



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **UPPER HOUSE COMMITTEE HANDS DOWN FINAL REPORT ON NSW GOVERNMENT GRANT PROGRAMS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**24 February 2022**

The Public Accountability Committee has just tabled its final report on the integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs. While the first report focused on the grants to local government, including the Stronger Communities Fund, the final report focuses on grants for bushfire relief and arts and cultural grants, and systemic reforms needed to restore integrity in grant allocations.

Chair of the Committee, Mr David Shoebridge MLC, said: 'This report reveals widespread failures in grants allocation in New South Wales and importantly proposes urgent reforms to re-establish public confidence.'

'The 2019-20 bushfires caused significant destruction and devastation across New South Wales, leaving many communities vulnerable and in need of assistance. Yet the committee found that funding allocations for bushfire recovery were politically driven and with no proper administration or approval processes in place. Moreover, many of these grant programs did not include any systemic fraud controls, resulting in tens of millions of dollars in fraudulent applications,' Mr Shoebridge continued.

'The funding of arts and cultural grants programs have also been deeply problematic, with overt and undocumented Ministerial interference in grants being the most concerning. Coupled with further pork-barrelling concerns, this time of the Regional Cultural Fund, there is a clear lack of transparency and accountability that continues to plague so many other grant programs under this government.'

Mr Shoebridge said, 'It is extremely disappointing to see this government repeatedly use grant programs for political gain. To this end, we have made a suite of recommendations based on our findings which, alongside the recommendations of our first report, will fundamentally reform grants administration in New South Wales.'

'These reforms are now urgent. The public purse remains open to continued abuse in the lead up to the next election and the people of New South Wales deserve a grants system that ensures public money is applied to do the greatest public good, not the greatest partisan advantage', Mr Shoebridge concluded.

The report, along with all other inquiry documentation, is available on the inquiry [webpage](#).

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