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REGIONALISATION

A Public Sector Issue in Queensland

SYNOPSIS

The regionalisation of government services provides greater access by service users whilst the devolution of authority enables quicker response to their needs.

Regionalisation of government operations is a key element of the current Queensland government regional development policy.

Corporate planning and program budgeting have been introduced in the government sector to improve efficiency, effectiveness and equity in service provision.

This paper discusses the rationale for regionalisation and the need for devolution of authority if the process is to be successful. At both the national and state levels, examples of regionalisation are examined. Audits conducted by the Australian National Audit Office reveal that it is not a simple matter to successfully regionalise departments that have been strongly centralised in the past.

Currently in Queensland there is a desire at Chief Executive level to regionalise the functions of departments as much as possible. This is a necessary ingredient for success for without it, regionalisation efforts will only be token at best. The Public Sector Management Commission has also supported the push for regionalisation and it has done this through organisational reviews of various departments.
INTRODUCTION

The regionalisation of government administration is a current topic in Queensland. The recent introduction of corporate plans and program budgeting has added impetus to the regionalisation process.

This paper discusses the rationale for regionalisation and the need for devolution of authority if the process is to be successful. At both the national and state levels, examples of regionalisation are examined. Audits conducted by the Australian National Audit Office reveal that it is not a simple matter to successfully regionalise departments that have been strongly centralised in the past.

Currently in Queensland there is a desire at Chief Executive level to regionalise the function of departments as much as possible. This is a necessary ingredient for success, for without it, regionalisation efforts will only be token at best. The Public Sector Management Commission has also supported the push for regionalisation and it has done this through organisational reviews of various departments.

For regionalisation to be successful it needs to be supported at the Chief Executive level and accompanied by devolution. Additionally the aims and objectives need to be understood by lower level employees.

The current Queensland government has committed itself to a policy of the regionalisation of government activity wherever possible. As a result the process is being driven from the top with Chief Executives being expected to incorporate it within their departmental programs.
CHAPTER 1: PUBLIC SECTOR REGIONALISATION

The decentralisation or regionalisation of public services has been one result of a drive for resource efficiency in government service provision generally. During economically stagnant times the calls for efficiency and effectiveness are at their strongest. For decentralisation to be accomplished, artificial regions are created for the purposes of administration and planning. The administration of and planning for service programs are then aimed at individual regions or groups of regions.

Dr Peter Coaldrake, current Chair of the Queensland Public Sector Management Commission, in a speech to the Commonwealth/State Heads of Agency Conference in 1991, articulated the current concern in Queensland in this way:

The Goss Government’s commitment to a program of regionalisation arose out of a set of concerns about both the geographic and professional remoteness of decision-making and the need to devolve decisions about service delivery closer to clients by ensuring that such responsibility be vested as far as possible with regional and local offices... It was also expected that any such activities would occur in a manner consonant with the strategic regional development framework concurrently being developed by the Bureau of Regional Development.1

The process of regionalisation is being co-ordinated in Queensland in conjunction with the strategies for economic development and regional development. Changes aimed at revitalising the Queensland public service are only a part of the much larger economic and regional development strategies as evidenced by the Government’s Regional Economic Development Plan for the 1989 election. Under the Plan a commitment was given to revitalise the state’s public sector in order that its service delivery be improved.

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IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY THROUGH REGIONALISATION.

Decentralisation OR Regionalisation.

Decentralisation can be defined as the location of branch offices away from the centre but with no autonomy. Decentralisation alone does not entail the devolution of authority.

Regionalisation also entails the establishment and maintenance of offices away from the centre but the feature that distinguishes it from decentralisation is the devolution of authority to the regional offices. This is very important. This point is made quite clear by Prasser and Neylan:

Of course, regionalisation of government is not new either in Australia or overseas...Nevertheless, it is a topic which is more “talked about” than acted upon, largely one suspects because it is more complex and difficult to do than initially appears. Also, real regionalisation which involves devolution of power from central to regional offices and managers is so against the existing power structures of organisations and constraints of public sector accountability that perhaps it, just cannot happen.

If accountability by the centre is considered paramount then decentralisation is the process by which a higher level of public access can be achieved. But whilst this process goes some way towards better service delivery it does not satisfy the supporters of regionalisation. Decentralisation can at best improve service delivery and at worst stifle initiative and imagination with respect to the fulfilment of client needs.

THE NEED FOR DEVOLUTION OF DECISION MAKING

The thrust of regionalisation is client satisfaction. Thus, the delegation of authority is integral to the process. Without it failure would result. However, the delegation of authority through regionalisation does raise questions. Can it be achieved without reducing accountability to permanent heads and of Ministers to Parliament? Also, can it be achieved without causing inequality of service delivery between regions.

There are two ways in which delegation of authority can be effected. Firstly, it can be achieved informally by internal administrative arrangements, initiated or approved by the chief executive officer. Alternatively, it can be achieved through the enactment of legislation where it is precisely worded and that right is given to the Chief Executive Officer who delegates authority to other officers.

Subordinate legislation such as Regulations can also be used. For example, s.4.10 of the Police Service Administration Act 1990 empowers the Police

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Commissioner to delegate authority over particular matters to subordinate officers. This has been achieved through the position of Regional Commander.

The aim of government regionalisation policies is to provide a better level of service to the user or consumer. If devolution does not accompany regionalisation then this aim will not be achieved because central control is inherently more inflexible and unable to respond quickly to changing local needs.

Where better provision of service is not achieved, there is a negative tendency to brand the regionalisation policy as unworkable or unrealistic. While policies generally improve social equity levels, their effect may be minimal if implemented insensitively.

