



NSW Government Grant Programs

Post-hearing responses

Inquiry into Integrity, Efficacy and Value for Money of NSW Government Grant Programs
Hearing held on 26 April 2021

Bega Valley Shire Council
May 2021



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Background

Bega Valley Shire Council (BVSC) appeared before the Public Accountability Committee on 26 April 2021 for the inquiry into the review of the integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs, represented by General Manager, Ms Leanne Barnes and Director Assets and Operations, Mr Anthony McMahon.

Post-hearing Response

Transcript

Bega Valley Shire Council confirm the transcript provided via email on 3 May 2021 is an accurate record of our appearance during the hearing and there are no corrections to the transcript required.

Questions on Notice

Transcript Reference	Context	Question on Notice	Response
Page13	<i>The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:</i> Thank you all for your time and submissions. I wanted to start with Bega and Snowy Valleys councils. Both of your submissions talk about the delays between the announcement of the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery, what we are calling BLER funding—it is not a great acronym—and about the program announcement and the actual opening. Both of you use the word specifically that it created "friction" in the community. Do you have the exact date when you were provided with a copy of those guidelines? Why don't we go to Bega first then Snowy Valleys?	<i>Ms BARNES:</i> I believe that we were advised of the guidelines in September but I would have to take on notice the exact date of the advice to us. I believe the applications were due shortly after that.	Formal advice of BLERF guidelines and applications deadlines were received 15th October 2020. Applications opened on the 27th October 2020 with applications due 11th December 2020.
Page 14	<i>Ms BARNES:</i> When the Federal Government announced that there would be a package of funding available and was matched by the New South Wales Government for communities recovering from the Black Summer fires, it was very early on in the piece that there were discussions at those general managers' groups and with the regional recovery committee that there would be a program coming out. It was longer to be announced than we perhaps would have initially hoped and that ultimately became the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund. All of the things that that general managers and CEO of local government group was doing during that period was capturing the issues, challenges and, I suppose, opportunities that we needed to present to government to have funding for.	<i>Ms BARNES:</i> I would have to take on notice and go back and look at the minutes of those meetings but it was formally announced.	At the Southern NSW Recovery Committee 2020 General Manager's Working Group Meeting #15, held on 13 May 2020, Major General Hocking (Deputy Coordinator National Bushfire Recovery Agency) announced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>\$650 million funding announced, with \$450 million absolute for local needs, supporting what you want in your local/regional areas. Remainder of funding to go to forestry, wildlife, emotional support (\$14 million), mental health (not clinical) and \$27 million to telecommunications.</i> • <i>Process regarding applying for \$450 million – process aims to be simple, accountable and responsive to local needs, as this is locally led. Key thing is there should be no change as the work has been done by this group over the last five months. Look at what the groups priorities are for funding/early projects that are certain at local and regional levels and start the submission process.</i> • <i>Aiming to have a simple application process locked in by the end of this week with the states prediction of 2-8 weeks to get things moving.</i>

