

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Climate Resilience

Macedon – Tuesday 3 December 2024

MEMBERS

Ryan Batchelor – Chair

David Ettershank – Deputy Chair

Melina Bath

Gaelle Broad

Jacinta Ermacora

Wendy Lovell

Sarah Mansfield

Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell

Sheena Watt

PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

John Berger

Ann-Marie Hermans

Evan Mulholland

Rachel Payne

Aiv Puglielli

Richard Welch

WITNESSES

Bernie O'Sullivan, Chief Executive Officer, and

Tania MacLeod, Acting Manager, Strategic Planning and Environment, Macedon Ranges Shire Council;

Ashley Fletcher, Climate Change Resilience Officer, and

Frances Ford, Coordinator, Emergency Management and Resilience, City of Greater Bendigo; and

Annika Kearton, Chief Executive Officer, Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance.

The CHAIR: I will declare open the committee's public hearing into climate resilience here in Victoria. This is a public hearing for the Environment and Planning Committee, a cross-party committee of the Legislative Council in the Parliament of Victoria, looking into climate resilience and the built environment here in Victoria. We are going to be providing a report to the Parliament which will include recommendations to the government. If everyone here can please ensure that mobile phones have been switched to silent and that background noise is minimised.

I will begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the lands we meet on today and pay my respects to elders past and present, and I welcome any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians who are joining proceedings today. Welcome to members of the public in the gallery. I ask that everyone participating in today's proceedings remains respectful of those proceedings at all times.

All evidence we take is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and the provisions of the Legislative Council's standing orders. Therefore the information that our witnesses provide today is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during these hearings, but if you go elsewhere and say the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of the Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded, and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing. Those transcripts will ultimately be made public and published on the committee's website.

Welcome. My name is Ryan Batchelor. I am the Chair of this committee and a Member for the Southern Metropolitan Region in the Legislative Council. I ask the committee members to introduce themselves.

David ETTERS HANK: Thank you. I am David Ettershank, Western Metropolitan Region.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Sarah Mansfield, Member for Western Victoria.

Wendy LOVELL: Wendy Lovell, Member for Northern Victoria Region.

Melina BATH: Good morning. Melina Bath, Eastern Victoria.

Gaelle BROAD: Hi, I am Gaelle Broad, Member for Northern Victoria.

John BERGER: John Berger, Member for Southern Metro.

The CHAIR: And online?

Jacinta ERMACORA: Jacinta Ermacora, Member for Western Victoria.

The CHAIR: Thank you all for joining us today. What I might ask each of you to do is just to state your name and the organisation you appear on behalf of for the Hansard record, and then I will invite you to make an opening statement. Maybe if we start at this end of the table and work our way down.

Annika KEARTON: Thank you. Annika Kearton, CEO of the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance.

Tania MacLEOD: Tania MacLeod, Acting Manager, Strategic Planning and Environment, Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: Bernie O’Sullivan, Chief Executive Officer, Macedon Ranges Shire Council.

Ashley FLETCHER: Ashley Fletcher, Climate Change Resilience Officer, City of Greater Bendigo.

Frances FORD: Frances Ford, City of Greater Bendigo, Coordinator, Emergency Management and Resilience.

The CHAIR: Thanks so much for joining us today in travelling to this lovely part of the world. What I might do now is invite each of the organisations to make a 5-minute opening statement, and then we will just move into questions. Maybe, Bernie, I will start with you.

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: Thank you, Chair, and welcome to the beautiful Macedon Ranges. In line with this climate resilience hearing, we have had some pretty erratic weather over the last few days, but it is a pleasure to have you here in our region, and it is great to have our colleagues from City of Greater Bendigo and CVGA with us today.

Councils are on the front line in preparing and responding to the impacts of climate change on our communities, in our natural and built environment. In Macedon Ranges we are known, as you know, for our native forests, our thriving food and wine industries, our natural attractions such as Hanging Rock – very proud of in Mount Macedon. But climate change is already influencing each of these values in some way. Under climate change the Macedon Ranges environment will become increasingly warmer and drier. Infrastructure will need to withstand three times as many above-38 degrees days annually by 2040, while experiencing fewer frosts. Annual rainfalls are likely to decline. However, a warmer climate is expected to bring more heavy and intense rainfall events than we are already seeing. Bushfire seasons will become longer, with the Macedon Ranges bushfire season predicted to extend up to six weeks longer, with the season extending into late April by 2050. It is starting earlier now, and it is going to increasingly extend later.

The events of February 1983 are never too far from residents’ minds, when wildfires destroyed the townships of Macedon and Mount Macedon – where you are today – as well as over 6000 hectares of vegetation. More recent fires – thinking about February 2014, Gisborne South and Mickleham; October 2015, Lancefield–Cobaw; and January 2016, Edgecombe – have resulted in the loss of homes, significant numbers of stock, outbuildings and fencing and have impacted lives. Our shire continues to recover from multiple weather events that have impacted our local communities in recent years, including the vicious 2021 windstorm, the 2022 rainfall flood events and the early 2024 events. Our team and many of our councillors have been actively involved in relief and recovery efforts related directly to these events, with a particular consideration for the long-term recovery of residents who have had the unfortunate and compounding experience of multiple events over a short period of time.

Insurance that council might have, along with the Commonwealth disaster recovery funding arrangements, are the two key funding streams that council is reliant upon in extreme weather events. Both are subject to strict qualification criteria and exclusions which do not fully protect councils from the financial burden of climate change. When we talk about an increasing number of events, Macedon Ranges has been impacted by 22 severe weather events that have qualified for disaster recovery funding arrangements in the past 10 years – 22 events in the past 10 years. These events do not include the smaller weather events, as unless the emergency is very large, relief and recovery management happens at the local level and is led and paid for by council. Such works include the repair and maintenance of infrastructure, the clearing of debris and drains, waste disposal, pothole patching and road grading, and this results in significant unbudgeted expenditure to councils. In fact extreme weather events attributed to climate change are the largest financial burden for council. As an example, the windstorm damage sustained in mid 2021 – four weeks after I started at the Macedon Ranges Shire Council – resulted in Macedon Ranges Shire Council incurring \$21 million in associated expenditure. It took nearly three years to process all the claims arising from that single event, and significant costs in excess of \$5.6 million borne by council were not able to be claimed back. Impacts on council outside of the assistance stream include hidden costs that are harder to quantify such as staff overtime and turnover due to peak workloads, higher processing costs and delays, internal investigation costs when looking at asset failure, supply and contractor shortages and delaying the normal business-as-usual services that our communities need on a day-to-day basis.