What is devolution? O'Connor\(^3\) believes that devolution is simply the placement of real authority as close to the work face as possible. Devolution of authority carries with it a high degree of responsibility, and the greater the level of devolution the greater the level of responsibility.

O'Connor argues that devolution is not only concerned with service provision:

> ...the Australian Public Service is using devolution, amongst other things, to develop a more entrepreneurial style of management as a means of increasing productivity and effective program delivery.\(^4\)

Jenny Bedlington, New South Wales State Manager of the Department of Community Services and Health, has proposed a more radical definition of devolution:

> Devolution can be thought of as the placement of power to make decisions on strategies, priorities and resource allocation, together with its concomitant responsibility and accountability, at the level of organisation and the level within organisational units which lead to the most cost-effective decision. So devolution is a process of paring away non-productive layers in the management process, layers that add little or no value to original action and recommendations.\(^5\)

Access to public services is a right of all citizens irrespective of geographical location. At the same time there is an obligation on the part of government to use available financial and manpower resources efficiently as they are finite.

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\(^4\) O'Connor, op.cit., p.6.

For supporters of decentralisation, regionalisation and devolution, the point is not to expect too much, for it is not a 'cure all' for non-metropolitan areas. On the other hand, opponents must realise that efficiency and effectiveness cannot be measured in dollars and cents alone.
The following statements sum up the debate over regionalisation and devolution:

A balance must be reached between equity and efficiency goals as the financial resources of the State are finite and cannot support widespread delivery points, but client cost must not be excessive to receive the services they need.\[6\]

Devolution has been the flavour of the month for some time and unfortunately there are instances where it may have gone too far too soon or have been inappropriate.\[7\]

Inconsistency in decision making has always been a major argument used by opponents of devolution. However, those who support devolution (whilst excepting it as a criticism) do not believe it is a sufficient argument to halt devolution:

If the price we pay for devolution is a little inconsistency - so be it. Overall our clients are far better off.....In my view the advantages which flow from enhanced client contact, immediate decision taking, speed of decisions and quality of decisions and, may I say it, the occasional breaking down of hotbeds of industrial activity outweigh the problems of any perceived lack of consistency.\[8\]

**IS THERE A COMMON LEVEL OF DEVOLUTION?**

The short answer to this question is no. The appropriate level of devolution varies from department to department. The objectives of devolution will dictate how far it is taken. As Bedlington so succinctly puts it:

The decision whether or not to devolve a function must be focussed simply on improvements in productivity and effectiveness and be guided by Managers' personal commitment to achieving quality outcomes for their clients, at the least possible cost to the tax-payer.\[9\]

One-stop service centres have been established in Queensland to ensure services are provided efficiently. (These services will be discussed later.)

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\[7\] O’Connor, op.cit., p.11.


\[9\] Bedlington, op.cit., p.82
CHAPTER 2: REGIONALISATION AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The Department of Post-War Construction was established by the Chifley government in 1944 for the purpose of improved regional planning. The strategy agreed upon by State and Commonwealth Governments involved:

- delimitation of regions;
- undertaking of regional resource surveys;
- assessment of regional development potentials;
- encouragement of co-operation between Federal, State and Local Governments to plan for conservation and development;
- decentralisation of planning to regional organisations to strengthen local participation;
- relating regional development to State and national economic policy;
- establishing administrative machinery to enable Commonwealth and State regional planning.  

Ninety-seven regions were delineated in Australia: 20 in New South Wales, 13 in Victoria, 18 in Queensland, 20 in South Australia, 16 in Western Australia, six in Tasmania and four in the Northern Territory.

After 1950 the Menzies governments pursued different regional development strategies through the Ministry of National Development, undertaking major construction projects to stimulate regional growth.

In 1973 the Department of Urban and Regional Development (DURD) formulated new regionalisation policies to achieve metropolitan decentralisation. Decentralisation was seen as a strategy for overcoming urban congestion and to allow economic growth in rural areas. Local Government areas were used as the building blocks to establish regions with a strong community of interest. Fluidity of boundaries was built into the system to take account of transport routes and marketing factors. In the end DURD accepted the regions proposed by the State Governments. Although the system became redundant with the change of Commonwealth Government in 1975 some elements of DURD's regionalisation scheme were implemented e.g. Australian Bureau of Statistics used the DURD regions as Statistical Divisions.  

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11. ibid., pp.6-9.
In 1988 the Australian Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs reported on the Country Centres Project 1986-87 addressing the issue of regional development Australia-wide. Seventy-five regions were constructed nation wide, seventeen within Queensland either partially or wholly. They were not organised with a hierarchy in mind but were regarded as mutually exclusive. In 1988 the department published a number of working papers:

... to provide up-to-date information to local government authorities and regional bodies to assist them in their planning and management tasks. It also aims to develop an information base for improving the responsiveness of government policies to varying local needs and potential. In addition, the analyses serve as an information base to better inform the local delivery of Government programs.\textsuperscript{12}

**APPROACHES TO DEFINING REGIONS**

There is no single approach to the construction of regions, as different configurations lend themselves to different purposes. Once the purpose is defined a configuration can be drawn that will support the collection of data for identified needs. Authorities such as Telecom, Australia Post, and electricity generation authorities, have devised regions to suit their own needs.

There are two main ways in which boundaries are determined. Firstly, to maximise the access to the services provided, resulting in minimal cost and inconvenience to the client. Secondly, boundaries may be drawn to take account of economy and efficiencies. The first approach focuses on clients: the second approach favours the service agency and precludes networking between regions.

Unfortunately, these two approaches are not complementary to each other. A client and service oriented network, may not be viewed as cost efficient and cost effective and is vulnerable in times of economic cutbacks.

