the role of welfare in combating rural poverty, citing examples of advocates for those who are in favour of an increase and of a decrease in welfare expenditure. The two testifying members both were highly opposed to cutting welfare and both testified that cutting welfare would further heighten poverty and would not achieve any of the effects which it hoped to achieve. TheSensibleCentre highlighted their belief in the value of welfare while the Member for Capricornia highlighted the need for discussion as to job growth over the need to cut welfare payments. This will be investigated further in the findings of this report.

Committee Specific Inquiries

This report will next move onto the specific inquiries asked of particular Members of the Public and of Parliament pertaining to the subject matters. Most of the questions relate to their specific electoral areas or their thoughts as to particular proposed policies and solutions. For questions which were not answered, they will not be logged within the report. Additionally, it will be logged whether or not they were in attendance to the Committee hearing.


TheSensibleCentre

↑  **Gregor_The_Beggar** - President | DPM | Sen. for New South Wales | Country Labor • 1 point 10 days ago

↓ I thank the Member for Canberra for appearing today, I'm sure many of us have questions for you today.

My main question relates to the Jervis Bay Territory and other territories which are within the borders of your electorate. Do you believe that the Government is doing enough on this front to alleviate any potential community poverty in these areas and what would you like to see on this front?

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [edit](#) [disable inbox replies](#) [delete](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [distinguish](#) [reply](#)

↑  **TheSensibleCentre** • 1 point 8 days ago

↓ Thank you for the question, and thank you for remembering the often forgotten Jervis Bay Territory.

I've been pleased to see the Government's progress thus far. Measures such as increasing welfare payments and extending JobKeeper have been a lifeline for the folks out in Jervis Bay, and has been positively received.

However, there's always room for more improvement, and while I'm happy with the Government's offerings so far, there's more that can be done.

A place like Tharwa isn't a particularly long drive out of the city, so it's easy to lump it into the built-up areas of Canberra and call it a day. But let's not forget that not everyone in Tharwa can drive -- or afford to drive -- which means they're quite a distance away from essential services, and lack reliable public transport.

To that end, I'd ask that the Inquiry consider the areas around Canberra to be well within the scope of this inquest. The city doesn't gradually fade away like Melbourne, where the line between suburb and region gradually blurs. Rather, it drops away suddenly, which means many on the periphery are outside the reach of essential services.

To that end, I believe the Government should consider, and future governments should consider, a fund for investment on Canberra's periphery and in the Jervis Bay Territory. A similar fund exists for Northern Australia, and the ACT's could be considerably more modest, due to lower -- but still very much present -- investment needs. This would allow the federal government to directly assist the Legislative Assembly in providing targeted, job-making-investments into the regional and rural areas of the Australian Capital Territory.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

TheSensibleCentre was asked a single question by the Senator for New South Wales pertaining to the Jervis Bay Territory and other rural territories within her electorate of Canberra. TheSensibleCentre highlighted the immense success she had seen in her community of increased welfare payments, referring to the NewStart increases presumably, as well as the extension of JobKeeper payments which have both allegedly been positively received. She moved onto highlighting issues surrounding areas of her community such as Tharwa which was lumped into the city of Canberra despite having vastly different scopes of inquest. She talked about the lack of reliable public transport and the distance from essential services despite low rates of motor vehicle availability for individuals in the community. She then recommended to the Committee that the Government should implement a fund for the Canberra Periphery and the Jervis Bay territory based on the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility Act. This will be discussed in the Findings.