There are also significant barriers to accessing funds for betterment of damaged assets and infrastructure following disaster events. Under current disaster recovery funding arrangements in Victoria, councils are only

funded to return assets and infrastructure to their pre-disaster state, with councils generally required to pay for additional upgrades themselves should they wish to build back better. The urgency with which essential infrastructure needs to be reinstated, such as getting a road open, further limits opportunities to budget for and allocate funding to build back better. In a sense, the road may get washed out with the next disaster event because we are not futureproofing it.

The ability for Victorian councils to keep up with regular asset maintenance and renewal to invest in upgrades for climate resilience is severely hampered by resource and funding constraints. These pressures are compounded by the impacts of rate capping, which was clearly evident in the recent state and federal financial sustainability inquiries; rising inflation; labour shortages; and higher construction and maintenance costs. Resources are further strained from responding to successive climate-related disaster events. Uncertainty about the future impacts of climate change make it difficult to plan for servicing infrastructure, such as power, water supply, stormwater and sewage requirements. At present, as an example, all drains and retarding basins are constructed to meet today's climate requirements, not tomorrow's climate requirements. The sector is generally not modelling future climate scenarios, and there is a risk that infrastructure that is being delivered today is not being designed to adequately accommodate future climate conditions. This puts communities at risk. Including future climate projections and flood modelling into infrastructure design will in turn increase the cost of construction and ongoing maintenance.

Climate change is one of the most serious threats to our natural, historic and Aboriginal heritage. As such, preparing for how climate change will impact the heritage of the Macedon Ranges is a key objective of the recently adopted *Macedon Ranges Heritage Strategy 2024–34* and its accompanying action plan. Macedon Ranges Shire Council declared a climate emergency in December 2021 and has a plan to reach zero net emissions by 2030. Council understands its responsibility to take strong action on climate change and supports residents across the shire to do the same. Our priorities include transitioning to post-carbon energy and transport alternatives and advocating for the introduction of environmentally sustainable design – or ESD, as we know it – policy into the planning scheme. But many of these targets are contingent on the leadership from the Victorian government to provide the planning and legislative framework to enable our townships to be built with the future climate as the central consideration for our communities – thinking about the years and generations to come, not just the now.

We respectfully request the Victorian government to, one, ensure local governments have access to secure, long-term funding to prepare for and recover from climate impacts; two, support a consistent approach to proactive build back better funding responses to emergency events for Victorian councils; and thirdly, incorporate environmentally sustainable design policy into the planning system along with the most recent localised and flood climate modelling. To finish, it is essential that all levels of government strive for best practice rather than minimum standards. Business as usual will not cut it when it comes to planning and futureproofing for our communities. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Bernie. Greater Bendigo, who wants to –

Frances FORD: Ashley is going to start off.

The CHAIR: Great.

Ashley FLETCHER: I will start. Thank you. Thank you, Bernie. That was very well said, and I think it covered a few of our concerns as well too.

Bernie O'SULLIVAN: Sorry about that.

Frances FORD: No, we are just reinforcing.

Ashley FLETCHER: Yes, that is it. The City of Greater Bendigo is in the centre of Victoria. We have the third-largest urban area in Victoria but also many small towns and villages. Some of those are Heathcote, Axedale, Huntly, Marong, Elmore, Goornong, Kamarooka, Lockwood, Neilborough, Sebastian, Woodvale, Raywood, Mia Mia and Redesdale. It is quite a diverse municipality, and our population is, at this stage, approximately 122,000, but it is growing very rapidly. Bendigo is known as the 'city in the forest' due to the state and national parks which surround the urban area. Large areas of bushland also extend throughout our rural areas and contain rural living and many bush blocks as well too. This increases the bushfire risk for the

municipality as a whole but also for our rural communities and the residents in our small towns. Most of urban Bendigo drains into the Bendigo Creek, which bisects the city. This creek, along with other tributaries and waterways are prone to flooding due to the topography of the municipality and also the history of mining and disturbance, which have reduced the capacity of the landscape to absorb water.

In recent years the City of Greater Bendigo has also experienced an increase in climate-related natural disasters, as I am sure you have heard from most local governments. Our council also plays an important regional support role through the Northern Victorian Emergency Management Cluster, and we provide that support to our neighbouring councils as well too. Some of the events that we have experienced include the Black Saturday fires, which were mainly in Redesdale and in Eaglehawk, but we also had that fire spread to within 1.2 k's of our city centre, so it came very close in our urban environment. We were also impacted by the 2022 flood event and as part of the Northern Victoria Emergency Management Cluster provided assistance to our neighbouring councils. This assistance included establishing and operating the largest relief centre in the state since Black Saturday, and the financial implications for council were substantial. It is estimated that the total damage cost was \$3.3 million, \$650,000 of which fell to council after reimbursements. It is also likely that there are additional costs that were incurred but were not able to be counted because they did not fit the eligibility criteria, and there was not a way that we could easily capture those to be reported.

Additionally, we had a number of extreme weather events in late 2023 and early 2024. Between Christmas and through to February we had a Boxing Day rain event, a storm hail event on 2 and 3 January, another rain and flood event on 7 and 8 January and then another storm event on 13 and 14 February in our municipality. In many cases people were impacted by flooding twice in a 15-month period. The emergency services responded to 4668 requests during the period of 2 January to 20 January alone, so it was a very busy time.

The concurrent events and the long tail of recovery have meant that council is both responding to new events while also recovering from previous events. Whilst the above-mentioned events were considered emergencies, it is also really important for us to consider the slow-onset climate impacts, such as drought, increased heat and lower rainfall, that will also impact our built environment and infrastructure in the future. And due to its proximity and connection to the local community, local government has a really unique perspective on what is needed to build resilience for infrastructure but also for our communities as well too. I will just pass on to Frances, who wants to highlight some of the key messages from our submission.

