

**Submission
No 19**

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

Organisation: Bland Shire Council

Date Received: 20 August 2020

NSW Legislative Council
Inquiry into the Integrity, Efficacy and Value for Money of
NSW Government Grant Programs

Submission from Bland Shire Council
21st August 2020

To The Public Accountability Committee
Mr. David Shoebridge MLC
Chair
Dear Mr. Shoebridge

Council's submission focuses on the Stronger Country Communities Grant Scheme as this Scheme has had the greatest impact on Council and the Bland Shire Community.

The Bland Shire Local Government Area covers over 8,500 sq. kms; has the second longest road network of all NSW Councils measuring just over 3,200kms and a population of just under 6000 spread amongst six (6) small villages and the main centre of West Wyalong.

Consequently, as a small rural council, with a small rate base and major challenges in maintaining our existing infrastructure, we are very reliant on government grants.

(a) The range and availability of funding programs, including but not limited to:

(ii) Stronger Country Communities Fund

Bland Shire Council has been the recipient of a total of \$3,116,055.00 following three rounds of this particular funding program and you will find attached a list of the projects to which this funding has been allocated.

The fact that a small rural council, such as the Bland Shire, does not have to compete for funding for vital community facilities is of immense benefit. I am nearing 50 years' service in local government in NSW and I have always advocated for the allocation of government funding being on an identified needs basis and not based on which council has the best grant writing team!

None of the projects on the attached list would have been possible, given Bland Shire Council's limited financial resources, without this funding and every one of those projects has provided not only a community asset but also an uplifting of community spirit and community pride.

(b) The manner in which grants are determined

Council believes that it is important for the local Member of Parliament to be involved in the identification of projects but always in liaison with the local council. Bland Shire Council is fortunate to have a very active local member in Steph Cooke and her understanding and appreciation of local

needs when combined with the identified needs in council's Community Strategic Plan ensures that projects meet the expectations of the local community.

(c) Measures necessary to ensure the integrity of grants schemes and public confidence in the allocation of public money

The reaction of the Bland Shire communities, when seeing these projects come to fruition, has always been positive and there is a high level of appreciation, not only of the council's involvement but also that of the state government and the local member. I believe that this is testament to the confidence the local community has in the partnership between local and state government to deliver essential facilities and services in a timely and cost effective manner.

(d) Any other related matters

The benefits of this particular Grant Scheme and the way in which the funding is allocated on council by council basis has been immense and it would be a travesty if Bland Shire Council and other similar size councils were deprived of vital government financial support simply because of any political agenda to save taxpayer funds. We are all taxpayers, and the current NSW Government's endeavours to support regional and rural NSW is to be commended.

Resilience and sustainability are at the core of the future of communities such as those within the Bland Shire and we strongly urge this Committee to these factors into account when assessing the future viability of grant schemes such as the Stronger Country Communities Program.

Ray Smith PSM [™]
General Manager

**Summary of Projects and Grant Allocations under the NSW
Stronger Country Communities Fund
Rounds 1-3**

SCCF 1 - PROJECTS	
	AMOUNT
Refurbishment of Waterslide at Holland Park Pool - West Wyalong	\$137,550
Heating of Holland Park Pool - West Wyalong	\$147,596
West Wyalong Community Cinema	\$451,572
Ungarie Tennis Club Upgrade	\$264,520
Total Allocation of Grants	\$1,001,238
SCCF 2 PROJECTS	
Barmedman Mineral Pool Upgrade	\$171,890
Cooinda Park Rejuvenation - Stage 1	\$187,800
Rugby Club and Rodeo Grounds Power and Sports Lighting Upgrade	\$839,009
Kikiora Hall Rejuvenation	\$139,298
Total Allocation of Grants	\$1,337,997
SCCF 3 - PROJECTS	
Dog Park for Natural Heritage Reserve	\$68,000
Roof and Lighting at the Outdoor Basketball Court and Surrounds	\$214,000
West Wyalong Skate Park upgrade	\$151,220
Purchase and Installation of Outdoor Fitness Equipment	\$110,000
Green Corridor Refurbishment as Passive Recreation Space (Stage 1)	\$183,600
Youth Resilience Project	\$50,000
Total Allocation of Grants	\$776,820
Grand Total of all 3 Rounds	\$3,116,055.00