Mikiboss

[-] [Gregor_The_Beggar](#) - President | DPM | Sen. for New South Wales | Country Labor • 1 point 10 days ago
 I thank the Former Member for Cowper for his attendance and I will aim to keep his questions brief.
What communities does he see as being the most disadvantaged within his former electorate?
[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [edit](#) [disable inbox replies](#) [delete](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [distinguish](#) [reply](#)

[-] [mikiboss](#) • 1 point 6 days ago
 I thank the Senate President for their question.
Regional and Western New South Wales contains some of the most economically disadvantaged areas which are faced in the Nation. While Cowper itself is not the entirety of NSW, it covers some of our towns and suburbs doing it tough.
Some of the geographic communities which I think need to be addressed are those in Narrabri, Bega, and particularly Brewarrina, areas which have been brought into great concern from the work of NCOSS. These areas not only struggle with economic disadvantage, but face the struggles which regional areas face on an everyday basis, such as increased costs for goods and services, and a concerning trend of brain drain.
Beyond geographic areas, I'd also like to raise the concerns experienced by those who rely on traditional water flows, be they Aboriginal Australians, or people involved in an industry where natural flowing water plays a key role. The concerns we have faced due to several factors relating to water usage here in New South Wales have not only made people's lives harder but their livelihoods more precarious.
I hope my answer benefits the inquiry
[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)


Former Member for Cowper and Prime Minister Mikiboss was summoned to the Committee where he made his attendance to answer a question by the Senator for New South Wales in regards to which groups are most disadvantaged within his former electorate. He highlights how he sees regional and Western New South Wales as being particularly disadvantaged compared to the rest of New South Wales and Australia as a whole. He highlighted particularly Aboriginal groups such as the Narrabri, the Bega and the Brewarrina in particular which have struggled with increased costs of goods, brain drain by local community experts referring to medical professionals and other educated individuals as well as issues of inequality caused by reduced access to natural flowing water which Aboriginal Australians benefited off of. This will all be integrated into the Findings of the Report.


ARichTeaBiscuit

[-] [Gregor_The_Beggar](#) - President | DPM | Sen. for New South Wales | Country Labor • 1 point 10 days ago
 I thank the Member for Capricornia for their attendance and I will aim to keep his questions brief.
What communities does they see as being the most disadvantaged within their electorate?
[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [edit](#) [disable inbox replies](#) [delete](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [distinguish](#) [reply](#)

[-] [ARichTeaBiscuit](#) • 1 point 9 days ago
 Clerk,
I can think of quite a number of rural communities in Capricornia that face disadvantages due to the sheer distance they have to travel to get vital healthcare services and the nature of getting food and energy in that part of the world. Tablederry, Wyandra, Teelba and Mungallala are perhaps the most notable examples.
Cherbourg is another prime example, as the region has poor access to public services and suffers from high unemployment and subsequently also has issues with poverty and its associated issues.
[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)


The First question asked of the Member for Capricornia was the same asked to the former Member of Cowper in regards to disadvantaged communities within their electorate. The Member for Cowper responded by highlighting the notable examples of Tablederry, Wyandra, Teelba, Cherbourg and Mungallala. All of these areas, according to their testimony, suffer from the sheer distance which is required to be travelled to access healthcare services and the high cost of food and energy in the area. In Cherbourg in particular, they highlighted high unemployment and lack of public services in the town. This will be integrated into the Findings of the Report.


 [-] **Gregor_The_Beggar** - President | DPM | Sen. for New South Wales | Country Labor • 1 point 10 days ago

 Thank you for appearing today, /u/ARichTeaBiscuit, and I hope that your status as Member for Capricornia could prove enlightening to this Senate Inquiry;

As the Member for Capricornia, could you explain to the House any concerns or issues which you have identified in Far North Queensland poverty specifically and what programs you believe could aid your community?

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [edit](#) [disable inbox replies](#) [delete](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [distinguish](#) [reply](#)

 [-] **ARichTeaBiscuit** • 1 point 7 days ago

 Clerk,

It is my understanding that communities in Far North Queensland suffer from a high rate of poverty and the healthcare, crime and other issues that are associated with poverty.

We can do a lot to alleviate these issues by ensuring that we are investing enough in rural healthcare and education issues, supporting local economic initiatives, delivering social housing and by setting welfare payments at a rate which is sufficient for people to live on.

By working on these issues I believe we can work to tackle poverty in Far North Queensland.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

The next question for the Member of Capricornia was asked by the Senator for New South Wales again and it was related to the issues identified in Far North Queensland poverty specifically and their belief in programs to alleviate suffering there. The Member identified high rates of poverty, high cost of healthcare, high crime rates and other particularly notable issues and highlighted as solutions investment into rural healthcare, education, social housing and high spending on welfare policies.