Frances FORD: Sure. I would like to start with 28 February 2024. That day I remember strongly, because I had staff in my team deployed to the Maryborough relief centre for people evacuating the Bayindeen bushfires that you will remember. The very same day, the rest of the team were out doing flood recovery outreach. I have worked in emergency management a long time, but I have never been doing bushfire relief and flood recovery literally on the same day. So this is the new world that we are in right now. Bernie has spoken eloquently about the principles of build back better, and I just wanted to reinforce that message, because I think from every angle, whether it be financial investment and what makes sense, social good of the community or community wellbeing more generally, the principles of build back better – as seen through the Queensland Betterment Fund, which is probably the best-known example, and the evidence that has come through about the value of that investment – are that it makes no sense to be spending money on work that can literally be washed away, sometimes not years later but a few weeks later. We feel really strongly that if we cannot have something similar to the Queensland Betterment Fund in Victoria, we are going to be continuing to waste money. For long-term sustainability those principles just make sense on all levels.

Another one I want to just mention briefly, and this is covered in our submission, is the limits of single incident funding. We were grateful for the community hub flood recovery funding that came through from Emergency Recovery Victoria in relation to the October 2022 floods. However, that took eight months to arrive, which was only a few months prior to the next lot of flooding, which we actually received no funding for, even though we had significantly greater impacts from the incidents that Ashley has listed from Christmas Day through till February. I have met people who were impacted twice. I remember one couple in their mid 80s who had just gone home. Their house had just been fixed up 13, 14 months after October 2022. They had just gone home a few weeks earlier, and they got flooded again. They were 86 years of age. That is just one example, but it really reinforces the point that people are going to be impacted more than once, that we need support to be able to support our communities to be more climate resilient and that at the moment the funding system does not allow for that. Our whole disaster recovery funding arrangements framework is based on single incidents. As you would know, each single incident has a totally separate list of reporting requirements, but the reality on the

ground is that we may be dealing with many incidents simultaneously, some of which may have funding but many of which may not have any funding attached. We are all for being accountable, but we do need to find a way to better link recovery support with resilience support.

Everyone is at different stages in the work in our communities – the communities that Ashley listed. Some of the people in those communities are still traumatised by the recent flooding and they do not really want to talk about resilience right now, but in a few months time they might be ready to talk about longer-term resilience planning. There are many strengths in our communities and many active leaders who are wanting to do what they can to support their communities before anything happens. We all know that communities that are connected before an event are going to recover much better. That is very well evidenced in all the research that has been done. However, it does take time and staff hours to resource that process. If we are talking strength-based community development, it does need resourcing. There is no resourcing from state government for that kind of work at the moment. We get a little bit of funding for emergency management. In our case it is \$60,000, unindexed for 13 years. That equates to about \$36,000 from when it was first introduced not long after Black Saturday. That is appreciated, but \$36,000 in today's money is not even going to cover the internal work that has to be done in emergency management planning and preparedness, let alone any support for community engagement and community development. So there is a gap at the moment.

I know that there is work being done at the national level to explore possibilities to change the disaster recovery funding arrangements so that they are more fit for purpose and do acknowledge concurrent, cascading, complex events. Our communities are not living with single incidents; they are living with the accumulated impacts of climate change.

The CHAIR: If you could just quickly wrap up, please.

Frances FORD: I will stop. We can raise other issues as we go, but thank you for the opportunity.

The CHAIR: Annika.

Annika KEARTON: Thank you very much, and thanks for the opportunity to address the committee today on behalf of the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance. We are a formal partnership of 13 local governments working collaboratively across central and north-west Victoria to address the challenges of climate change. Our alliance was the first greenhouse alliance in Victoria to be established, back in 2003, and has been active for over 20 years. Our members include two major regional cities, Bendigo and Ballarat; Victoria's largest municipality by area, Mildura; and some of Victoria's smallest municipalities by population, including the Pyrenees and Loddon shires. CVGA is one of eight greenhouse alliances in Victoria, and collectively we represent 70 of Victoria's 79 municipalities.

I am really pleased to be here today with two of our member councils, and Bernie and Frances have spoken very eloquently about some of the impacts that climate change is having on infrastructure, communities and environments across our region as well as the increasing cost and resource pressures on councils from climate-driven extreme weather and challenges keeping up with asset repair, maintenance, renewal and upgrades in this context.

I also want to note the report that was handed down last week by the inquiry into local government resourcing and services, which found that climate change is emerging as a significant threat to the financial sustainability of Victorian councils.

CVGA's mission is to lead and support collaborative action by our members to both reduce emissions and enhance the resilience and adaptive capacity of councils and communities in our region. We do this through a shared service model, and we seek to achieve efficiencies and economies of scale in the delivery of projects that may otherwise be beyond the reach of individual councils.

Our recent work in the adaptation space has included programs to support household, small business and community energy resilience; business cases for neighbourhood batteries to provide backup power to critical community facilities in emergency events and grid outages; research into opportunities and challenges for households to retrofit or upgrade their homes to become more resilient to climate change in addition to the strong emphasis that is already present in Victoria on energy efficiency retrofits; and targeted urban greening studies in regional townships.

I just want to briefly highlight some of the issues that our members are facing in their efforts to enhance the resilience of local built environments to climate change, namely, access to data and further support for climate risk assessments to inform local planning and gaps in the current Victorian planning system. A critical first step, as we are all aware, in addressing risk from climate change to the local built environment is understanding that risk. Currently there is a lack of sufficient granular or localised spatial data on climate risks. Councils are seeking to fill this gap individually by undertaking their own detailed risk assessments, but they would benefit from greater funding from the state government and guidance on consistent methodologies for risk assessment. A statewide review and update of all relevant flood mapping to align with the most recent CSIRO rainfall and run-off projections reflecting anticipated patterns of rainfall due to climate change would be particularly useful for local planning.

Councils have been heavily reliant on grants through the federal Disaster Ready Fund to fund risk assessments to gather data at the right scale to inform local planning, risk management and investment decisions for climate adaptation. Indeed CVGA will be looking towards this funding stream in 2025 to undertake a regional asset risk assessment on behalf of our members, but we note that we will be competing with numerous organisations, state government departments and other priority council projects for funding through this program and that funding requirements will limit the scope of the project and only enable assessment of a handful of asset classes and hazard types. This speaks to the challenges that the local government sector faces in terms of funding risk assessments that are critical for planning.

