

**Submission  
No 315**

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

**Organisation:** Uralla Showground Trust Board (UTSB)

**Name:** Mrs Margaret O'Connor

**Date received:** 30/08/2012

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Uralla Showground is one of many vital pieces of public land facilities. The funding arrangements for these are currently inadequate. This deprives communities, especially rural communities of vital access to public land and infrastructure. It also causes biosecurity threats to the agricultural sector.

SUBMISSIONS TO NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY INTO THE  
MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC LAND IN AUSTRALIA ON BEHALF OF :

THE URALLA SHOWGROUND TRUST BOARD  
2 AUGUST 2012

1. The current Uralla Showground Trust Board (USTB) has the role of managing, marketing and maintaining the Uralla Showground, which, as land owned by the Department of Lands, is one of the forms of "public land" falling within this Inquiry's terms of reference.
2. The USTB is a community based board appointed by State Government and tasked with physical maintenance, management, marketing and compliance as described in the our charter "" which is attachment "A" hereto.
3. In about 1998 the current USTB took over our showground at Uralla which had dilapidated and falling down fencing, buildings (collapsing pavilion , ring announcer's broadcast box, toilet facilities etc. ) as well as an unpaid (and unpayable) existing debt to the Public Reserves Management Fund of approximately \$20,000.
4. The USTB's position to Department of Lands official's in Armidale (our supervising agency) was simply " either we fix the collapsing infrastructure or we repay the loan. We cannot do both." The urgent need was to repair the main pavilion and ring fence. This was done and the question of repayment of old loans shelved on an informal basis as there was just no way a bunch of community volunteers could manage both tasks at the same time.
5. Fifteen or so years later we have managed by dint of enormous community labour and a few tied grants/loans (which have extended our debt to PRMF) refooted the main pavilion, refitted the interior of the pavilion, installed a professional caterer standard kitchen, rebuilt the broadcast box, rebuilt the ring arena fencing, secured the showground from vandalism by installing electronic gates and security monitoring. We are at the point of opening a licenced (full time) bar attached to our pavilion to extend our capacity to raise revenue to maintain financial sustainability for the showground reserve.
6. More importantly whilst maintaining (just) the original stakeholder loyalty of the Uralla Show Society and the Uralla Pony Club Inc. we have extended the number of users of the showground facilities to a wide range of community users groups, both public and private in nature.
7. By this we mean that we can now offer budget conference facilities for local community groups like : historical society, playgroups, university student activity clubs, RSL, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) ,agricultural field day demonstrations (using our animal handling facilities) poultry clubs (including local auctions).
8. Additionally in order to raise revenue, we hire out the showground facility to offer a budget but still commercial quality function facility for local weddings, birthday parties, training and trade conventions and dinners etc.

9. We also hold annual fund raising Rock n Roll nights to additionally support the showground.
10. In the 2010/11 financial year we clocked approximately \$100,000 hours of volunteer labour. In 2011/12 this figure has doubled to approximately \$200,000. A lot of this is skilled tradesman hours.
11. The materials used have largely been privately recycled from jobs at which our tradesmen volunteers are working in their private capacity. A lot of this is "cast off" from government office refits where the old materials had been binned in dumpsters and our members and associates either retrieved or negotiated diversion to the USTB's materials stockpile.
12. Our concern to this Enquiry is that despite the above achievements we have not succeeded in our efforts to have the outstanding "debt" of \$20,000 to PRMF forgiven.
13. The current system for management of the State's showgrounds is one whereby the only funding available to manage and maintain these areas of public lands is by way of what we can generate in community based enterprise on the land (fundraisers, low budget "commercial" events) or loans from PRMF. It is simply impossible to keep doing this and maintain the facilities as well as financial viability.
14. Our Showground Trust Board is proud of its efforts to restore our showground. But we are exhausted and broke and in debt for our pains. The current system, which requires us to meet all current safety, workplace and other good government regulatory requirements, as well as fiscal reporting, community relations, marketing of our grounds for "profit" generating events on a budget of "\$0" is clearly unsustainable.
15. It has only been sustained, over the past 15 years or so by us, on the back of huge hours of volunteer labour, which itself is unsustainable in the long term.
16. We respectfully request the Public Lands Inquiry to invite us to provide further detail (by way of written and /or oral submission) to substantiate our concerns.
17. We further request this Inquiry offer some assistance on the question of having our current debt to PRMF forgiven so that we can continue to obtain funding from that fund. In addition we respectfully ask this Enquiry to address the underlying problem of the lack of financial viability in having this Fund (a loans fund) as our only source of "seed" funding for developing our showground into the modern, community resource it so clearly could and should become for our part of regional Australia.

Sincerely

Uralla Showground Trust Board