The most effective form lies between the two. To provide a service unnecessarily may result in wastage whilst ultimately an administrative driven approach may lose sight of client needs.

**RECENT REFORMS**

Under the *Public Service Reform Act* 1984 the permanent heads of Commonwealth departments and agencies have had the power to create, abolish and reclassify positions devolved to them. Prior to the 1984 Act the Public Service Board was responsible for this.

Since department or agency heads have taken over the responsibility for human resource management, there has been further devolution down the

The devolution of authority to classify positions has progressed to regional and program managers.

Further reforms occurred in 1986 via the Public Service Legislation (Streamlining) Act with many of the Public Service Board’s powers, such as determining hours of duty, working patterns and arrangements, being devolved or delegated to Heads of Departments.

The Administrative Arrangements Act 1987 abolished the Public Service Board and established the Public Service Commission. This act also established the Management Advisory Board as an advisory board to the Prime Minister on management matters. The act also substantially reduced the number of departments from twenty-eight to seventeen.

With its Management Improvement Advisory Committee, the Management Advisory Board has produced two papers on devolution - Devolution and Regional Offices, and Devolution of Corporate Services. These papers indicate how devolution has been implemented to different degrees, and with varying degrees of success as a consequence.

The Management Advisory Board made its attitude quite clear:

> to attempt to identify best practice may not be useful because the extent of devolution can only be determined with reference to the type of agency i.e. size, culture, purpose, and geographic spread.\(^\text{13}\)

and further:

> ...there is no best practice for devolving corporate service functions. Rather agencies must adopt strategies that provide a best fit for their particular set of circumstances.\(^\text{14}\)

Obviously, the Board is not concerned with the establishment of any rigid standard to be imposed on departments and agencies.

However, the Board did argue that:

> Nevertheless, there are a number of common principles and practices which are worthy of note. Successful devolution largely depends upon a strong and clearly articulated commitment from the chief executive officer, good vertical and horizontal communication, well designed and timely training and development programs, and good management information systems.\(^\text{15}\)

**EXAMPLES OF REGIONALISATION AUDITS**

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\(^\text{14}\) ibid., p.17.

\(^\text{15}\) ibid.
The Australian National Audit Office has conducted efficiency audits on a number of Commonwealth departments and agencies in which the effects of regionalisation were examined. Several of these are detailed below:
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)

ATSIC has 29 Regional Offices employing 486 staff, equal to 44% of total ATSIC staff. The average staff level of a regional office is 17. These regional offices work with and support the elected ATSIC Regional Councils through a secretariat established in the office.

Much of the activity of Regional Offices involves the assessment, delivery and monitoring of grants to community based organisations. The purposes of the audits were to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of Regional Offices in implementing ATSIC programs and supporting Regional Councils.

In Queensland there are six Regional Offices, located in Brisbane, Rockhampton, Townsville, Cairns, Torres Strait and Mount Isa. The only Sub-office is at Roma.

Despite this extensive regionalisation network, the Australian Audit Office described the level of service and the operation of Regional Offices in this way:

... Regional Offices are providing a reasonable level of service to indigenous communities..\(^\text{16}\)

and

The ANAO considers that Regional Offices can be used more efficiently and effectively.\(^\text{17}\)

It is clear from comments such as these that the regionalisation of government services in itself is not a guarantee that service provision will be any more effective than if it were centralised. There is simply more to it than physical location. The development and training of staff in regional offices is an extremely important aspect. This was an aspect that was criticised in the audit report:

Regional Office staffing and training arrangements and reporting structures need to be improved.\(^\text{18}\)

Department of Social Security (DSS)

The department employs in excess of 20 000 in over 300 locations across Australia. The National Administration Headquarters is located in Canberra. Client services are delivered in Area Offices and 213 region-based offices delivering client services.

Under s.14 of the Social Security Act 1991 the Secretary delegates his/her powers over administration and service delivery to officers in all three levels.


\(^{17}\) ibid., p.xii.

\(^{18}\) ibid., p.x.
Manuals and instructions have been produced to ensure consistency in decision making.

DSS has three area offices in Queensland - the Northern Area office in Townsville, and the Southern and Central Area offices both in Brisbane. There are a total of 48 Regional Offices involved in program delivery with 12 or 25% of these located in the Metropolitan area.

The department is currently progressing through a rationalisation and devolution process at all three administrative levels. (National Administration, Area, and Regional Offices).

The Australian Audit Office completed an efficiency audit to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the operations and management of the sub-program covering Special Benefit payable to clients. Amongst other things the efficiency audit was concerned with the consistency of decision-making across Regional Offices. The Audit Report was critical of the standard of decision-making:

> There was a variety of local administrative arrangements used to administer Special Benefit in Regional Offices visited by the ANAO and these arrangements appeared to affect the quality of decision-making and the documentation in support of the decisions made.19

As a result of this finding the Audit Office recommended:

> That DSS emphasise to its Regional Offices the importance of staff experience in the proper administration of Special Benefit.20

This type of comment emphasises a long held criticism that regionalisation and resultant devolution are inherently inconsistent.

**Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs**

This department has publicly pursued a decentralisation program by downsizing some larger offices and creating smaller service outlets. Each office is virtually managerially autonomous in immigration matters and deals with clients in a one-stop-shop environment.

The department's Corporate Plan has set the direction of a highly planned and structured devolution process to the management of the Regional Offices. They now have authority to make decisions on Permanent Residence and most deportation orders. However determinations on Refugee Status and criminal and mandatory deportations for overstaying a Visa are still controlled by the central office in Canberra.