The adequacy of the current Victorian planning system as it relates to adaptation to and the mitigation of climate change impacts is also a significant ongoing challenge for councils. In 2021 the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances partnered with the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment, or CASBE, to commission a research report on climate change and planning in Victoria, which we have recommended to the committee in our submission. This report identifies a disconnect between high-level policy positions on climate change at the state and local government levels and the day-to-day decisions that are being made within our planning system. The report outlines a raft of reform opportunities directly relevant to this inquiry.

I would like to acknowledge the recent passing of amendments to the *Planning and Environment Act*, which for the first time in Victoria will create a mandate for climate change to be considered in planning decisions and will enable councils to ask for more environmentally sustainable design, or ESD, but further measures are required to effectively operationalise this legislation. Victorian councils have been working together along with the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances to advance how ESD is addressed in the planning system, and in 2022, 24 Victorian councils, led by CASBE, lodged an elevating ESD targets amendment articulating minimum standards in key areas such as energy efficiency and green infrastructure. Two years on we continue to call for this amendment to be approved by the minister for exhibition.

Embedding ESD requirements in the planning scheme is essential because of the fundamental role that the planning scheme plays in guiding decision-makers and its weight as statutory law. Councils also require further support and resourcing to administer monitoring, compliance and enforcement in the delivery of ESD-related actions and in the protection of existing natural assets. Once a planning permit has been issued there is generally very little monitoring or enforcement, due in great part to lack of resourcing, and often this means unfortunately that ESD potential is not translated into practice. For example, a VAGO report in 2022 stated that Victoria is losing over 10,000 hectares of native vegetation each year due to illegal removals, but councils face significant financial and resourcing barriers to undertaking sufficient compliance and enforcement. The loss of vegetation is impeding the state's ability to capture both climate resilience and economic benefits from protecting and increasing green infrastructure to reduce the health risks associated with the urban heat island effect as temperatures increase. These are just some of the measures that the state could take to strengthen the Victorian planning system and enable councils to continue demonstrating leadership on climate change adaptation and mitigation for a more resilient built environment. Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: Thanks very much for those comprehensive opening statements. We will just go to questions. I want to come to the planning question in just a sec. Obviously there was a big discussion about the resource-constrained environment that we are in and the need for additional funding to help prepare for these risks. Where do we think that money should come from?

Bernie O'SULLIVAN: All levels of government need to contribute to that, and we all have a responsibility to plan and prepare and then help communities respond and recover. We feel at a local council level we are

very close to the community, and if it is not funded from somewhere else, then often it becomes a council responsibility. And that is okay, we are just saying it is getting harder. As we said before, in Macedon Ranges, for instance, over 10 years there have been 22 disaster-declared events. With other resource constraints like rate capping, for instance, the ability to have the scope to respond and respond quickly and respond to events as they occur is much harder for councils. That is why across the state, particularly some smaller rural shires, and it was very evident through the financial sustainability inquiries, councils are starting to post deficit budgets because they cannot respond as they should for the support of their communities.

The CHAIR: So we have got increasing disaster events, fires and floods on the same day. It is reasonably unprecedented, and the strain on emergency management and emergency response is clear. Do we think that the funding regimes for those are currently adequate?

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: No. Let us unpack disaster recovery funding arrangements for a little bit with the 2021 storm event in Macedon Ranges. To take three years to get right through the claiming process – and we are very thankful for the state and federal funding arrangements to support the expenditure that local councils faced – it does not go far enough. It is very process ridden and slow. It is no-one’s fault, but we need to do better. We are seeing some councils in terms of the floods in Victoria that have needed to open roads to enable trucks to get through at harvest to take produce to port. They are underwriting the recovery of those roads and reinstating those roads without any guarantee that they will get that money back. For a small rural council you are pretty much going broke.

When we think about disaster-declared events, local councils are now needing teams of claims staff to process the claims, because otherwise to meet the requirements and the certification is immense. I think there is a level of trust there between levels of government, between council, state and federal, where a disaster is very evident, where it is very evident that a road is damaged. So it is just thinking through how can we streamline the funding process, how can we make it easier for councils and how can we get money to the recovery effort a lot faster. We need to do that better and work together better.

The CHAIR: And probably where we need to get the revenue from. Mr Ettershank.

David ETTERS SHANK: Thank you, Chair. Mr O’Sullivan, I might just start with something you mentioned at the beginning there. Did you say that climate change related damage was now the biggest cost to council? Did I hear that right?

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: You did. For instance, that 9–10 June 2021 storm event, for us in terms of our annual budget – \$21 million in expense that was totally unbudgeted for that we needed to respond to. Where historically we have seen those events sporadically and not on top of each other, that has totally changed for us. One of the challenges back into our councils is the state of readiness that you feel like you need to have at any point in time. Historically we would put on staff to try to support an emergency response recovery. Now we are thinking, ‘Well, gee, how do we respond at the drop of a hat? How do we scale up so quickly?’ That capacity is really pushing councils where we are very pushed on our revenue, and we have limited revenue-raising opportunities compared to metropolitan councils by sheer weight of reduced population. And we are finding that climate change and responding to increasing intense and erratic climate events is our biggest financial impact we are facing.

David ETTERS SHANK: Okay. I do not think we got a submission from Macedon council, did we?

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: It is still coming through.

David ETTERS SHANK: Okay. Could I perhaps just ask you to take a question on notice?

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: Sure.

David ETTERS SHANK: If you could maybe just document that for us? I do not think anyone has put that to us quite so clearly, just the sheer scale of it relatively in terms of climate-related damage as a percentage of council’s expenditure. Just provide the committee with some documentation that outlines that; that would be terrific.

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: I would be happy to do that.

David ETTERS HANK: In terms of the adequacy or otherwise of the planning system, could I perhaps just ask all of the parties really to indicate what they would consider to be their highest priority in terms of changes to the planning system, if you were going to give life to aspirations around resilience and adaptation?