↑ [-] **model-slater** - Prime Minister | Senator for Victoria | Greens • 1 point 11 days ago
↓ /u/ARichTeaBiscuit. Your electorate and it's constituents rely heavily on the coal and fossil fuel industry for employment, and therefore a living. What role do you believe the government needs to be playing in the renewable transition, and in terms of support for the workers or do you believe it would be best left to the market?

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

↑ [-] **ARichTeaBiscuit** • 1 point 9 days ago

↓ Clerk.

It is true that Capricornia has historically benefited from coal mining and the fossil fuel industry, however, as the world continues to move away from fossil fuels and embrace renewable technology it has become quite clear that these industries don't have a liable long-term future.

It is my opinion that it would be deeply unwise to simply allow the free market to formulate a response, as we have seen in communities in Wales that still suffer as a result of the rug being pulled under their feet due to the sudden closure of the coal industry, with places in the United States providing another example.

If we are to assist these communities transition away from coal and fossil fuels then we need a government that is willing to support them, both through training schemes that can help people move over to an entirely new sector of the economy and through retraining to ensure these people can work to construct and maintain the renewable infrastructure that Australia needs to build itself, as it should be remembered that we've got the potential to transform from a coal exporter to a renewable exporter.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

The final question was from the Senator for Victoria, the Prime Minister Model-Slater, who asked about the reliance of the electorate on coal and fossil fuels and the position of the renewable transition in the electorate. The Member for Capricornia responded by stating that while their electorate was dependent on coal mining and fossil fuels, the renewable industry transfer inevitably occurred as well as their skepticism for the free market to deal with the issue in their electorate. They highlighted the need for training schemes for new sectors and the benefits of retraining programs like the Transitional Careers Scheme. They ended with their belief that Capricornia should become a renewable exporter rather than a coal exporter.

Riley8583

↑ [-] **Gregor_The_Beggar** - President | DPM | Sen. for New South Wales | Country Labor • 1 point 10 days ago

↓ I thank the Member for Moncrieff for his attendance and I will aim to keep his questions brief:
What communities does they see as being the most disadvantaged within their electorate?

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [edit](#) [disable inbox replies](#) [delete](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [distinguish](#) [reply](#)

↑ [-] **riley8583** • 1 point 8 days ago

↓ Clerk.

The electorate of Moncrieff has many communities, so it would be difficult to outline what specific communities are more disadvantaged than others. However, I can say that many regional towns throughout my electorate are in desperate need of funding and support, specifically in the areas of healthcare, education, and infrastructure.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

Member for Moncrieff Riley8583 was called up to speak next by the Senator for New South Wales, who repeated his question about the most disadvantaged communities in his electorate. He highlighted the disadvantage in regional towns in Moncrieff

predominantly, confirming that the phenomenon shown throughout this report also applies to the Division of Moncrieff.

↑ [-] **Inadorable** - Senator for Tasmania | Greens • 2 points 10 days ago
↓ Finally, does the member agree with me that expanding vital services in rural areas is of utmost importance, especially healthcare and education?

permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

↑ [-] **riley8583** • 1 point 8 days ago
↓ Clerk,
I have been an avid advocate for expanding services in our regions. I have been fighting to secure a proposal for a satellite hospital in my electorate, along with other services, such as education.

permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

The Senator for Tasmania then asked the Member for Moncrieff as to their belief in regards to expanding vital services into rural areas, particularly in healthcare and education. The Member for Moncrieff agreed that expansion must take place and highlighted his plan for a Satellite Hospital in Moncrieff to address this. This will be included in the Proposed Actions.

