

**ITEM-13 LMM 28/06/2022 - UNFAIR GRANT PROGRAM EXCLUSION**

**MOTION:**

That City of Newcastle:

1. Notes its long-standing frustration with inconsistent State Government classification, and resulting ineligibility for many grant programs.
2. Refers to the content of previous Lord Mayoral Minutes<sup>i</sup>, subsequent submission to the Public Accountability Committee's Inquiry into the integrity, efficacy, and value for money of the NSW Government grant programs<sup>ii</sup> and commissioned Background Issues Paper by Hunter Research Foundation Centre<sup>iii</sup> regarding City of Newcastle's classification and eligibility for government funding.
3. Notes that at the time of said Submission, Newcastle had been denied eligibility to apply for funding sources totalling \$5.86 billion, Newcastle's approximate share of which totalled \$170.9 million, based on City of Newcastle's share of Gross State Product.
4. Notes that on 30 March 2021, the Public Accountability Committee tabled<sup>iv</sup> 15 recommendations as part its first report into the integrity, efficacy, and value for money of NSW Government grant programs.
5. Acknowledges that the report found "it was unacceptable for large regional cities such as Newcastle and Wollongong to be excluded when complementary grants programs are designed for both metropolitan and regional areas", and called for the NSW Government to review and standardise eligibility classifications across grant programs.
6. Confirms the Committee also supported investigation into the creation of a third 'gateway city' classification category for regions, which would potentially include local government areas such as Newcastle and Wollongong.
7. Notes that the Government provided its final response<sup>v</sup> on 8 June 2022, in which there was no acknowledgement of the concerns raised by City of Newcastle.
8. Notes that since that making its submission, Newcastle has since missed out on the opportunity to apply for a share in millions more dollars in funding from the State Government because of its inconsistent classification, more recently including the \$20 million Events Boost program, and the \$35 million Electric Vehicle Fast Charging grant program.
9. Confirms our disappointment that despite those inquiry findings, Newcastle is still suffering from funding inequality by being unable to apply for major government grant programs that are accessible by its neighbouring council areas and laments the loss of community infrastructure, programs, and services as a result.
10. Writes to the Minister for Local Government, Wendy Tuckerman MP advising of this inequality and requesting assistance in resolving the issue as a matter of urgency.

**BACKGROUND:**

**NEWCASTLE MISSES OUT ON \$20 MILLION ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING DESTINATION GRANTS PROGRAM**

Newcastle Herald  
12 May 2022

Newcastle's lord mayor has lashed the state government for the city being excluded from a grant program for electric vehicle chargers.

The NSW Government announced \$20 million in EV Charging Destination Grants to roll out up to 3500 electric vehicle chargers at tourist and small business visitor economy destinations.

A range of destinations in regional NSW can apply for the grants, including motels, wineries, cafes, restaurants, natural attractions, visitor information centres, museums and zoos. But none of those sorts of businesses in Newcastle are eligible.

Lord mayor Nuatali Nelmes said the reason Newcastle will miss out on the program again comes down to the city's classification.

Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Maitland and Cessnock are eligible, as they are classed as regional, but Newcastle is considered metropolitan.

"It just goes to the regional-metro dichotomy in grant funding that Newcastle is often left out of the regional funding pool, included in the metro funding pool but often excluded just by the tyranny of distance from metropolitan Sydney," she said.

The classification issue has also reared its head in other grant programs such as the Regional Sport Infrastructure Fund, but Cr Nelmes said this was particularly disappointing as it means popular destinations like Blackbutt Reserve, Fort Scratchley or Newcastle Museum miss out.

"It's a shame. We've done a lot of work in the electric vehicle charging space and it would have been a good opportunity to consolidate that work," she said.

"Research shows one of the inhibitors to purchasing is range anxiety.

"But we'll keep on pushing ahead and make sure we have a good supply of electric vehicle charging stations."

**ATTACHMENTS:**

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<sup>i</sup> LMM 27 July 2020 - City of Newcastle submission to the Inquiry into the integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs; LMM 25/08/2020 – City of Newcastle’s Submission to the Public Accountant Committee’s Inquiry into the Integrity, Efficacy and Value for Money of NSW Government Grant Programs.

<sup>ii</sup> City of Newcastle’s submission to the Public Accountability Committee’s Inquiry into the integrity, efficacy and value for money of NSW Government grant programs dated 21 August 2020.

<sup>iii</sup> Hunter Research Foundation Centre, *City of Newcastle Classification for NSW Government Funding* Background Issues Paper, August 2020.

<sup>iv</sup> Report (nsw.gov.au)

<sup>v</sup> Letter to Dominic Perrottet MP, Premier, providing Government response to first and final reports dated 8 June 2022.