



The Hon. John Barilaro MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Regional New South Wales
Minister for Industry and Trade

Mr David Shoebridge MLC
Chair
Public Accountability Committee
E: Public.Accountability@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Shoebridge

As the fires raged across this state, I made the decision to become the Minister responsible for disaster recovery.

With this title, I took on the painstaking responsibility of getting lives and communities back in order.

I spent day after day on the road, travelling from Wyaliba to Rappville to Nerrigundah. I've sat around kitchen tables talking with people who lost hope along with every possession they owned. I've looked people who have lost loved ones directly in the eyes.

I feel a sense of utter disgust in the decision to politicise this issue.

The recent allegations in relation to the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery (BLER) program prove the old adage true: a lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting its shoes on.

Had you bothered to look for the facts, rather than rely on claims found on the internet, you would understand that approximately \$51 million in support has gone to non-government seats to date under the BLER program.

That's an over allocation to non-government seats, based on actual fire impacts, if you want to get technical.

You would know that the Local Government Areas of Ballina and Byron (within the only fire affected Greens seat of Ballina) are technically classified as being low fire impact. There were zero buildings damaged and destroyed in Narrabri (the only eligible SFF held LGA). Not all areas experienced an equivalent level of impact.

RFS data shows that over 90 percent of buildings damaged and destroyed occurred in Government seats. Moreover, around 80 per cent of the economic impact occurred in Government seats. That's reality, not a politicisation.

The Blue Mountains, while undisputedly fire impacted, makes up 1.7 per cent of total property loss and damage across the state, and 2.6 per cent of the state-wide economic impact. Shoalhaven, on the other hand, sustained 13 per cent of total property loss and damage, and 14 per cent of the state-wide economic impact.

To date, the Blue Mountains has received \$26 million in federal and state government recovery grant support. It, along with other high impact LGAs yet to receive funding under BLER, will be prioritised under the open round of the program. The guidelines, which you've probably never read, make this clear. Snowy Monaro LGA in my own backyard is yet to receive funding.

You would never mark a student's work 25 minutes into an hour long exam, so how can you jump to conclusions when only 40 per cent of BLER funding has been allocated?

I am inviting you to come on the road with me and see the NSW Government's fire recovery efforts with your own eyes.

My office will be in touch to coordinate a time that you may be available to join, should you wish to do so.

Yours sincerely,



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