Annika KEARTON: Sure. I think it has been mentioned by my colleagues here, but really embedding those ESD standards within the planning system. At the moment there are a number of competing obligations for planners and decision-makers to factor into planning decisions, and unless those ESD standards are really codified within the planning system, those competing obligations are going to continue to win out. We really need climate change to be elevated within the planning scheme in a way that is commensurate with the level of risk that it proposes.

I would say a great starting point is that elevating ESD amendment that has been put forward by Victorian councils, who are really on the front foot here, just as a starting point. I have been really pleased as well to note that the Minister for Planning's office has been liaising with councils around the draft ministerial directions to operationalise that legislative amendment that went through earlier this year. But I would really encourage, as Bernie noted, that collaboration between local and state government on these planning issues and really drawing on that local expertise of local governments in terms of what environmentally sustainable design looks like in a local setting.

David ETTERS HANK: Thank you.

Tania MacLEOD: I can draw on a local example, where it is the Amess Road community –

Wendy Lovell interjected.

Tania MacLEOD: Sorry?

Wendy LOVELL: I have got all notes about Amess Road.

Tania MacLEOD: In Riddells Creek. It is a new community just down the road here. Initially council was tasked with the PSP for that, the precinct structure plan. It was knocked back through council due to a petition from the local community with about 1200 signatures, predominantly looking at the low response in the plans to climate resilience and adaptation, so it has gone back to the state government through the facilitation process. I believe the Riddells Creek planning group have also put in a written submission to this inquiry. They have done some modelling with the stormwater and found that it is inadequate to be dealing with the projected rainfall at the top of the Maribyrnong catchment. In terms of low carbon and active transport, it is about 30 minutes walk from the centre of town, car dependent, with no facilities for electric vehicle charging. But essentially there is nothing in the planning scheme to oblige the developer to actually build for climate resilience in that particular precinct, so it is likely to get through.

David ETTERS HANK: Thank you. Is there a comment from Bendigo?

Frances FORD: Just very briefly, that all the points made in the CASBE submission council is strongly supportive of, but in a nutshell embedding the ESD standards is really the core of it.

David ETTERS HANK: Thank you very much.

Bernie O'SULLIVAN: Can I just make one final comment on that one? I mentioned before up-to-date and localised flood and climate modelling. This data needs to get into the planning schemes across Victoria quicker. When we think about a contribution the Victorian government can increasingly make, it is to support councils to get the flood modelling and climate modelling done and to get it into the planning scheme. A lot has been done, and it does not get in the planning scheme.

The CHAIR: We are well versed, having just completed an inquiry into flooding. On the issue, you are preaching to the converted, I think, here.

Bernie O'SULLIVAN: I am so glad you are across that, Chair.

The CHAIR: Ms Broad.

Frances FORD: Can I just add a little bit about –

The CHAIR: Hang on. I am just going to let Ms Broad ask a question and maybe we will get to it in that context. I just want to give members the opportunity to ask questions.

Gaelle BROAD: That is all right. You can continue.

Frances FORD: It was just about going back to the question of where the money comes from, so that can wait.

Gaelle BROAD: Sure. I guess I am just interested – we have got fire, flood and storms; there are a number of events that do happen – with the population growth that is happening in the region, how does that sort of balance with some of these requirements as well? What sort of pressure is that placing on you? Because I know in Bendigo, for example, in Huntly there is a lot of development on that side of town and there has been talk as well about maybe perhaps Ravenswood would be a good spot to expand, which has got more hills, not the flood plain. What sort of pressure is that population growth placing on councils?

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: I think one of the challenges that we will have in terms of communities that will see growth across the state, including Macedon Ranges shire and City of Greater Bendigo for instance, is, as we know, to achieve great climate outcomes, there are trade-offs, that you need to do more and less of things. Now, when we also have the need to deliver a lot more housing across Victoria and many people needing housing, the challenge will be that we will be putting in housing developments at the expense of our environment, of our climate, that meet today’s minimum standards. A really good example for us is the Victorian government project for a kindergarten in Lancefield that is currently being built at the moment. In terms of ESD, as in environmental sustainable design, minimum standards – so a lot of our kindergartens going in across the state through the Victorian School Building Authority and the money and funding that is supported are for minimum standards. In terms of that particular example, Macedon Ranges Shire Council said ‘not good enough’ when we think about futureproofing that sort of building, so we spent an extra \$135,000 to \$150,000 on things like glazing on windows and extra insulation to ensure that we are making it comfortable and safe but also with a view to how do we support the environment. That is one of the risks as we grow, that we will be doing things that are not meeting the standards to get it in quickly but not with an eye to the future.

Frances FORD: Can I also mention Bendigo’s managed growth strategy, because this is a really hot topic for us. As you would be aware, with the projected increases in population there is a strong commitment in the managed growth strategy to do as much infill development as possible. There is a lot of scope within urban Bendigo as it currently stands for a lot more housing to be provided within our existing footprint. That does not mean to say there is no need for greenfield development, but if we can maximise the opportunities for infill, that is going to have many, many consequences. Whether we are talking about not wanting to build in extreme fire risk areas – we have huge numbers of properties subject to fire management overlays – or whether it is about active transport and not wanting to have a totally car-dependent society in Bendigo – we do not want people pushed out to the fringes where there is no public transport because they cannot afford to get somewhere closer in to the urban centre – there is a whole lot of reasons why infill development is seen as preferable. It will not answer all our questions, and we know that the developers are not so keen, by and large, because the profit margin, I understand, is not as great. It is more complicated to do infill than it is to do a greenfield development from their perspective, so those negotiations are very much underway. But it is certainly within our managed growth strategy that we try and maximise infill development wherever possible.

Gaelle BROAD: With additional infrastructure being built in Bendigo, or more housing in Bendigo, I know the drains are very outdated and there has been, I guess, a reduced amount of expenditure I think in council budgets on drainage. Can you talk to that? I guess you talked about the need for increased assets, but what sort of challenge is that presenting, the drainage, in historical places like Bendigo?

Frances FORD: No drains I think could ever be built that would deal with the intensity of the deluge – we get a lot of flash flooding, but we are getting far more intense flash flooding. The estimate from our most recent lot of floods is that – people do not talk about one in 100 years anymore but the 1 per cent. It was more like one in 2000, so no drains would have coped. There is certainly an issue with community perception. There is a perception that the more development, say, in the Huntly area makes some of those areas more subject to flooding. The jury is out on that to a certain extent, but we have been advised by our engineering team that even

with no housing in those new developments the areas that were flooded most recently would still have experienced very severe flooding.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Ermacora.