Regional offices and Central Office in Canberra have agreed on standards of

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20 ibid., p.33.
service following devolution of decision making.
The department operates six state offices and two territory offices as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Regional Offices</th>
<th>Area Offices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Southport, Townsville, Cairns)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As at June 1992, 56% of the department's staff were located in the designated regions. Regional managers are responsible for the development of their own financial and human resource estimates which are subject to negotiation with the central office in Canberra.

In commenting on the DSS the Management Advisory Board reported that the pace of the devolution process within the department had been too fast:

> With the advantage of hindsight it has become apparent that it was unrealistic to expect staff to cope with so many major changes simultaneously.\(^{21}\)

Nonetheless, the Board concluded:

> However there have undoubtedly been improvements in the effectiveness of most aspects of service delivery. There have been some mistakes made in the initial application of devolution. It is important to view the efficiency and effectiveness of devolved functions and to be prepared to make some adjustments as reviews are completed.\(^{22}\)

**Commonwealth Employment Service (CES)**

Other than Australia Post the CES has the most extensive Commonwealth network. As part of the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) the CES is officially classed for administrative purposes as a program called Labour Market Operation.

Central Office in Canberra has only 4.5% of total staff employed there whilst 95.5% are located in the States and Territories. The network of Offices across the country totalled 737 in 1990-91.

The main operational management for the network is Area management.

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\(^{21}\) Australia. Management Advisory Board, Management Improvement Advisory Committee, op.cit., p.29.

\(^{22}\) ibid., p.30.
Area Directors are responsible for strategic direction, allocation of resources and performance monitoring. The devolved management structure of the CES gives local managers freedom to implement recommendations from national reviews where they consider them to be appropriate. The CES has 27 Areas:

- New South Wales 9
- Victoria 5
- Queensland 5
- Western Australia 3
- South Australia 2
- Tasmania 2
- Northern Territory 1.

Since 1987, policy reviews have been aimed at the improvement of the quality of service to clients. As part of the client-centred approach CES staff are allowed discretion in making decisions on the program best suited to their clients' needs and to local labour market circumstances. Planning in the department takes into consideration for a bottom-up contribution of views from Area Offices and local CES staff who deal directly with the public.

The network of Offices give differentiated services. These are Job Centres for mainstream job registration; Special Service Centres for disadvantaged clients; Youth Access Centres advising young people on employment and training; and Industry Services Centres that liaise with employers. In country locations where it is not cost-effective to have differentiated services Country Service Centres have all CES services in the one Office.

In Queensland there are 33 Job Centres located in towns and cities away from Brisbane as well as a number of Agents in small country towns. Since March 1991, the entire network Australia-wide has been linked by a mainframe computer database and has increased the capacity of the CES to locate vacancies in other districts to benefit job seekers in country areas. CES also uses mobile centres to visit rural and remote areas. For instance, a Youth Access Centre uses the state rail system in South Western Queensland. The centre is a demountable building on a flat top rail wagon.

Similar to the one-stop-shops operating at the state level in Queensland, the CES participated with other Commonwealth agencies in a trial in 1990-91 in providing all Commonwealth programs and services from a single office.
CHAPTER 3: REGIONALISATION AT THE STATE LEVEL

New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australian state governments initiated public service inquiries between 1975 and 1985. Following criticism of the Queensland Public Sector the Queensland Coordinator General, the Public Service Board Chairman and the Under-Secretary of the Premier's Department reviewed the Queensland Public Sector in 1977.

There was criticism of the inquiry by an academic in Public Administration:

> The need for decentralising the public service to the grass roots level needs to be borne constantly in mind.
> What will result from the review? Without doubt there will be changes, but they are likely to be of the cosmetic variety - tokens of change rather than the real thing.\(^{23}\)

Another obvious criticism of the public and private sectors in Queensland:

> ... was that the highly centralised government control from Brisbane was creating more delays and higher costs than in any other state.\(^{24}\)

Kidston makes particular reference to the Education Department:

> During the 1970's and early 1980's the Queensland Department exhibited many of the signs of "organisational drift" - a concern to keep the system 'ticking over' while tinkering at the margin to produce incremental change. In this connection the inertia evident in Education was typical of what Scott\(^{25}\) and Hughes\(^{26}\) have suggested was a wider problem in Queensland's system of public administration at that time - a propensity to pay lip service to public accountability but an unwillingness to engage in constructive self criticism of a kind that might produce fundamental administrative reform.\(^{27}\)

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23 Tucker, Douglas, "Public Service Inquiry: no way to change the system", *Courier-Mail*, 10 November 1977, p.5.


25 1979 pp.92-97

26 1980 pp.200-201

Painter\textsuperscript{28} writes that decentralisation and regionalisation were highly prominent in administrative reform in the other states in the 1970's. Now it would appear that in the early 1990's, Queensland is going through the same process.

Since election in 1989 the Queensland State government has proceeded to implement its policy of reform of government administration in Queensland. Public sector reforms have not been viewed in isolation, as a statement from a 1989 policy paper prepared by the State Parliamentary Labor Party showed:

\begin{quote}
The Goss Labor government will look to the public service as an integral part of revitalising Queensland.\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

Regionalisation was not mentioned in this policy document on Public Sector Reform. An undertaking was given to restore efficiency in public administration by implementing the recommendations of the proposed Public Sector Management Commission on public service matters. However, regionalisation was referred to specifically in several policy statements. The ten-point Economic Development Strategy for Queensland, prepared for the 1989 election, listed a commitment to revitalise the public sector and to implement of a comprehensive regional development strategy. The Labor Party contested the 1989 election with a regional economic policy that included the regionalisation of government administration tempered by efficiency in service delivery. The policy statement on Fire Services gave a commitment for the administration of fire services on a regional basis\textsuperscript{30} and the Health Policy document spoke of retaining the best aspects of both central control and regional autonomy.\textsuperscript{31}

The new government established a northern and rural task force with membership drawn solely from within government ranks at the Parliamentary level. Its role is to monitor the impact and co-ordination of the state's regionalisation program. The chairperson of the task force reports directly to the Premier.

