

Submission  
No 9

**INQUIRY INTO INTEGRITY, EFFICACY, AND VALUE FOR  
MONEY OF THE LOCAL SMALL COMMITMENTS  
ALLOCATION PROCESS**

**Organisation:** Port Macquarie Hastings Council

**Date Received:** 24 January 2025

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24 January 2025

Refers to: CRM18600/2024

Ms Abigail Boyd MLC  
Committee Chair  
Public Accountability and Works Committee  
Legislative Council  
Parliament of New South Wales  
6 Macquarie St  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via email: [PAWC@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:PAWC@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Ms Boyd,

**Re: Inquiry into the integrity, efficacy, and value for money of the Local Small Commitments Allocation process.**

Port Macquarie-Hastings Council appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission on the important matter of the Local Small Commitments Allocation (LSCA) process and offers the following points for the Committee's consideration. For ease of reading, we have used sub-heading and reference the sections of the Inquiry terms of reference in our submission.

**Introduction - Port Macquarie-Hastings Council**

The Port Macquarie-Hastings Local Government Area (LGA) is located halfway between Sydney and Byron Bay on the Mid North Coast, with 84,525 residents living in 34 communities across a 3,686km<sup>2</sup> area. The LGA spans the electorates of Oxley and Port Macquarie. Port Macquarie-Hastings Council currently services 335 parks, 65 playgrounds, 17 community halls, 920km sealed and 458km unsealed roads, 55 sporting fields, and 3 Libraries. It also includes a Regional Airport, 5 sewage treatment facilities, 4 water treatment plants, an environmental laboratory, 5 waste transfer stations, 137 bridges, 27 RFS and 3 SES facilities, 183km of footpaths and numerous other community assets.

**Advocacy**

We would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Member for Port Macquarie and Member for Oxley for their understanding of our regional community, and working with Council to identify appropriate playground upgrade projects that we could deliver.

***(a) the range and availability of funding under the program, including but not limited to the manner in which grants were and are determined***

As a high growth regional Council and with limited ability to expand our revenue sources, grants are a critical source of income to support our projects in our community.

Our experience with the LSCA process for application, assessment and recipient allocation has consistently been clear, transparent, fair and reasonable. Noting the Oxley and Port Macquarie electorates are National and Liberal seats, we welcomed the opportunity to receive our fair share of funding with a portion of the \$400,000 delivered to each of the NSW electorates.

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Our three LSCA allocations are as follows:

- \$302,250 Laurie Street Laurieton Play Space (Port Macquarie electorate);
- \$75,000 Sister Marjorie's' Mobile soup kitchen for the homeless and hungry (Port Macquarie electorate); and
- \$80,000 Andrews Park Wauchope Nature Play Space (Oxley Electorate).

For each project Council prepared and submitted a separate 11- page application with up to six attachments. We were aware that submitting an application did not guarantee funding would be granted for any project, and that it had to be compliant with the Funding Guidelines and that submissions undertake assessment by the LSCA Project Office.

#### **Emphasis on shovel-ready projects**

We welcome grants for shovel-ready projects that will have immediate community and economic impact. The criteria that the funding must be used to deliver upgrades to playgrounds and parks within the electorate gave us ample room to propose projects in our Operational Plan. One of the on-going challenges local government is facing when it comes to grant funding, is an increased emphasis by funding bodies on the need for projects to have matched funding. It is relieving for Council that there were no criteria to match funding for these projects.

#### ***(b) the role and interaction of the Premier's Department and other agencies in the process, assessment, and facilitation of grants***

##### **Support from LSCA Project Office**

We would like to note that we have consistently experienced an exemplary high level of support from the staff at the LSCA Project Office. We truly commend these staff for their expertise and helpfulness to facilitating our requests. We value their friendly, efficient and knowledgeable support in the coordination of agreements, variations and reporting obligations.

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

The Program managed by the NSW Government ensured an even playing field as \$400,000 was allocated to each of the 93 NSW electorates, ensuring fairness across all electorates, irrespective of political party standings.

Like most NSW grants management offices, the LSCA Project Office coordinates the program via SmartyGrants - an online grants administration system. This system provides a high-level of probity with tracking, storing and reporting on the flow of data including submissions, assessments, milestone reporting and project completion reports and acquittals.

#### **In conclusion**

Port Macquarie-Hastings Council thanks the Public Accountability and Works Committee for consideration of our submission. The effect of grant funding to invest in the rejuvenation and creation of our regional community facilities, infrastructure and programs enables hugely positive outcomes on all aspects of community life in our regional local government area.

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We strongly support the continuation of the Local Small Commitments Allocation program as it provides benefits to local communities and councils through a range of capital works, services and programs.

Yours sincerely

**Duncan Coulton**  
Executive Manager strategy

Cc. Mayor Adam Roberts  
The Hon. Leslie Williams - Member for Port Macquarie  
The Hon. Michael Kemp - Member for Oxley