Jacinta ERMACORA: Morning, everybody, again. Thanks for the conversation and the information you are providing. They are really, really useful insights from my perspective. We have done a fair bit so far on infrastructure and the costs and ESD et cetera, which is great. Ms Ford – Frances, I think – you mentioned strength-based community development as a response in emergency situations. Can you give a bit more detail around what that looks like in a particular place-based community? What are the benefits from that?

Frances FORD: Sure. Thank you for the opportunity. One example is Marong. We are working very closely with the Marong Community Action Group. It is out a little bit to the west of Bendigo, a rapidly growing community, and the Marong Community Action Group has been going for many years as almost like a progress association – lots of community projects, community events, wanting to improve levels of community connectedness. But the key people in that group also have a strong commitment to emergency preparedness, and they know that any investment in preparedness and mitigation is going to more than pay for itself in terms of reduced recovery. What the community action group is doing with their Resilient Marong project, with some support from council, is looking at their local risks and identifying practical actions that will help mitigate those risks not just in terms of what individuals can do but also what they can do as a community.

Jacinta ERMACORA: As a community.

Frances FORD: Some of it is about providing information to families and households. We have a particular focus on more vulnerable groups – for instance, refugee communities. We do a lot of work in emergency preparedness with refugee communities in Bendigo who are often not able to use the VicEmergency app or do not necessarily understand the risks in the areas that they are living in. Does that help give you a bit of an idea?

Jacinta ERMACORA: Yes. I have come across this before in Pomonal in my electorate, where there were bushfires. I have done a few visits there, and a lot of the different groups – the fire brigade and school and so on – talked about the November emergency management dinner that the whole community would attend, and at that dinner there would be reminders around preparing for bushfire, which was their highest risk. A lot of community members sort of mentioned that that strengthened that level of awareness you were talking about – knowing where vulnerable or immobile people are located and who needs to be extracted first. I thought that was potentially of great value in an emergency situation.

Frances FORD: It also relates to the need for more granular data. Everyone is crying out for data about local risks, and it would be really helpful to have some centralised support so that we could get data for those communities at a more detailed level than local government level.

Jacinta ERMACORA: But I think you could spend a lot of money hiring people to collect data about who lives where and what their situation is. If you could put that money into an annual social event, that would actually deal with that too, probably, because it would vary from time to time – people move.

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: I suppose just on the back of that – if I might, Chair – from a practical point of view as well, you are wanting the community (1) to be really well connected but (2) to do the sort of planning and preparedness so when things happen, they know where to go, what to do and where the safe places are. We are seeing an increasing number of events – power is out, mobile phones are out – so what has the community got in place in partnership with councils and utility providers to get people to places where they can contact loved ones, charge phones et cetera. Some of it is practical – how we are preparing our communities for these future events – because it is really hard and we know when the events happen our emergency services and agencies are really stretched. There are not enough volunteers, so how are we making sure we are getting that in place now in peacetime?

The CHAIR: Thanks. Ms Lovell.

Wendy LOVELL: Thank you very much. As we leave the city, on any exit point to the city we see more and more of these new, modern housing estates that have very small blocks with houses built on every square inch of the block. There are no eaves on those houses because they want to get as close to the fences as they

possibly can – very little tree canopy, no green open space and streets that are just like courts, which create problems with traffic and parking and all sorts of issues. That brings me to Amess Road and all the problems there. More importantly, I guess, Macedon Ranges has been given a target of 12,700 homes on top of their existing 21,300 homes – almost a 60 per cent increase. City of Greater Bendigo, 54,900 current homes – they are targeting 37,500, so that is more than a 68 per cent increase. We have seen Macedon Ranges make a very sensible decision around Amess Road for all the reasons that you have already outlined, like the lack of focus on addressing climate change and climate resilience; poor consideration for bushfire risk; and poor connectedness, as in it is a 30- to 40-minute walk to shops, services, public transport, schools and other amenities and inadequate stormwater infrastructure. Yet a development like that has been accepted by the minister into the development facilitation program and the panel, I believe, is actually not directly required to consider adaptation or preparation and mitigation for climate change impacts when it considers that actual application, which has blocks as small as a hundred square metres amongst it, totally inappropriate. So I guess my question is: what needs to change to ensure that we are planning better? We know we need growth, but we need to have planning schemes that are going to be strengthened so that it does not create problems and create communities that are not appropriate for climate resilience.

Tania MacLEOD: I guess we need to be protecting the existing and future green infrastructure and blue infrastructure. Riddells Creek is at the base of Mount Macedon. It is a highly bushfire-prone area, so the bushfire management overlay will obviously take precedent, where you can clear vegetation or trees within 10 metres of a house and vegetation more broadly around the dwelling. So any opportunity that we have to increase biodiversity through, say, extending VPOs are trumped by this bushfire overlay. Heat is the silent killer. There is a lot of focus on bushfire, but there is less focus on the impact of urban heat on residents and providing for sufficient green infrastructure in new developments to provide amenity and also cooling infrastructure for our residents. So it is nature strips for nature, allowing nature strips or streets that are wide enough to actually support canopy trees and more site coverage of lots so it is not just paving which then increases the load of storm water on our drains and drainage infrastructure – really a better consideration of blue and green infrastructure at the top levels of the planning system.

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: And I would just say, when we are talking about VPOs, we are talking about vegetation protection overlays. The other comment I would make is that lots of councils are doing the very important long-term strategic planning about how their communities should grow in a measured, sensible way. For instance, one of the requests that we have for the Victorian government at the moment is: the council this year adopted 30-year plans for Romsey and Gisborne, and we are saying to the Victorian government, work with us and move those plans through, because they have been through years of consultation and planning and data and evidence and community input, as distinct from some proposals that might go straight through from a developer to a state facilitation program and then suddenly we have a town doubled that does not have that two- or three-year strategic planning process. When we drive around our communities that we love and we think, ‘Gee, why is that there, that building?’ it is because a planning decision was made 10, 20, 30 years earlier. So that strategic planning is really important. Let us get that into the planning scheme first before we are making new communities that are not well planned.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Dr Mansfield.

