

**Submission
No 106**

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

Name: Mr David McAlister

Date Received: 9 February 2021

Bushfire Recovery Grants Allocation Submission

Declaration ;I did not seek a grant and I do not know or have any links with any individuals/companies who received grants.

I write this as a survivor of the Currowan Bushfire and resident of Benandarah, NSW- my farm was fire ravaged saving only the house and Creative Arts Studio.

Item 1

My only reliable, all weather access road has been closed for over a year now because three timber bridges were destroyed in the bushfire. Now the bridges are gone my community on the Clyde River has to run a gauntlet of narrow, unreliable (never in wet weather) and dangerous bush "rat" tracks. We always carry chainsaws as there is the likelihood of fallen timber cutting off the tracks!

When I saw the Bushfire Recovery funding grants I was delighted because, as you would expect, I envisioned that these grants would be used to restore life to what it was before the fire. I sincerely thought that rebuilding damaged infrastructure would be high on that list. Our three bridges are a but few of the many bridges decimated in the 2019/2020 fires and they are still inaccessible over a year later!

I write ,thinking of the many citizens affected by these closures.

Item 2

I read the list of successful grant recipients/projects for my region and some are worthy recipients as they were impacted by the Bushfire ,eg oyster farmers on the Clyde-due to embers floating down river. On the other hand, there are too many recipients who received grants that were not "impacted "by the fire.

It would appear that the offering of employment and tourist opportunities was the over-riding goal with little thought to Bushfire Recovery. My fellow farmers would be delighted to hear what parameters were set to access these grants and if guidelines were set to establish if an application was meaningful and not just a cash grab?

Item 3

As I look out from my veranda towards the Budawang Ranges and Pigeon House Mountain it is a fact that fires will come again, they are an essential element in the cycle of life but what have we really learnt from the fires of 2019/2020?

An opportunity existed in the grants programme to research and establish best practice in harm minimization; such a "halo" belts around "built up areas" or clear back zones-fire breaks along major Highways. At the least let's try to make the fighting of wild fires a little less dangerous.

Item 4

This next item is a heartfelt plea.

After the fires the well-being of victims of a fire-that includes all emergency workers and their families and every community member, need support.

My dear neighbour saved four homes in the middle of the night in the middle of the Currowan fire by circling homes with his tractor fitted with a disc plough. Now, twelve months later he is a "mess". He'll never put his hand up for help. In his day "real" men never did! How can we help these heroes when they need help? A grant may have helped in finding the best practise for aid to the real victims and not those putting their hand out for a quick cash grab.

Item 5

My perceptive daughter suggested that an opportunity existed for "Landcare" or the like to plants river gums on the Clyde River as on our farm, and many others, many of these very old and gracious trees were destroyed and many have already fallen into the river. These trees maintained the river bank and now erosion is commencing on our property. We have fenced off these areas and are hoping tree seeds will germinate.

Well, what have I done besides this submission:

Wrote to my local member Andrew Constance.....his office redirected my letter to Mr Barilaro.....no reply.....Wrote to Ms Berjiklian.....one month later redirected letter to Mr O'Toole.....no reply.

And yes I did send a submission to the Bushfire Inquiry-no reply only that it was received.

And ,after the cleanup and the fence roll up, following the Currowan Fire,my son and I re-fenced two kilometres of burnt sheep fence-only one kilometre to go!