Page 16	<i>The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS:</i> In your submission you talk about that you had to chase up to receive a letter of offer or the grant agreement for those community halls. When did you receive those?	<i>Ms BARNES:</i> I would have to take that on notice. I believe it was three weeks or a month ago. I would have to take that on notice and get that back to you.	<p>Council did not receive a letter of offer after the announcement of the BLER direct funded projects Kiah and Wandella Hall replacements. Council had to initiate contact with Department of Regional NSW to assist us to find a contact person within Resilience NSW to send Council a letter of offer and then progress with the executed funding agreement. Contact was received from Resilience NSW on 09/02/2021. Council was then required to provide the following information within one week for approval before a funding agreement to be drafted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed project overview including the project objective and the expected outcomes/benefits that will be achieved by the project • Total amount of funding required • A detailed budget breakdown for the funding requested • A detailed project plan outlining key tasks/activities and delivery milestones of the project – template below • Risk Assessment – outlining the risks to project delivery and how these will be addressed. <p>A draft funding agreement was signed by Council on 26/04/2021.</p> <p>Council received signed funding agreements for the Kiah and Wandella Halls projects from the Resilience NSW on the 12/05/2021.</p>
Page 16	<i>The CHAIR:</i> When you say "announced" there was not a public announcement? It was in one of these communications you had at a council to government level, is it?	<i>Ms BARNES:</i> My understanding was—and I would have to take this on notice—that there was a media announcement about the fact that there would be funding because it was national. It was to all of the States. And then there was media around the fact that the New South Wales Government had undertaken to match the Federal Government contribution and that then was handed over to the Government to come up with the framework for how the funding would be allocated across, I think, 47 local government areas in New South Wales that were going to be eligible to have some of those funds allocated towards recovery activity.	<p>Council were advised via a media article for funding for Kiah and Wandella Halls, published on 9 November 2020.</p> <p>Bushfire recovery funding to rebuild Wandella, Kiah Halls Bega District News Bega, NSW</p>
Page 19	<i>The Hon. NATALIE WARD:</i> I just want to clarify a couple of things starting with Bega Valley if I may direct that to you first. I understand the Bega Valley has received more than \$75 million under the Regional Growth Fund. Is that correct?	<i>Mr McMAHON:</i> We would have to take the exact figure on notice but we can provide that information noting that the Regional Growth Fund is made up of a number of different subprograms.	<p>Council has received in total \$10,905,073 through the Regional Growth Fund programs to date.</p> <p><i>See Attachment 1 – Breakdown of Projects – Regional Growth Fund</i></p>

Attachment 1 - Breakdown of Projects – Regional Growth Fund

Fund	Project name	Funded amount	Date awarded funding
Regional Growth - Environment and Tourism Fund	A Destination for All - Upgrade facilities at Bruce Steer Pool, Short Point and Pambula Surf Club	\$2,271,000	24/07/2018
Environment and Tourism Fund	Tathra Headland Wharf Access	\$1,219,000	27/07/2018
Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round 1	Community Hall Kitchen Upgrades	\$143,636	08/03/2018
Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round 1	Revitalising Bandara Children's Services	\$163,700	08/03/2018
Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round 1	Rural village playground upgrades (Mogareeka, Bemboka, Wyndham, Cobargo)	\$300,705	08/03/2018
Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round 1	Great South Coast Walk Stage 1 (Wallaga Lake) connectivity improvements	\$225,500	08/03/2018
Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round 1	Eden Log Cabin Upgrade	\$141,136	08/03/2018
Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round 2	Bermagui All Abilities Playground	\$376,507	03/09/2018
Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round 2	Barclay Street Eden sportsground upgrade	\$653,948	03/09/2018
Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round 2	Wolumla sportsground upgrade	\$110,690	03/09/2018
Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round 2	Lawrence Park Tathra sportsground upgrade	\$140,000	03/09/2018
Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round 2	Bega Park amenities and BBQ facilities	\$126,296	03/09/2018
Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round 2	Community Hall kitchen upgrade (Brogo, Candelo, Tarraganda, Wyndham, Rocky Hall)	\$182,955	03/09/2018
Stronger Country Communities Fund - Round 2	Accessible Nature Trails: Tura Coastal Reserves Project	\$200,000	03/09/2018
Stronger Country Communities Fund Round 3	Bermagui Multipurpose Outdoor Courts Upgrade	\$160,000	06/05/2020
Stronger Country Communities Fund Round 3	Eden Skate Park Upgrade	\$300,000	06/05/2020
Stronger Country Communities Fund Round 3	Quaama Memorial Park Playground Upgrade	\$90,000	06/05/2020
Stronger Country Communities Fund Round 3	Bega Maker Space	\$100,000	06/05/2020
Drought Stimulus Package	Merimbula Airport – Commercial Aviation Tourism Precinct	\$4,000,000	18/12/2019
Total		\$10,905,073	