↑ [-] **Inadorable** - Senator for Tasmania | Greens • 2 points 10 days ago
↓ To continue along the lines of my previous question, would the member agree that local stores should be in common ownership of townfolk rather than their big city company bosses?

permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

↑ [-] **riley8583** • 1 point 8 days ago
↓ Clerk,
It is not the job of the government to dictate who owns a private business, and this principle is one of the many key principles of our free-market economy.

permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

↑ [-] **Inadorable** - Senator for Tasmania | Greens • 2 points 8 days ago
↓ Speaker,
I must conclude that the member for Moncrieff is all talk and entirely unwilling to make the systemic changes needed to keep wealth in rural communities, because he and his party are too ideologically attached to protecting the owners of capital, even when it ruins the communities of their own constituents.

permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

The Senator for Tasmania then asked an additional question about common ownership of local stores and whether the Member for Moncrieff agreed with this principle. The Member for Moncrieff showed skepticism as to the role of the Government in that position and ultimately recommended against it.

↑ [-] **Inadorable** - Senator for Tasmania | Greens • 2 points 10 days ago

↓ I think we can agree that poverty in our rural areas is a real problem we should tackle. Whilst we can discuss about welfare, I think this completely ignores the reason why our rural areas are struggling in the first place. That is because our rural areas are exploited to make profit for the wealthy at the expense of our communities.

Does the Member agree that the way to go forward is to implement systems that keeps wealth in rural communities, for example by implementing a mining tax that ensures a large chunk of the profits is reinvested in local communities and wealth funds?

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

↑ [-] **riley8583** • 1 point 8 days ago

↓ Clerk.

The Senator is making an assertion without providing any facts. I'm afraid I have to disagree with all of the suggestions made by the Senator and ask that any further questioning is on the basis of factual evidence rather than opinion.

A mining tax is very detrimental to regional and rural Australia and to the jobs of those working in the industry. Furthermore, a mining tax would arguably hurt the local economy due to the fact that workers could be laid off as a result of such tax, which subsequently results in fewer people investing in the local economy, as most miners are FIFO workers.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

↑ [-] **Inadorable** - Senator for Tasmania | Greens • 3 points 8 days ago

↓ Speaker,

For someone who pretends to speak for regional Australia, the member loves showing his contempt for this part of the country. He opposes a tax that would take money from megacorporations exploiting our land and communities and give it to the communities that desperately need that investment. He opposes plans that would ensure that wealth in the community stays inside the community, rather than being siphoned off by big businesses like supermarket chains and landlords. All because he's so ideologically addicted to capitalism that even the basic truth of more wealth leaving rural communities than enters them is one that is ideologically biased to him. Regional Australia deserves better than him, and I can only ask him to reconsider his stalwart advocacy for the powerful rather than the powerless.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

The Senator for Tasmania asked her final question in regards to implementing systems which keep wealth in rural communities, particularly focusing on a mining tax which would be reinvested into wealth funds. This likely refers to the legislation which the Senator has fielded recently in regards to a Mining Tax proposal and asks the Member for Moncrieff as to his support for this plan. The Member for Moncrieff disagreed with the proposed plan and disagreed with the mining tax implementation for the sake of the economy and mining jobs in rural and regional Australia. The Member for Moncrieff also condemned what they saw as an ideological statement by a Committee member, which has been noted by the Chair.

12MaxWild

12MaxWild was unable to appear at the Committee due to an exemption which was logged and notified by the Chairman of the Committee, we regret that he was unable to make his presence at the Committee known.

BestinBounds

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

↑ [-] **Gregor_The_Beggar** - President | DPM | Sen. for New South Wales | Country Labor • 1 point 10 days ago

↓ I thank the Member for Lingiari for his attendance and I will aim to keep his questions brief:
What communities does he see as being the most disadvantaged within their electorate?

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [edit](#) [disable inbox replies](#) [delete](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [distinguish](#) [reply](#)

↑ [-] **BestinBounds** • 1 point 6 days ago

↓ I thank the Senator for New South Wales for their question.

This is a multi faceted issue which doesn't have an easy question. I suppose if i was to single out one group it would be the indigenous aboriginal groups who often live at the edges of my electorate in rural communities which don't quite yet have easy access to urban centers. It is here where the effects of poverty are most prevalent and where decades of socio-economic negligence by successive governments is at its most potent.

