

**Submission  
No 60**

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

**Organisation:** Namoi Unlimited

**Date Received:** 23 August 2020

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# NAMOI UNLIMITED

Premier agricultural region in Australia

GUNNEDAH SHIRE COUNCIL | GWYDIR SHIRE COUNCIL | LIVERPOOL PLAINS SHIRE COUNCIL | TAMWORTH REGIONAL COUNCIL | WALCHA COUNCIL

23 August 2020

Mr David Shoebridge MLC  
Chairperson  
Public Accountability Committee  
NSW Parliament  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Shoebridge

On behalf of the member Councils of Namoi Unlimited, below is a submission to the inquiry into the integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs.

In general if integrity means the quality of being honest, and the application of high moral principles, the identified programs in your inquiry have afforded Councils an opportunity to access funding for community facilities and infrastructure not seen previously, and having dedicated funding programs for regional NSW needs to continue. The focus on regional NSW should remain part of the moral principles or compass of any future NSW Government.

Efficacy is the ability to fulfil a desired intent or result and again, the member Councils of Namoi Unlimited believes in general that these programs have contributed to the development of key community and business infrastructure required to develop economies and support communities.

The requirement for projects to demonstrate value for money as part of their application process, should give your committee comfort that Regional NSW teams have made this assessment according to the guidelines.

More specifically, comments are provided below on the areas of focus in the Committee's Terms of Reference;

- **The range and availability of funding programs,**

Whilst in general Councils have been afforded a number of opportunities to apply for funding for a range of infrastructure related programs, funding is dedicated to the building of facilities, and whilst Namoi Unlimited acknowledges that this is critical to jobs and business development if the funding is expended locally, these programs do not assist groups like Joint Organisations develop regional responses and projects.

Namoi Unlimited supports the development of an avenue within these funding programs that enable Joint Organisations to address the key role given to Joint Organisations by the NSW Government, that is strategic regional priorities and the plans to achieve them, inter-governmental relations and leadership.

- **The manner in which grants are determined, including: the oversight of funding determinations, the transparency of decision making under grants schemes, the independence of the assessment of projects, the role of Members of Parliament in proposing projects for funding, the scope of Ministers' discretion in determining which projects are approved, measures necessary to ensure the integrity of grants schemes and public confidence in the allocation of public money.**

Namoi Unlimited believes that the timely delivery of Government investment is critical to regional development. There have been examples in our region where announcements have been made, but then contracting and construction has taken a long time to come into play.

Namoi Unlimited believes private enterprise follows government investment closely and must be made in the right place at the right time, therefore a regional approach and support is invaluable to this process.

Not all parts of the NSW Government have embraced the opportunity to work with Joint Organisations and their member Councils which is disappointing. Joint Organisations although they are recognised in the Local Government Act, are not eligible to all funding programs.

In these particular programs where a Local Government Area is provided with an estimated funding allocation, and a Joint Organisation may also be eligible to make an application, this will not occur because the Joint Organisation and Councils are essentially pitted to compete with its own members. The member Councils will prioritise their local projects.

Namoi Unlimited also believes they can fulfil a valuable role for the NSW Government to provide;

- Advice on local and regional priorities
- Coordinating consultation and engagement between project partners
- Aggregating project outcomes and project opportunities delivering better value for money for the NSW Government
- Provide a monitoring and performance program between the grant program and recipients

Namoi Unlimited believes the role of local Members of Parliament in this process is critical because like Local Government, their interest is to progress the development of the State of NSW and their community.

On behalf of the members of Namoi Unlimited, I would like to wish you and your committee our very best in your deliberations, and if you require any further information from our group, please do not hesitate to contact our Executive Officer at

Yours sincerely

**Councillor Jamie Chaffey**  
**Chairperson of Namoi Unlimited**  
**Mayor Gunnedah Shire Council**