The \textit{Public Sector Management Commission Act 1990} established the Public Sector Management Commission whose brief includes the review of agencies and their functions. The Premier, as the responsible Minister introducing the legislation, mentioned the need for the Public Sector Management Commission to ensure appropriate organisational structures within

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
Soon after its creation the Public Sector Management Commission made its approach to government administration in Queensland quite clear, as over:

Crucial to internal self-management is the requirement that managers in the field be vested with sufficient authority and resources to handle business, at the counter and in the regional office, speedily and expeditiously. Most work should be handled locally, within the framework of the corporate plan. A regional office which spends any significant amount of time or effort referring matters elsewhere is an office which has either been not properly designed or empowered. Once the strategic direction as it affects the regional office has been settled find their way to central office. The focus in central office should be on strategic and policy direction, and the planning and coordination of program delivery.

QUEENSLAND DEPARTMENTS AND THEIR REGIONAL PRESENCE

In mid 1990 the Queensland Bureau of Regional Development (QBRD) surveyed the presence of Queensland government departments locations outside Brisbane. The results indicated that fifteen departments all have personnel working in regions outside of Brisbane. There is a degree of disparity because of the different types of services provided. Table 1 lists the departments and indicates the percentage of total staff allocated to regional areas as at the middle of 1990.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment, Vocational Education, Training and</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Industries</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism, Sport and Racing</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice and Corrective Services</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lands</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Industries (now Minerals and Energy)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Services</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasury</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing and Local Government</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, Industry and Regional Development</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attorney General</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total all Departments</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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It may appear ironic that the Department of Business, Industry and Regional Development had one of the lowest levels of personnel situated in areas outside Brisbane but the nature of the work is less conducive to a high proportion of personnel decentralisation. The department is the administrative agency for a number of Commonwealth programs with respect to industry development and a great deal of the work is research oriented and advisory.

Of the fifteen departments listed, seven are above the service wide total of 39% whilst eight are below this figure.

Selth\textsuperscript{34} gives an indication of the number of Commonwealth public service personnel who were located away from Canberra. The figures indicate that 72% of Commonwealth Public Servants in 1989 were located in areas away from Canberra. Whilst it is unrealistic to compare this figure with the total percentage figure for the Queensland Public Sector it is worth noting that the Commonwealth figure of 72% is surpassed by the two highest decentralised state departments listed in Table 1 (Department of Employment, Vocational Education, Training and Industrial Relations and the Department of Family Services and Aboriginal and Islander Affairs).

As previously mentioned, departments have established regions to suit their own circumstances and responsibilities. Even within departments there is diversification. Of a list of 22 departments and agencies only 13 were operating on a regional basis. However nearly all of the remainder operate on major and minor centres which gives them a presence in areas away from Brisbane.

Within some departments there may be a division using designated regions whilst another division does not. For instance, this occurs in Attorney-General and Justice Department; Corrective Services and Consumer Affairs; Tourism, Sport and Racing; Police and Emergency Services; and Treasury.

Drawing on information from the 1990 Bureau of Regional Development study, the following table (Table 2) indicates the approximate level of devolution to regions within departments.

\textsuperscript{34} Selth, Phillip, "At the Coal Face: Delivering Services at the Regional Level", \textit{Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration}, no.65, July 1991, pp.48-60, p.49.
TABLE 2
DEVOLUTION OF AUTHORITY TO REGIONAL AREAS
(1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEPARTMENT</th>
<th>LEVEL OF AUTHORITY IN REGIONAL OFFICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Services</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment, Vocational Education, Training &amp; Industrial Relations</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment &amp; Heritage</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Services &amp; Aboriginal &amp; Islander Affairs</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing &amp; Local Government</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice &amp; Corrective Services</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lands</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, Industry &amp; Regional Development</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police &amp; Emergency Services</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Industries</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Industries (Now Minerals &amp; Energy)</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism, Sport and Racing</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 15 departments listed, six of them (or 40%) had levels of authority delegation that could be regarded as high whilst seven of them (or 46%) had low authoritative levels. As previously mentioned, the Management Advisory Board as an Advisory body to the Prime Minister suggests the success of regionalisation and devolution requires total commitment from senior management. Is such a commitment evident in Queensland? The attitude of senior management in the Department of Transport gives a guide:

The issue of local autonomy is a relatively easy issue for me for I strongly believe in the policy of "let the managers manage"!!! There is no point in having regional managers who are not authorised to manage.35

Whilst two academics believe that the pace of devolution to regions within the Education Department will quicken:

We will also see more substantial devolution to the school level of a range of functions and perhaps a better co-ordination of this development at Head and Regional Offices. We will also most likely see a leaner Head Office.  

As mentioned earlier the Public Sector Management Commission views regionalisation as a means of shifting authoritative decision making to the front line and so devolution will increase.

**EXAMPLES OF REGIONALISATION**

**Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning**

The 1990 survey conducted by the Bureau of Regional Development revealed that this department recorded one of the lowest percentages with respect to regional presence. The *Annual Report* of the department alluded to this:

A major constraint in developing better client services has been the highly centralised administration of services from Brisbane...