This government has a range of plans to combat this but I understand that this is not the question to outline this plan.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

The Member for Lingiari appeared twice to answer two questions put by the Senator for New South Wales. The first was a repeat of his previous questions about disadvantaged groups in the Northern Territory, with the Member for Lingiari responding that it is not an easy question to answer but singling out remote Aboriginal communities in the electorate whereupon he criticized socio-economic negligence on the part of previous governments.

↑ [-] **Gregor_The_Beggar** - President | DPM | Sen. for New South Wales | Country Labor • 1 point 10 days ago

↓ I thank the Member for Lingiari for their attendance in this inquiry tonight:

Can the Member for Lingiari explain what the potential impact of mining related taxation could be within his electorate and whether he would support these schemes or not and would he elaborate further what kind of support he wishes to see for mining workers who lose their employment due to a host of different tax policies?

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [edit](#) [disable inbox replies](#) [delete](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [distinguish](#) [reply](#)

↑ [-] **BestinBounds** • 1 point 6 days ago

↓ I thank the senator for New South Wales for their question.

Look I'll be blunt that mining and related industries are a core component of the NT economy. Many in Lingiari are employed in these mines, especially closer to the heart of the nation. Taxation would lead to the loss of jobs, which is unfortunate, however in the long term the money generated from taxation in these industries would be crucial for redistribution throughout the electorate. We have major inequality problems, decades of underfunding in key social and public services to reverse as well as a healthcare system being redesigned and retooled so it can compete under the strains and requirements needed for operating a system that has wide coverage of rural areas. We need to fund, and I would support the imposition of tax schemes on mining sectors to create the foundation we need to build a better lingiari for tomorrow.

In terms of support for our unemployed miners, I publicly back the creation of a new mining workers redundancy support payment, targeted at paying out 75-100% of previous salaries from mining. Therefore creating financial stability for our workers who lose their jobs as a result.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [spam](#) [remove](#) [report](#) [give award](#) [reply](#)

The Member for Lingiari's second question related to mining taxation and whether or not he supported schemes to support former mining workers who lose their employment. The Member for Lingiari agreed that there would be a loss of jobs caused by a mining tax in Lingiari and highlighted that particularly occurring in his State. He however still supported the mining tax on the condition it was redistributed into the community to solve inequality issues, finance social and public services and retool healthcare in the Territory. He specifically backed the Mining Workers Redundancy

Fund which has been proposed in the past and called for a 75-100% payout of former salaries which the MWRF called for.

PuzzledWaste

↑ [-] **dyljam**  **Sen. for Western Australia | SDP Senate Leader** • 1 point 11 days ago

↓ u/PuzzledWaste - As Minister for Trade, you have immense responsibility over our agricultural industry, which is responsible for employing significant numbers of rural Australians. What policies have you pursued in your position to strengthen Australia's agricultural export industry?

permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

↑ [-] **PuzzledWaste** • 1 point 8 days ago

↓ I thank the Senator for Western Australia for their question.

We are currently pursuing a tariff-free relationship with India. Furthermore, we are improving relations with Asian nations in general, and we are cutting taxes on coops, as many farms are. These actions will help strengthen our agricultural industry.

permalink embed save parent spam remove report give award reply

The Member for Denison responded to a single question posed to him in regards to the Australian Agricultural export industry in his position as Minister of Trade. He was asked about the kinds of policies he would like to see pursued to strengthen the export industry to aid rural Australians, with the Member replying that they would look at exporting to Asia particularly India as well as slashing taxes on co-operatives.

Captain_Plat_2258

Captain_Plat_2258, after correspondence with the Committee, was unable to make an appearance at the Committee due to personal reasons pertaining to her present employment and so she was granted a logged exemption by the Chairman of the Committee.

Model-Kyosanto

Model-Kyosanto did not appear at the Senate Inquiry and did not answer Committee Summons. The Chair did not receive any communication as to the reasoning.

