

**Submission
No 114**

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

Organisation: Central Coast Council

Date Received: 25 February 2021



25 February 2021

Mr David Shoebridge MLC
Chair of the Public Accountability Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr Shoebridge and Committee Members,

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITTEE'S INQUIRY INTO NSW GOVERNMENT GRANTS - BUSHFIRE

Central Coast Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Public Accountability Committee's inquiry into the integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs provided for bushfire support for NSW communities.

The Central Coast LGA is located on the coast of New South Wales, 60 to 90 kilometres north of the Sydney CBD, and about 80 kilometres south of the Newcastle CBD.

The bushfire season of 2019-20 was extreme, we witnessed bush fires through forested regions on a scale that we have not seen in Australia in recorded history. The Gospers Mountain fire which started at Lithgow, burned all the way east to the Central Coast, it merged with the Three Mile fire near Gunderman and Spencer, and further fires around Mangrove, Kulnura and Bucketty, in all more than 543,000 ha were destroyed by the Gospers Mountain fire.

Central Coast sustained a loss of approximately 28,000 hectares, along with;

- 3 homes destroyed and 3 homes damaged,
- destruction of the Mangrove Creek Picnic Area
- 6 outbuildings destroyed and 13 outbuildings damaged,
- 127 rural land holdings impacted, along with,
- business', plant and machinery, and hobby farms,
- Up to 100 people self-evacuated on New Year's Eve from the Charmhaven fire alone.

The Central Coast region was heavily affected during the 2019 -2020 bushfires from not only the physical effects of the bushfire, but also the regional economy was negatively impacted due to a downturn in visitor numbers and the impact on the supply chain and smoke damage to crops.

Council appreciates the support provided by the Federal and NSW Governments and the opportunity to submit applications for funding through the numerous bushfire programs. The complex nature of the different grant programs has required Council to provide additional resources to support the applications with additional funding required to support other identified projects.



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To improve the process for emergency grants Central Coast Council submits the following recommendations:

- Simplified grant and reporting processes
- Resilience NSW or Grant Management Office personnel assigned to each LGA to provide a coordinated approach to emergency recovery grants
- Improved consistency in decision making
- Provision of webinars prior to submission

A review of Councils records indicates that Central Coast Council was not invited to nominate projects to be fast-tracked under the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery fund and was only notified of the program on 16 October 2020. Council would have appreciated an opportunity to have been able to nominate some fast-tracked projects to support the bushfire recovery efforts.

Council has applied for the following projects under Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund Phase 2 - Stream 2 and the Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund programs. Council is still awaiting a determination on these projects

Program	Project	Funding Requested \$
Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund Phase 2 - Stream 2	Community led recovery & resilience Phase 2.	120,000
Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund Phase 2 - Stream 2	Agribusiness Mapping Stage 2.	100,000
Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund	Rural Fire Service - Solar & Battery Project	972,000
Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund	Central Coast Region Data Dashboard to support an Economic and Social Data Analytics	300,000
Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund	Bigger Backyard - Business to Consumer Platform and Innovation Breakfast Series	345,000
Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund	Central Coast Investment Attraction Platform and Campaign	600,000
Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund	Tourism Product, Content and Digital Product Development	286,311
Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund	Bush Regeneration and Resilience in 18 Council Reserves	207,000

Should you require any further clarification, please contact my office.

Yours sincerely,

Rik Hart
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Central Coast Council