A network of area offices has been forged out of the previous practice of centralisation. In 1991-1992 the only area offices were located in Cairns, Gold Coast, Townsville, Woodridge and Ipswich. The strategy currently being implemented will upgrade nine existing operations centres to area offices. These new operations centres are located in Bundaberg, Emerald, Gladstone, Mackay, Maryborough, Mount Isa, Rockhampton, Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba. The services available to the public from these area offices will initially be related to public rental housing and private rental assistance.

The Area Operations Division is responsible for the decentralisation of client services. The General Manager reports the department's endeavours in decentralisation in this way:

The process of decentralisation marks the beginning of our most significant client strategy. A state-wide network of local area offices will provide a much higher level of client service and convenience than would ever be possible through a centralised system.

The department is also heavily involved in the Government Agency Pilot Project that is an initiative of the Office of Rural Communities in the

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38 ibid., p.11.
Department of Administrative Services. This is a concept where a single agency is established as a link between numerous government departments and the general public in small rural towns.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning will operate the government agency in Biloela, Moura, Herberton and Ravenshoe. This approach aims to provide efficient, effective equitable services.

The department is also using program budgeting to change within its housing, local government and planning responsibilities. The implementation of the corporate plan, of the department in 1991-1992 has allowed greater emphasis to be placed on cross program links with other departments.

**Department of Primary Industries**

The department (DPI) has created five administrative and operational regions each headed by a Director. The Western Region office is located in Longreach, the Northern Region office in Rockhampton, the Southern Region office in Toowoomba, whilst Nambour is the location of the South Eastern division. Each region has a number of area offices and these are indicated as over:

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39 The Rural Communities Unit was created originally within the Cabinet Office.
The current structure of the department is a direct result of the amalgamation of the Department of Primary Industries, Water Resources Commission, the Department of Forestry and Boating and Fisheries Patrol of Department of Harbours and Marine at the end of 1989. Each of these departments has always provided local services through district offices.

The five year Corporate Plan (1992-1996) has regionalisation and integration as its cornerstones. The speed of delivery of information to clients has been improved by the introduction of information systems based on regional needs. The key issues addressed by the Corporate Plan are commodity markets; agricultural practices; resource planning; community expectations; priority setting and commercialisation of state investments. The department's aim is to attain managerial consistency across the regions and the five Regional Directors are regarded as part of the Senior Management Team in the organisation.

The department has established six Business Groups. These are Land Use and Fisheries Group; Agricultural Group; Queensland Forest Service; Water Resources Commission and Corporate Services Group. Each region has a regional manager for each Business Group who is responsible to the Regional Director. Regional Directors are assisted by a Planning Officer, Media Liaison Officer, Research Officer and one or two administrative support staff. In addition to this, the Regional Manager (Corporate Services) has support for financial administration and human resource management.

With regional directors being appointed, regional solutions are expected to regional problems along with the development of primary industries within a regional focus. DPI has calculated that the introduction of regions will
deliver an increase of 3% in efficiency of total operations.

**Department of Lands**

This department has operated local district or regional offices since the establishment of Queensland in 1859. Today the department operates ten regions covering the state. These regions, their centres and district Centres are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Regional Centre</th>
<th>District Centres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>Roma</td>
<td>Charleville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cunnamulla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dalby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darling Downs</td>
<td>Toowoomba</td>
<td>Dalby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Goondiwindi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inglewood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stanthorpe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Warwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Coast</td>
<td>Beenleigh</td>
<td>Bundall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>Ipswich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine Coast</td>
<td>Caboolture</td>
<td>Nambour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide Bay</td>
<td>Maryborough</td>
<td>Kingaroy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gympie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gayndah</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Rockhampton</td>
<td>Emerald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Blackall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Longreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>Charters Towers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Townsville</td>
<td>Hughenden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cloncurry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mount Isa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far North</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
<td>Atherton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Innisfail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The district offices (except Bundall, Nambour and Kingaroy) are all former Land Agent's Offices established progressively under the various *Land Acts*. The Land Agents administered locally the land selection and management policies of the Chief Commissioner for Crown Lands in Brisbane. Uniformity

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of land administration and policy has been a hallmark of the Lands Department in Queensland. Although the Survey Office was separated from the Lands Department in 1975 with the formation of the Department of Mapping and Surveying (later Department of Geographic Information), it was re-amalgamated with the Lands Department on 7 December 1989 after many of the survey and mapping functions had been privatised earlier.41

Today's regional directors are responsible to the Deputy Director-General and are involved in policy formation and development of procedures. The department regards itself as client oriented with the clients at the top of the organisational chart and the Director-General at the bottom.42 The meeting of client needs is at the top of a list of critical success factors.

Organisational restructuring in 1991-1992 improved the profile of the regional offices with increased staff numbers at the expense of corporate headquarters in Brisbane. There has been a progressive transfer of business activity from Brisbane to the individual regions. Additionally, devolution has occurred with regional management being more responsible and accountable for decision-making, and also facilitates uniform decision-making and standards across the state.

Like the Department of Primary Industries, the Department of Lands has established business groups or programs. It is the responsibility of Regional Directors to ensure that the programs are delivered efficiently and effectively within their respective regions.

The ten regional centre offices are land service centres to the general public. Access to all products and services is available through them. The district centres generally offer only local land services but they are an accessing point for obtaining mapping products and land services from their regional office or Brisbane headquarters.