Information Consolidation and Gathering Reports

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/8/20/aboriginal-people-in-nsw-face-covid-crisis-within-a-crisis>

The First Bit of Information Consolidated for the Report comes from an Aljazeera piece surrounding COVID-19 outbreaks in Aboriginal communities in New South Wales, which also highlight an increasingly devolving healthcare system within the region as well as the conditions of overcrowded housing. While the COVID-19 response is outside of the purview of this Committee and discussion about the inefficacy of vaccination is a matter for the Health Department to resolve, this Committee does highlight two prominent issues found in this article. The first is about Aboriginal healthcare access which is vastly reduced compared to the rest of Australia. It offers the truly startling figure that Aboriginal Australians lead the world in Rheumatic Heart Disease and still suffer from a host of preventable and treatable illnesses such as Trachoma. A large degree of this is also tied into the large households and rural housing crisis which the article talks about, a symptom of complete lack of housing in rural and regional areas leading to overcrowded housing conditions. This will be integrated into the Proposed Action.

<https://ruralhealth.org.au/sites/default/files/publications/nrha-factsheet-povertynov2017.pdf>

The Fact Sheet Published by Rural Health sets forth a concise document with crucial figures for the Committee to consider. The Fact Sheet states that incomes for those in rural and regional communities were 18% lower than those for urban communities and that their net household worth was significantly lower being 29% lower than those in urban areas. The Fact Sheet also describes how the cost of living is higher on most fronts for rural and regional Australians, aligning with the testimony the Committee has received. The cost of food is highlighted as being up to 20% higher in rural and regional areas than in urban centers. The cost of petrol as well is highlighted as being 10% higher than in urban centers as well. This also adds onto the potential for higher costs of energy, a phenomenon noted by the testimony of the Member for Capricornia in rural and regional Queensland.

The Report highlights how 5% of rural and regional individuals did not see a GP due to the costs of it, a 2% increase from their urban counterparts. Most shocking of all is a large 23 and 21% of those who did not see a dentist due to the cost of it. This highlights an issue of overall healthcare rollout throughout Australia.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-05-11/federal-election-2019-you-ask-we-answer-new-start/11102702?pfmredir=sm>

This ABC Article which has been presented raises the point in regards to NewStart Benefit Increases and the benefits associated with it. The Committee takes in the evidence and the testimony from the wide range of Australians within it and will integrate the recommendations to increase NewStart to address poverty as being a worthy cause to investigate.

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/bushtelegraph/rural-poverty/5909108>

The Committee received this ABC article surrounding the poorest regions of Australia broken down by the electorates at the time. This article makes particular mention of the Sunshine Coast region, Agricultural New South Wales and Western Australian Mining Communities. Most of all however it highlights major inequality and poverty in the State of Tasmania and causes immediate concern to the Committee to hear of. This will be discussed in the Proposed Action.

<https://www.actu.org.au/media/1385714/d34-actu-submission-regional-jobs-of-the-future.pdf>

This ACTU Submission highlights some truly shocking statistics to the Committee which are worth consideration. The ACTU Submission highlights a host of discussions surrounding regional and rural jobs, highlighting the role of the service industry and the need for continued support of the service industry within these areas. The ACTU Submission also provides a concrete unemployment figure for consideration by the Committee for particular regions. The ACTU Submission highlights areas of high unemployment in Gippsland, in Coastal New South Wales but most particularly in Far North Queensland where there is a shocking unemployment rate of 15% which is three times that of the national average. The report also highlights Youth Unemployment as being particularly high in rural and regional areas.

“Broadmeadows in Melbourne’s north, once home to 600 Ford workers, and many more in the supply chain, has an unemployment rate of 25.4%. Elizabeth, the home of Holden manufacturing for nearly 100 years, now has nearly a third of the workforce unable to find work. Elizabeth East and Port Adelaide both have unemployment levels of over 13%. Some estimates put the number of job losses in Adelaide’s automotive components and manufacturing supply chain at 50,000. “

This particular quote, using the example of the automobile industry in Australia, reveals a shocking fall in employment due to deindustrialization and the failure of Government

policy to adequately address this in rural and regional areas. This same crisis presents itself right now with regards to mining jobs and highlights the need for immediate action to reduce the collapse of Australian mining, which is seeming incredibly inevitable. The ACTU submission will be the most helpful in the findings of this report.

