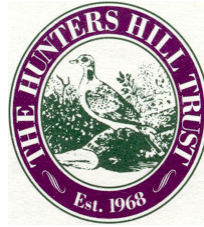


**Submission
No 100**

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

Organisation: The Hunters Hill Trust

Date Received: 26 October 2020



PRESERVING AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST GARDEN SUBURB
THE HUNTERS HILL TRUST INC
P.O. BOX 85, HUNTERS HILL, N.S.W. 2110

24-10-2020 Submission re Boronia Park SCF to Integrity Commission V3

Mr Stewart Smith,
Committee Director
Integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs
public.accountability@parliament.nsw.gov.au
26 October 2020

Dear Mr Smith

We write in reference to your current enquiries into the Integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs. We are residents of Hunters Hill whose Council was the recipient of what was described as a \$1 million grant issued by Anthony Roberts through the Stronger Communities Fund. As you know, this was established by the NSW Government to support councils subject to a merger proposal and assist their communities.

In his address at Boronia Park during the Moocooboola Festival on 5 August 2018 (reported in his media release of 7 August 2018), Mr Roberts announced '\$1 million in funding towards the Boronia Park Sports Precinct Upgrade,' stating that:

“An upgrade has long been needed for the Park,”

“Some of the facilities are 50 years overdue for rehabilitation. Through a lot of hard work we've been able to secure a grant to fix up the grandstand, build a new amenities block, greater facilities for community use, netball courts and general improvements to the park itself. That feeds into a greater plan for a new facility centre here.”

“This funding will assist every sporting group in Hunter's Hill and bring Boronia Park up to speed”

Hunters Hill Council adopted a revised Plan of Management for Boronia Park in April this year, and amongst many other recommendations, the Plan proposes 'a new sport/community facility' (Action PDFL32, detailed on p109) as one of many upgrades to the sporting facilities here.

The wording of Minister Roberts statement matched the wishes of many in the local community (as evidenced by submissions made during the public exhibition of the recently revised Plan of Management for Boronia Park, and documented in the Plan). The Plan allocates the priority to 'Internally refurbish grandstand' as High, the same priority as is given to construction of a sport/community facility.

At the meeting of Hunters Hill Council on 12 October, however, in a 4:2 decision, ignoring the list of purposes in Anthony Roberts' statement when announcing the funding, Council has allocated the whole \$1 million (as well as a Commonwealth grant of \$500,000) solely towards the construction of a 'sport/community facility'. This ignores the other items for which the grant was intended (as stated above), in particular the long-overdue upgrade of the 1928 grandstand (the 'CA Fairland Pavilion').

We believe that taxpayer-funded grants should be acquitted in line with their publicly stated purposes, with all conditions met. Having been unsuccessful in our attempts to obtain copies of any application or formal granting of the funds, we conclude that there never was such an application, consistent with the receipt of the funds being described as a gift (by HH Council's General Manager during Council Meeting 12 October). This lack of transparency about the origins of such funding is disturbing and compounds the concern we have that Council is willing to obscure the facts in order to favour the desires of one organisation (the local rugby club) over the local community's preference to restore and upgrade the 1928 Grandstand.

Consequently, we are writing to ask you to include this episode as evidence misuse of a 'grant' in your considerations.

Yours sincerely

Alister Sharp PhD
President Hunters Hill Trust

References

- Plan of Management for Boronia Park for Hunters Hill Council, 4 May 2020: download from <https://www.huntershill.nsw.gov.au/home/lifestyle/get-active/parks-and-reserves/plans-of-management/>

Attachments

- Media release by Anthony Roberts, 7 Aug 2018
- Email exchange 9-10-2029 between Alister Sharp (President Hunters Hill Trust) and Lisa Miscamble (General Manager Hunters Hill Council)