**Queensland Health Department**

Regionalisation of the Health Department was precipitated by the passing of the Health Services Act of 1991. Under the Act, the Governor in Council has the power to establish Regional Health Authorities. The functions and powers of Regional Authorities were established under ss.3.18 and 3.19. As a result, thirteen Regional Health Authorities were created on 1 July 1991. The boundaries of the regions were drawn to include all or part of Local Authority boundaries. The previously 59 designated Hospital Boards were replaced by the Regional Authorities. The Health Services Act also created the position of Regional Director for each Regional Health Authority. The functions of the Regional director are set out in s.3(07). The restructuring that took place resulted in a reduction in the number of staff employed in the Central Office by 300. Many of these positions were transferred to the regions.

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41 See Annual Reports of the Department of Mapping of Surveying 1975-1989.

The Regional Health Authorities administrative offices are located as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane North</td>
<td>Chermside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane South</td>
<td>Mount Gravatt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Rockhampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central West</td>
<td>Longreach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darling Downs</td>
<td>Toowoomba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackay</td>
<td>Mackay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Townsville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peninsula &amp; Torres Strait</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Coast</td>
<td>Southport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine Coast</td>
<td>Maroochydore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Moreton</td>
<td>Ipswich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide Bay</td>
<td>Torquay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through regionalisation, decisions concerning local services are made by local people. The process shifts the focus away from the central office in Brisbane to each of the regions that are managerially autonomous. Each region produced a strategic plan for 1992-1997 that set the direction for health service delivery in that region. At the same time this process has had consequences for central office. Functions that will remain the responsibility of central office are policy formulation, planning and priority setting and evaluation and monitoring.

In the 1991-92 Annual Report of the Health Department a number of the regions indicated that their service provision had improved as a direct result of regionalisation. The requirement to consult with the local community in the formulation of regional strategic plans was considered a major factor in the quality and quantity of service delivery.

- Regionalisation has provided opportunities for more input from local people into health service provision. (Central West Regional Health Authority)

- The idea behind regionalisation of the State’s health services - involving local needs in the provision of health care - has worked well within this region. (Darling Downs Regional Health Authority)

- The Region was pleased that, by a combination of local management and reorganisation of resources, it was able to meet previously unmet demands. (Mackay Regional Health Authority)

- Consultations with community groups are bringing about better coordination of, and access to, health services, better use of resources, a greater emphasis on health education and promotion and on the needs of special groups. (Northern Regional Health Authority)
Department of Minerals and Energy.

The case of the Department of Minerals and Energy illustrates both the regionalisation and devolution strategies. Under the *Mineral Resources Act 1989*, regional managers (District Registrars and Mining Wardens) have been granted certain authority with respect to the granting and administration of mining leases. *The Mineral Resources Act 1989* repealed the *Mining Act 1968* which had operated with minimal amendment since 1968 and was predominantly the *Mining Act 1898* with amendments. Under the *Mineral Resources Act 1989* the administrative districts changed from being tied to particular Gold and Mineral Fields to Mining Districts managed from a provincial city or major country town (s.2). Under the *Mining Act 1968* the jurisdiction of the Mining Warden’s Court was exclusive. This was changed under the *Mineral Resources Act 1989* (s.10) to permit parties to institute proceedings (except application hearings and compensation determinations) in any civil court of competent jurisdiction. Proceedings may now also be removed from the Warden’s Court to the Supreme Court (s.10.23).

Queensland Transport

The department is responsible for road, marine, intrastate air transport and railways. Geographically, the department is organised into five regions covering fifteen districts. The regional location of offices is listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Regional Office</th>
<th>District Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South-Eastern</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>Nerang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gympie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bundaberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-Western</td>
<td>Toowoomba</td>
<td>Toowoomba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Warwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Rockhampton</td>
<td>Rockhampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Barcaldine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mackay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emerald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Townsville</td>
<td>Townsville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cloncurry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, there is a network of customer service centres located throughout the state.

Regional Directors, regarded as key managerial positions in the organisation, are required to manage all programs within their respective regions. A stronger regional structure has resulted in improved services to the public.

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Each region has a goal for each program that is administered. The programs administered in each region are transport infrastructure; freight transport services; passenger transport services; transport safety and client services.

For instance, in the Regions the goal for client services program is to:

- Improve quality and range of services offered by new and existing customer service centres. (Northern Region).
- Provide a wider range of services in customer service centres. (Central Region).
  - Provide a complete range of services and information to clients at times and locations convenient to them.
  - Reduce customer waiting time by reviewing management systems and practices. (South West Region).
- Ensure a client-focused philosophy exists within the region, that products and service meet client needs and expectations and that outlets and services are conveniently located for clients. (South Eastern Region).
- Complete staff multi-skill training and a widened range of customer services to be offered... (Metropolitan Region).

In 1991-92, the regions indicated achievements towards their goal for the client services program:

- **Northern Region:** One-stop-shops established in Mount Isa, Cairns, Atherton and Mareeba to enable processing of marine-orientated transactions as well as licensing and registration services.
- **Central Region:** All customer service centres in the region provide a full range of services following the multi-skill training of staff and amalgamation of offices.
- **South-Western Region:** Goondiwindi Customer Service Centre opened to provide a complete range of services. Quick service lanes developed in customer service centres.
- **South-Eastern Region:** Establishment of one-stop-shop at Beenleigh, bringing the total number of outlets in the region to ten.
- **Metropolitan Region:** Spring Hill Customer Service complex provided marine and port services. North Ipswich Customer Service complex was improved with an undercover inspection area.

The department’s Corporate Plan 1993-1997 lists the regionalisation of systems and services as a key issue for the future. An element of the corporate strategy is to enhance client consultation to identify and better
service their needs. Under the Corporate Plan there is a heavy emphasis in the client service program on the training of client contact staff. There is also emphasis on the design of services and products and systems that take into account client needs and expectations. In short, there is a customer first culture.