Proposed Action

The Committee makes the following proposed actions in-line with the evidence gathered for the length of this report from a combination of testimony and evidence being presented to the Committee.

The Paramount Finding of the Committee is in the field of job growth and creation. The Committee has received overwhelming evidence that job growth is at the heart of alleviating rural and regional poverty and many of those who have testified alongside the written information presented to the Committee supports continued job growth. The Committee has found that particular areas of job growth which have been identified are in renewable energy sources which could potentially replace existing mining jobs into the future alongside a return to the public service employment which was characterized previously by the SEC. The Committee therefore finds that the Commonwealth has a major role to play in being an employer in rural and regional areas and that job growth could likely occur substantially due to increased Government employment intervention into the rural and regional countryside.

The Committee was asked to identify the efficacy of a potential Mining Tax in ensuring community investment and the impact it could have on jobs in states with a dependence on mining such as the Northern Territory, New South Wales and Queensland. The majority of those questioned about a Mining Tax found that the Mining Tax would either cause negligible job losses or would still be beneficial despite the job losses it would cause. The exception to this was the Member for Moncrieff, who recommended against a Mining Tax in his community of Moncrieff. Additional explanation was provided as to the need for these Mining Taxes to support investment back into the communities it was taken out of. The Committee therefore endorses a Mining Tax of some variety on the condition it is invested back into rural communities it originates from. The Committee makes specific reference to the Mining Workers Redundancy Fund proposal which received support in the Northern Territory context. Further investigation may be required as to efficacy elsewhere.

The Committee recommends that rural healthcare and education particularly continue to be financed and prioritized by the Commonwealth Government to provide additional support to rural and regional Australians. The Committee therefore

recommends the Commonwealth continues to support such schemes, particularly in the field of those which already exist such as the Hospital Modernization Scheme or Rural Education Fund. The Committee however has not found convincing evidence that education is a reliable tool to lift rural and regional Australians out of poverty without first undertaking other, more significant aspects of financing and recommends the prioritization of job growth over rural higher education.

The Committee recommends that immediate satellite hospitals be financed in the next budget for the area of regional Moncrieff, Tablederry, Wyandra, Teelba, Cherbourg and Mungallala and finally the suburb of Tharwa in the city of Canberra. Further satellite hospitals will need to be examined on a case-by-case basis, particularly due to their potential to create job opportunities as well as furthering health outcomes. The Committee also recommends the creation of specialized healthcare clinics in rural and regional areas.

The Committee has identified welfare as a key determinant in reducing rural and regional poverty and has received repeated testimony as to the efficacy of welfare in defeating rural poverty. The Committee has specifically received discussion about the need for welfare access in rural and regional Queensland and in Far North Queensland. The Committee endorses the changes which have been made in regards to welfare reform such as the extension of JobKeeper and the increase to payments such as NewStart for their role in reducing rural and regional poverty.

The Committee has identified lack of access to Government services as a determinant of rural and regional poverty. In particular, an area of focus presented by testimony was in access to Government support such as welfare alongside Government postal services and banking services. To address this issue, the AusBank scheme which was started during the last Budget appears to be a strong factor in being able to increase accessibility between rural Australia and the Commonwealth Government. The Committee endorses continued postal office expansion and the continued rollout of the AusBank scheme and recommends that AusBank be expanded with the powers to make relevant welfare payments to accounts with cooperation of Social Services.

The Committee has heard the proposal for a Canberra Infrastructure Fund reminiscent of the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility Act. This new fund for Canberra would be in regards to the fringes of Canberra and the Jervis Bay Territory. The Committee endorses this proposal as long as it is equivalent to the population of the region, due to the more specialized focus of this scheme compared to the far broader Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility.