Wendy LOVELL: And Amess Road does double the size of Riddells Creek. Sorry to the panel.

The CHAIR: That is all right. Dr Mansfield.

Sarah MANSFIELD: Thank you. A number of you brought up data and the importance or, I guess, the value of centralising data, things like flood overlays and that being done centrally and incorporated into planning schemes. We have heard throughout this inquiry some different views about that, but I would be really interested to understand why, from a council’s perspective, centralisation of data is a useful thing to occur.

Annika KEARTON: I will not speak from council’s perspective – I will let you do that. But certainly I think there is an efficiency there. At the moment a lot of councils are approaching this individually. It is costly, and we have already heard the extreme cost pressures that councils are under to respond to climate change, both emergency shocks and stresses, so there is an efficiency to be gained there. Consistency in the data as well – there is certainly value in having consistent data and consistent risk assessment methodologies. Again, at the moment, there are a number of risk assessments being undertaken by individual councils or by clusters of

regional councils. They are all using different methodologies, so further guidance around consistent and best practice risk assessments would add value and rigour to that data as well. But I might hand over to Bernie to comment on.

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: I will just say, before the City of Greater Bendigo will have a view, that it is a partnership approach. From a local council point of view, we certainly would not say to the state government, ‘That is your responsibility.’ We are saying it is a responsibility where we work together, that we fund it and resource it and get the flood planning and modelling done, and do not let it just sit there, because if it sits there, it is not in the planning scheme. So when developments come through and town planners are looking at, ‘What are the permit triggers here?’ – there might not be any permit triggers, because the work has not been done to get into the planning scheme. When we think about a planning scheme amendment, it takes a couple of years, and councils already have a lot in the queue, so that is one of the greatest things I see.

Frances FORD: The only thing I would add is it is about bringing together different datasets so that people can make sense of it without needing to be ‘data nerds’. So, one example is *Greening Greater Bendigo*, which Tania had a lot to do with in a previous life. That was partly about bringing together our data about canopy coverage and what had happened to that across urban Bendigo with our social economic data. We overlaid the maps, and if you are familiar with SEIFA data and the red areas that are the lower income areas, strangely enough they were also the areas with the least canopy cover. So our *Greening Greater Bendigo* strategy basically is saying, for the next 50, 100 years, we need to prioritise providing canopy cover in those red areas as the highest priority. That is bringing together different sets of data, and it is not rocket science, but it is not always easy to extract the key parts of what we need in the most efficient way possible. And it is exactly what Annika said – if everyone is trying to invent their own systems or look at the various tools online, we have an Australian disaster resilience index, but it is probably not granular enough for it. There is also some good vulnerability index work that is being done by various universities, but again, we need to be able to use that data locally.

Annika KEARTON: Could I just add, if I am able to, just one more comment: I think in terms of the flood mapping and data, that is a critical piece of the puzzle, and I think Bernie is right that this needs to be a shared responsibility across levels of government. That is also because there is other data that we need to invest in capturing too, particularly around economic cost-benefit analysis of the actual adaptation solutions once we have identified those risks so we can make really smart investment decisions around which assets are critical and which adaptation measures are going to deliver the biggest cost benefit for our communities from an economic, social and environmental perspective. So there is a wealth of data that we need. Having that partnership approach so that we can make best use of all of our limited resources to produce the multiple datasets and, as Frances said, to bring those datasets together to inform really precise decision-making brings us back to one of the initial questions around how we actually resource this work. I think we need to get smarter, and data is a critical way for us to do that.

The CHAIR: Thanks. Mr Berger.

John BERGER: Thank you, Chair. And thank you all for your attendance today. Bernie, I am interested in some the assets you spoke about earlier, in particular which ones have been affected by climate change so far.

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: Thanks, Mr Berger. When we think about some of the council assets, one of the key points for us too in terms of some of our local communities – what we love – is they are heritage towns that have lots of heritage architecture. A really good example is the state-listed Kyneton Mechanics Institute. The January 2022 flood-storm event saw significant damage to that heritage asset, and then there is the work to restore that in terms of the higher level of accreditation and skills that you need. Kyneton is a really good example in terms of – it was mentioned before – drainage and gutters. How many tradies know how to restore a 19th century bluestone gutter and do kerb and channelling? So we need even some of those skills in terms of our heritage assets but also all of the council buildings in terms of swimming pools, libraries, parks, gardens, picnic tables, botanic gardens. These are the types of assets that significantly get affected through these increasing numbers of emergency events, and often the obligation for council is to work with other levels of government to get the funding, but we need to reinstate some assets much more quickly than others. When we think about libraries, for instance, or buildings that house maternal and child health nurses to get babies immunised, being able to respond as quickly as we need to to reopen those assets is getting harder because, one, it could be a three-year claims process through disaster recovery funding arrangements, or it could be a two-

year wait on an insurance claim. They are some of the challenges that we are having, and what we are saying in this inquiry is the three levels of government need to work together to better plan and prepare our communities for future climate scenarios, because it is already happening.

John BERGER: I suppose it then follows: how do you then evaluate what your assets are that are going to be affected by future climate change events, whatever they might be – flood, fire or wind; and how do you then determine which ones you will start to look at now to get that process in place so you are not fixing a problem after the event but fixing a problem before the event?

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: Yes, you are exactly right. Firstly, for councils across the state to maintain their asset base and do the renewals is getting increasingly harder for our communities and for our councils. So every year when we are striking a council budget we might say, ‘Well, we need X million dollars for renewal of assets,’ so that it lasts longer and we do not need to put a shiny new one in until later. But councils are increasingly needing to take some of their renewal money and spend it on other, day-to-day, initiatives because budgets are tight, so that means our assets and our infrastructure are not lasting as long. The support that the Victorian government could give councils in terms of that asset planning –

All councils will be embarking on the development of an asset plan for the next four years, 10-year cycle. The data and information that goes into that will be really important. That is a high-level plan. When we are talking about the detailed inventory of assets that we have across the shire, and infrastructure, and then auditing exactly what condition or state they are in, that is really detailed work, and I would say a lot of councils do not have that data.

John BERGER: Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Ms Bath.

