

**Submission  
No 398**

**INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN  
NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** The Armidale Showground Trust Board

**Name:** Mrs Margaret O'Connor

**Date received:** 31/08/2012

---

The Armidale Showground Trust Board recounts funding and management plus relationship difficulties in maintaining important cultural , heritage and future directed community land and assets (all on public land) with inadequate funding and other social resources to properly discharge its responsibilities to the community, the next generation and the New South Wales Government.

## Submission to Inquiry into the Management Of Public Land in New South Wales

The Armidale Showground Trust Board wishes to alert the Inquiry to the predicament of our Trust Board (and no doubt many others across New South Wales.)

Rural Showgrounds are a major community and economic hub of rural towns and cities. Or they should be. However, as management of them is now devolved to voluntary (unpaid Boards comprised of community members), we the community trustees are shouldering a huge burden. We are responsible for maintaining and developing the showground land and infrastructure, securing ongoing community support for the showground, making sufficient profit from events to make the showgrounds sustainable economically and trying to plan and build vision for future needs and growth of the showground facility whilst keeping all the stake holders happy, including the owner of the Showground land, namely the NSW State government.

We do all of this on no funding. We have limited access to some loan funds and some grant money but it is hugely inadequate to the functions we are tasked with by State Government.

Our particular concerns is that the Armidale Showground was gazetted in 1877 with a grant of 10 acres of land on the east side of Armidale city precinct. That area has increased over the years to many more hectares. We are expected to provide, at bargain basement cost, to community not for profit organisations, state of the art agricultural infrastructure (sheds, yards, arenas, cattle and horse stall facilities) as well as pavilions for indoor display of community, art, produce and trade exhibits, on a tiny (and shrinking budget). Armidale showground boasts one of only two “twin” grandstands in NSW. Built in 1907 and 1909 they are local icons and heritage listed with the our local Council (Armidale Dumaresq) but are in close to being condemned as we cannot afford to maintain them in a safe condition and fit to be used for their purpose.

We have attempted to get State and Federal grant money to bring them back into service but our application failed as heritage restoration funds are not available to heritage structures that are only listed as such by Local Government.

We have been told that in order to secure ANY grant money to restore our grandstands, or update our showground’s built facilities we must partner with our local Council in any grant application.

But as the Showground is “owned” by the State Government our relationship with Local Government is quite unclear and not productive of any financial assistance at this stage .

WE have plans to build a \$5.5 million refurbishment of our Grandstands and incorporate this with a new multi purpose community building which could host events of up to 1000 people. But we have no clear way forward in terms of how obtain those funds by grant or other means and move our showground facility into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Our forefathers valued the community aspect of our Showground. Our present community would hugely benefit from the upgrade we are planning. But our ability to obtain funds, feasibility studies is foundering on lack of funds, appropriate heritage listing and insecure relations with all tiers of government.