The Committee heard a submission about bulk billing reform in regards to rural healthcare and restoring further bulk billing access for rural and regional communities. This was presented without debate or more nuanced analysis but from a purely practical and technical standpoint, increasing bulk billing in rural areas does lead to a decrease in overall healthcare costs. The Committee therefore endorses increased bulk billing support for rural and regional Australia provisionally to alleviate rural poverty.

The Committee notes higher rates of inaccessibility to a dentist due to the associated costs of it among regional and rural Australians. To this end, the Committee endorses programs to increase dental health in rural and regional Australians and is optimistic about the planned expansion of Medicare coverage to fully cover dental costs.

The Committee urges that the Commonwealth Government immediately seek to intervene in particularly Aboriginal communities in remote areas in the field of healthcare treatment. The high rates of Rheumatic Heart Disease must be immediately countered by the Government through any available means and the Government is recommended to launch a war to eliminate diseases such as Trachoma from the community within at least five years.

The Committee acknowledges the rural housing crisis and the conditions of overcrowding which have been caused by a lack of good housing stock. Overcrowding has continued to lead to worse health outcomes in particularly rural areas and has led to a host of other problems in regards to housing quality and maintenance costs. The Committee recommends that the Government seek to alleviate the rural housing crisis with a plan to construct additional state housing in remote and rural Australia as well as seek to overhaul regional and rural housing approaches completely with a whole new Office within the Department dedicated to rural housing upgrades.

The Committee has heard proposals surrounding rural and regional infrastructure and public transport accessibility. Out of the testimony which was heard, the rural and remote busways are a vital service to be provided to the community. The Committee was provided a particularly convincing testimony by the Member for Canberra in regards to ensuring remote bus services to regional hubs, which can have fast rail connections into urban centers. The Committee wishes to expand on this proposal as well, adding onto this that increasing rail freight connections between regional centers and urban centers will allow for greater export opportunities for rurally-produced goods. The Committee recommends the proposal set out by the Member for Canberra and recommends it be adopted by the Commonwealth. The Committee notes however this is a lower priority compared to other policy proposals due to larger costs.

The Committee has recognized through testimony and evidence presented to the Committee the higher costs of living for rural and regional Australians in terms of essentials. The Committee found that food, fuel and energy are prohibitively high in rural and regional Australia compared to their urban counterparts. The Government is recommended by their Committee to undertake broad reforms on this subject matter but is unable to provide any substantive specific suggestions as to what to do to alleviate this beyond GST removal, which has already been undertaken in the field of electricity.

The Committee recommends specific and immediate attention is drawn to the Tasmanian Poverty crisis which is currently underway in Tasmania. With the evidence provided prior to the Committee sitting alongside evidence collected during the information stage of this Committee, it is clear that poverty in Tasmania is something serious to be immediately addressed. The Committee recommends the Government undertake serious reform to reduce Tasmanian Poverty, likely in the fields highlighted above but especially in terms of job opportunities.

The Committee recommends specific and immediate attention be taken in regards to Far North Queensland Unemployment rates.

The Committee recommends that Youth Unemployment be tackled in rural and regional centers through targeted apprenticeship programs and other support mechanisms to restore jobs for Youths in rural and regional Australia. The Committee endorses the WorkChoices scheme for this purpose.

Conclusion

In Conclusion, the Committee has found that there is a massive crisis within rural and regional Australia in regards to poverty which simply needs to be addressed. The Committee has found through testimony and reports chronic issues relating to welfare access, job opportunities, healthcare, education, remoteness, public transport and a host of others in accessibilities while also coming to conclusions in regards to the efficacy of mining taxation legislation and a host of other planned schemes.

The Committee's finding calls for the dramatic spending of billions of dollars over a multitude of years and is set as a benchmark for all future Governments to aim to achieve in terms of future spending. There is a host of recommended programs for current and successive Governments within this report and the Committee recommends that the Government adopt all of its findings within their powers to achieve these aims and goals.

The Committee would like to provide special acknowledgement to the Senators of the Committee and to those who answered questions to aid in the process of presenting this Report.

Gregor The Beggar, Senator

Chairman of the Committee, Senator for New South Wales