Melina BATH: Thank you, Chair, and thank you very much for being here with us today. The flood inquiry that we finished in July had recommendations 38, 39, 40 and I think 61 on DRFA and also on betterment, so you are speaking our language and we are listening to you. I think it was Bendigo – you spoke in your submission about the Queensland betterment fund and said that Victoria could adopt something similar. Could you speak to that? And I invite you, Frances, to speak about where the money comes from. Here is your platform now.

Frances FORD: Thank you so much. I really appreciate that, because I am watching the clock, but I am very grateful for the opportunity. I would like to refer you both to the council’s submission but also the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances’ submission on this point. In terms of data for cost–benefit analysis, I find these stats really compelling. Since it was established in 2013 the Queensland betterment fund has resulted in almost \$400 million in avoided reconstruction costs – it is \$397.5 million, to be exact – from an investment of \$174 million, so it has more than twice paid for itself. Of the 531 projects completed to date, 423 have subsequently been impacted by disasters, but 79 per cent of those have suffered no damage or only superficial damage. To me, that is really compelling. And it speaks for itself, I think.

Melina BATH: Yes. And do you know the balance – the proportion between the Commonwealth and the state? Is that clear?

Frances FORD: My understanding is Queensland is 50–50 state and federal. I stand to be corrected, but I am pretty sure it is 50–50 and –

Melina BATH: So a modest investment in terms of the dividends?

Frances FORD: Yes.

Melina BATH: Thank you. And we had not organised that before; I just want to put that on the record.

Frances FORD: I am very grateful.

Melina BATH: And the other thing is I am very interested in – and you spoke about it in your submissions – the *Environment and Planning Act* update to acknowledge climate change. Yet I am disappointed to see that in a childcare, children’s centre facility we are having minimum standards through the VBA. What

recommendation do you make to this committee? Who wants to open that one up? It is not a gotcha. If we want to walk the walk and live the reality, what would you like to see?

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: All levels of government, when we are planning community infrastructure – so for that example a kindergarten for our youngest people in Lancefield, in a growing community – we need to be funding infrastructure and constructing infrastructure not to minimum standards but to standards that we would all like to have in terms of it being comfortable, it being environmentally friendly and sensitive, it being temperature controlled, it being insulated. We need to make sure that when the state is constructing buildings across the state – the Victorian government – that built into its standards is environmental, sustainable design. Councils have environmental, sustainable design built into our policies – for the Macedon Ranges Shire Council it is our sustainable buildings policy – but the state government does not have ESD built into their construction projects, so councils, should they wish to not be subjected to the minimum standard, need to foot the bill. And we are saying, ‘Let’s change that. When we plan for our state projects, let’s ensure that there’s a partnership approach and we’re building buildings fit for a future climate.’

Melina BATH: Thank you. I have got two more questions so I will have to divide, because I am sure my time is running out. You mentioned maximising infill project housing developments; it is difficult and more challenging for developers so they want to go to greenfield sites. If we are looking at the value of land and the importance of safety and mitigation of climate change, what sorts of incentives could be done? Could you workshop some of those impediments to infill and how they could be overcome?

Frances FORD: I might have to take some of that on notice –

Melina BATH: That is fine. Please do.

Frances FORD: because I know that our manager of strategic planning is working closely with a number of fairly big developers on exactly that issue: what can we do at the council level to make this as easy as possible for you to progress projects within the urban boundary?

Melina BATH: And/or in your response, the state government level, since we are making recommendations to state government on removing those impediments without diminishing any necessity for safety, protection, all of those.

Frances FORD: So if we send you some more information on that?

Melina BATH: That would be lovely, thank you – to the secretariat.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Mrs Tyrrell.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Thank you, Chair. Frances, earlier you mentioned the build back better program that Queensland has adopted. Say the Victorian government up and announced that we are going to do the same, what aspects of that program do you think that we should hold onto and where do you think we could improve if we potentially did this?

Frances FORD: An example I often think of is the CEO of Loddon shire talking about road base. Sometimes it is as basic as that: the thickness of your road base. If you have to do a really thin layer because you cannot afford any more, it will wash away really fast. Lincoln Fitzgerald – this was at a previous parliamentary inquiry – was saying –

Melina BATH: It is why we are here.

Wendy LOVELL: We were there.

Frances FORD: It was just as simple as that. Yes, it is more per metre, but it more than pays for itself within a very short period of time. That is just one example.

Annika KEARTON: Could I answer that briefly on the road base?

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: I was going to say, it is open to everybody. You have got the opportunity to tell the government what you would like in this if they went and did it.

Annika KEARTON: Thank you. I think there is a huge opportunity here to bring climate adaptation and resilience building and emissions reduction together as well. So if we are looking at betterment, we should be looking not only at what infrastructure is going to be more resilient to the impacts of climate change but how we can ensure that that infrastructure is also reducing emissions. When we look at road base, we can look at things like recycled materials in the road base. Bringing together and harmonising our adaptation and emissions reduction approaches in our ESD standards I think would go a long way to addressing both the short-term challenges that we are facing in terms of climate adaptation and the longer term challenge we have around emissions reduction, which ultimately is going to be critical to us being able to keep pace with climate change. If we do not draw down those emissions from the atmosphere, we are going to continue to see more frequent, more severe, extreme weather events.

Bernie O’SULLIVAN: I just have one comment. In terms of doing build back better in Victoria, there needs to be a greater level of trust between levels of government. The sense we get is the Victorian government is reluctant to go there because they feel that there will be financial exposure for them, that they might be carrying the financial risk. So that means from a council point of view we just see it not happening. What we implore is that the Victorian government and the Commonwealth government work it out. It is clearly working in other states, so there needs to be a high level of trust. It is really clear when disasters happen that stuff needs to get fixed, and at the moment we are fixing it to the day-to-day standard, not a future standard, so when the disaster is not here, looking at what criteria are we are going to use. What is the process, how do we streamline that and how do we make it easy for councils, because at the moment it is a handball, we see from a council point of view, between the Victorian government and the Commonwealth government, both saying it is them.

Rikkie-Lee TYRRELL: Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mrs Tyrrell.

Thank you all for coming along today and giving us some excellent evidence. You will within the next week or so be provided with a copy of the transcript to review.

With that the committee will take a short break.

Witnesses withdrew.