By June 1992 the department had forty-two one-stop-shops providing service to the public whilst five more were on the drawing board. The department will also manage the Queensland Government Agency Office to be located at Beaudesert.

The department conducted an evaluation of the client services program in October 1992. The findings were that the program standard was appropriate considering the stage of growth the department has reached. The program is due to be evaluated again in June 1996.

**Queensland Rail** (QR) has had a separate form of administration based on the functional aspects of railway operations. QR has an annual turnover of around $1.2 billion. It is the largest railway network in Australia with 10 011 kms, 16.9% of which is electrified. The development of Queensland Railways paralleled the economic development of Queensland since 1863. Traditionally Queensland Railways was administered through a Commissioner, and branches - Chief Engineer responsible for the track and bridges, the Locomotive Engineer (later called Chief Mechanical Engineer) for locomotives and rollingstock, Traffic Branch for time-tabling, accounts, audit, staffing. Although there were three divisions - Southern, Central and Northern - centred on Brisbane, Rockhampton and Townsville, decision-making was clearly centralised through the Commissioner for Railways. Except for four engineers, for over a century, commissioners were traditional public servants with a clerical background drawn from the Traffic Branch.

Under the *Transport Infrastructure (Railways) Act 1991* Queensland Rail was restructured into four business groups - Passengers, Coal and Minerals, Freight and Workshops - to operate along commercial principles. Queensland Rail is slotted into the Transport Infrastructure Program of the Transport Department's Corporate Plan for 1993-1997. Its goal is to "promote the effective and efficient provision and management of rail infrastructure to support the continued economic development of Queensland". One of the necessary outcomes is the "clear alignment between QR's Consolidated Revenue funding requirements with defined community service obligations." In addition there are three support groups - Corporate Services, Financial Services and Human Resources - and the Strategic Issues, Corporate Relations and Internal Audit units work in consultation with the business and support groups. Concurrently

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44 Queensland Rail. *Annual Report*, 1991-1992, p.4. Since this date some lines have been closed and services have been withdrawn from some other lines.


Queensland railway lines are classified according to the business groups in such a way that correlates approximately with the previous geographic divisions:

- Northern - Freight
- Central - Coal and Minerals
- Southern - Freight

The Passengers Group operates Citytrains and Traveltrains. It controls the lines between Ipswich and Caboolture, including the lines to Beaudesert, Cleveland and Beenleigh. There are substantial freight haulages on several of these lines.

In many respects Queensland Rail demonstrates the antithesis of regionalisation in that all the Business Group General Managers are located in Brisbane. A notable devolution of power is the Primary Industries Division of the Freight Group located in Toowoomba, which restores some power to Toowoomba which was head of the South West Division for many decades. Each of the Business Groups is divided into divisions e.g. Southern, South Western, Rockhampton, Brisbane. The Coal and Minerals Group has Infrastructure and Rollingstock Divisions located in Rockhampton, and the Workshops Group has a General Manager at Ipswich.

**Department of Education**

The department’s headquarters in Brisbane has had a staff reduction of 50% to 600 since the beginning of 1990. At the same time, the regional structure has been strengthened by the devolution of authority.

The department has 11 administrative/educational regions covering the state:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Regional Office Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capricornia</td>
<td>Rockhampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darling Downs</td>
<td>Toowoomba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan East</td>
<td>Mount Gravatt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan West</td>
<td>Chermside, Ipswich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Townsville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-Western</td>
<td>Mount Isa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peninsula</td>
<td>Cairns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Coast</td>
<td>Southport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-Western</td>
<td>Roma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunshine Coast</td>
<td>Nambour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide Bay</td>
<td>Maryborough</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Regional Directors report directly to the Director-General. The department administers three financial programs. These are Preschool Education, Primary Education and Secondary Education. It is the responsibility of the Regional Directors to administer these programs within their regions. Within the regions school principals have responsibility for a range of administrative roles. Their responsibilities include the appointment of casual administrative staff and budgeting for professional development activities. It is expected that in the future the responsibility of finance for
minor building maintenance and staffing requirements will be devolved.

The school level is the focus of the placement of resources and services. The establishment of a school advisory council in 45 schools is part of this process. Regional Management Forums are conducted to establish common policy on issues.

With the department being the state’s largest employer, employing 41,000, human resource management plays an important role. Human resource regional management forums allow issues from the school level to be discussed and resolved. The forums have been a mechanism whereby some central office functions have been devolved to the regions.

The devolution process taking place within the department has many critics. The Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Associations is concerned that devolution might be change for change sake. There is also a concern at the cost of consultants and services for devolution to be accomplished. There is no time frame for the implementation of devolution but head office is slowly handing over decision making responsibilities to the regions.

CONCLUSION

Whilst the regionalisation of government administration is being pursued vigorously, it is not being done at any cost. The efficient use of available resources coupled with program effectiveness is being balanced up with equitable access to the services provided.

One-stop-shops have been established as a response to the efficiency of separate service provision in a number of geographical locations throughout the state. Locations that do not warrant separate service provision on the grounds of economic cost are more able to warrant the establishment of one-stop-shops. The justification for one-stop-shops is the combination of economic feasibility and social-equity.

A properly planned and managed regionalisation program has advantages over centralisation. Improved service delivery tailored to client needs is but one. The expansion of managerial skills to regional staff is another. Additionally, regional staff satisfaction rises as they feel less remote from the centre and more in control of their work. A reduction in the level of remoteness felt by clients is also gained.

Criticism of regionalisation stems mostly from failed attempts at service provision that were not viable to begin with. Additional criticism may come from dissatisfied staff if they are not fully consulted or informed of the need to transfer human and other resources to other locations.

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