

INQUIRY INTO INTEGRITY, EFFICACY AND VALUE FOR MONEY OF NSW GOVERNMENT GRANT PROGRAMS

Organisation: Cr Craig Davies, Mayor Narromine Shire Council and Chair of
the Orana Joint Organisation of councils

Date Received: 14 August 2020

Mr David Shoebridge MLC
Committee Chair.
14th August 2020

Dear Sir,

As Mayor of the Narromine Shire and Chair of the Orana Joint Organisation of councils I wish to submit the following in support of the Funding programs for Rural and Regional NSW. I can speak to my own situation knowing the issues and benefits are applicable across our Joint Organisation.

Having been elected to my current role in 2016 it quickly became evident to me that at the level of funding our shire was then receiving we only had one way to go. That was to follow so many of the rural towns across western NSW on a downward trajectory. I made quite vocal approaches to my then Local Member and highlighted the position of so many towns across western NSW that were losing population to the sponge centres of Dubbo and Tamworth. The Orana region lost approximately 10% of it's population during the past decade whilst Dubbo has grown very significantly. Narromine was also losing population but much less rapidly.

My approaches to the local member bore fruit and our submissions for funding became more successful. We have been able to not only stem the outflow of population but have turned the trend around to see an inflow. This despite predictions of NSW Planning that suggests we will continue to lose population. We currently have a population of approx 6,600 and a workforce of 2231. This in contrast to the pre-Covid workforce of 2339 again drawing attention to the imperative of grant funding to ensure our job numbers grow again and further development occurs.

Our efforts due to increased funding have given us the opportunity to attract significant investment with more to come. With a proactive leadership team we believe we can grow our shire by 20-30 % in the next decade with an additional 500–700 jobs (on pre Covid numbers) being created on the understanding that funds continue to flow to the shire. Amongst some of the major initiatives currently underway are the Inland Rail project that has the capacity on present projections to create as many as 300 permanent jobs alone. We are expecting an announcement of a feedlot development next month bringing a further 75 full time positions. These will only succeed with the support of grant funding from both levels of Government.

Our Aviation business park is weeks away from completion and is designed to attract high tech aviation related industries and already AMSL have announced their intention to establish and develop , test and manufacture electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing aircraft (eVTOL) on site bringing as many as 100 jobs.

This aviation precinct is also attracting significant International attention with European companies showing an interest along with 6 Korean companies who are very interested in bringing their technology to the shire for further testing and manufacture. This is all the result of a \$752k grant from the Growing Local Economies Fund. The end result will be tens of \$ millions of investment and hundreds of jobs, many high tech and allowing a diversity to our industrial base away from Agriculture to help future proof in further drought periods. This simply highlights the potential for rural and Regional councils to move quickly when opportunities present and show we are very much a part of the future growth of jobs and investment across NSW.

A selection of some of our other business initiatives and improvements to community facilities due to grant funding follows.

Regional Growth and Tourism Fund

\$2.5 mill for a Wetlands project that not only becomes the drainage of the Narromine township, in doing so it will shortly create a water wonderland in what is a swampy wasteland. Three holding ponds with a capacity to store 270 megalitres of water will become home to thousands of birds and aquatic animals. It will generate an estimated \$2.5 mill in tourism dollars annually but more importantly develop this ecological wetland to showcase our environmental aims and ambitions.

Drought Stimulus program

\$1.0 mill. This grant has helped our shire to provide the enabling infrastructure (water connection and sewerage connection) necessary for a 43 unit aged care facility along with another 15 large lot development in a flood free zone of Narromine. There is much interest in both developments due to retirees from further west wishing to have the benefits of Dubbo without having to live there. A total of \$25 mill will be invested in these developments due to this grant.

Stronger Country Communities Fund. Round 1

\$753k towards a total cost of \$1.1 mill to upgrade the Tomingley Hall, Trangie Show ground along with upgrades to both Trangie and Narromine pools. January 5th saw temperatures of 45.6 in our region and the necessity of good pools becomes obvious.

There was also upgrades to the Narromine Sports centre and the purchase of outdoor exercise equipment

Round 2 SCCF

\$1.5 mill of \$1.7 mill project

Narromine splash pool, Narromine and Trangie pool refurb, Narromine Trangie and Tomingley street scapes. Our towns are all located on either the Newell or Mitchell Highways and we pride ourselves in keeping them aesthetically pleasing both for residents and visitors given the harsh climate that we are sometimes faced with.

Round 3 SCCF

Cale Oval upgrade including new clubhouse and fencing, the removal of trees disturbing graves at the Trangie cemetery and much needed drainage works across the shire.

In conclusion I believe that further funding for approved start ups in rural and regional areas would provide even more investment and jobs across our areas. We have been granted \$50k towards the establishment of a business hub that allows entrepreneurs to establish businesses and engage with like minded others to share ideas and visions. Small funding arrangements would greatly boost their chances of success.

It is vital that significant funding continue to ensure real estate values are not diminished by falling populations, that towns are supported and allowed to grow and flourish and that rural and regional residents are given similar opportunities to those in the cities. It is well known that the further you live from the Sydney CBD the greater your chances of dying from a heart attack. We can accept having less health opportunities but we deserve to be treated as equals at all times.

Sincere thanks

Craig Davies