

**Submission
No 31**

**PERFORMANCE OF THE REGIONAL INVESTMENT ACTIVATION FUND AND
THE REGIONAL JOB CREATION FUND**

Organisation: NSWGR Holdings Pty Ltd

Date Received: 29 November 2023



Wednesday 29 November 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

Regional Job Creation Fund

NSWGR Holdings Pty Ltd were honoured to receive \$100,000 in funding under the above scheme. This funding enabled us to complete the restoration of our 11th ex-Southern Aurora Sleeping Carriage, at Goulburn NSW and in so doing create 5 FTE jobs in regional NSW. The asset provides a multiplier effect when used on our regional NSW Rail Tours, which have enabled us to distribute over \$8.2M to regional NSW communities since November 2020. We are pleased to make this submission to the enquiry.

The Allocation and administration of these funds.

We believe that allocating funds in line with employment objectives was an excellent and appropriate basis for funding. It is increasingly difficult in this country to obtain funding for anything other than property development.

The Administration was professionally delivered, albeit we were in a position to move somewhat faster than the application process allowed. The support provided by RDA Southern Inland staff was greatly appreciated.

The effectiveness of these funds achieving their aims.

We were able to hire additional staff to undertake the work, albeit significant headwinds were encountered in completing the work due to COVID, and a flow on impact on the tourism side of the business, which has severely constrained our ability to invest in the restoration of any more of our railway carriages. We have however developed a reputation for the specialist skillset of carriage restoration, and offers of external work are emerging. In our view, the funds were effective in achieving their aims of creating additional jobs in Regional NSW.

Council and Agency Support for private investor enquiries and proposals in regional areas

We received significant support from Regional Development Southern Inland, in meeting the application and reporting requirements for the funding. We also received recognition and support from Wendy Tuckerman MP, the member for Goulburn.

Impediments to growth in regional NSW, including challenges in the planning system

We are very fortunate that we are focussed on railway rolling stock, and not subject to Council approvals in order to undertake work/prosecute our business. Having said that, we see massive planning inefficiencies from semi-Government authorities and contractors, including especially the property sections of the Australian Rail Track Corporation and UGL Regional Linx. Examples can be provided on request.

The effectiveness of the business concierge service and comparison to other States' performance.

We found the business concierge service very effective, we don't have a point of reference to other states as we operate solely in NSW.

Opportunities for regional and metropolitan councils to work together to promote productivity and economic development

At this stage we do not have any involvement with land based developments, so have not had to deal with regional or metropolitan councils, however this question does highlight a possible excessive focus on land and planning based issues, rather than over arching disciplines such as Transport and Tourism portfolios.

Any other related matters

The amount of the funding was appropriate - grants for less than \$100,000 don't really 'move the needle', and the work entailed in preparing, submitting and waiting to hear if a competitive grant for say \$25,000 is successful, is not worthwhile.

We have had a very positive experience in dealing with Transport Heritage NSW, Sydney Trains and Transport for NSW representatives, when stabling our train at Chullora Rail Heritage Hub. This has made a significant contribution to our ability to conduct regional rail tours, and bring tourist dollars to the regions. We understand that this is also the case for The Picnic Train, East Coast Heritage Rail and Lachlan Valley Railway. Continuing to allow Tourism and Heritage Rail operators access to metropolitan rail facilities such as Chullora Rail Heritage Hub and Central Station, Sydney is very important in the promotion of tourism for NSW.

We have also enjoyed excellent support from Destination NSW in the tourism space.

Access to capital for small business is a massive issue, especially given that banks tend to only lend with Real Estate security. In our view, the provision of grants could

be augmented with NSW Government Funded/guaranteed business loans at reasonable interest rates, to assist NSW business to grow.

Kind regards

Simon Mitchell B Comm
Director
NSWGR Holdings Pty Ltd