

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Environmental Infrastructure for Growing Populations

Melbourne—Tuesday, 20 April 2021

(via videoconference)

MEMBERS

Ms Sarah Connolly—Chair

Mr David Morris—Deputy Chair

Mr Will Fowles

Ms Danielle Green

Mr Paul Hamer

Mr Tim McCurdy

Mr Tim Smith

WITNESS

Mr Matt Ruchel, Executive Director, Victorian National Parks Association.

The CHAIR: Matt, I advise that the sessions today are being broadcast live on the Parliament's website, and rebroadcast of the hearing is only permitted in accordance with Legislative Assembly standing order 234. Thanks again for joining us at the public hearing for the Inquiry into Environmental Infrastructure for Growing Populations. This is one of several public hearings that the Environment and Planning Committee will be conducting to inform itself about the issues relevant to the inquiry.

I would like to acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of this land, and we pay our respects to them, their culture, their elders past, present and future and elders from other communities that may be joining us today.

Before we begin I need to point out to you that all evidence taken today will be recorded by Hansard and is protected by parliamentary privilege. This means that you can speak freely without fear of legal action in relation to the evidence that you give today. However, it is very important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to comments made outside the hearing even if you are just restating what you said during this hearing. You will receive a draft transcript of your evidence in the next week or so to check and to approve. Corrected transcripts are published on the committee's website and may be quoted from in our final report. Thanks again for taking the time to meet with us, Matt. I am really sorry we are running a little bit behind today.

Mr RUCHEL: No, that is okay. I have got a short opening presentation, which should only take 5 or 10 minutes.

The CHAIR: Great. Over to you.

Mr RUCHEL: Should I just load it?

The CHAIR: Sorry, I am just mindful of time. Just quickly the group can introduce itself. I am Sarah Connolly, the Chair of the committee and Member for Tarneit.

Mr RUCHEL: Great. Nice to meet you.

Mr MORRIS: Hi, Matt. David Morris.

Mr RUCHEL: G'day, David.

Mr FOWLES: Will Fowles, Member for Burwood.

Mr RUCHEL: G'day, Will.

Ms GREEN: Danielle Green, Member for Yan Yean, Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Victoria.

Mr RUCHEL: Hi, Danielle.

Mr HAMER: And Paul Hamer, Member for Box Hill.

Mr RUCHEL: G'day, Paul.

The CHAIR: Over to you, Matt.

Mr RUCHEL: Matt Ruchel is my name. I am the Executive Director of the Victorian National Parks Association. I have prepared a short presentation just by way of opening comments, just summarising some of the key points in our submission. Firstly, thanks for the opportunity to present.

Visual presentation.

Mr RUCHEL: The Victorian National Parks Association is a not-for-profit community-based organisation. We have been around since 1952, so we are coming up to our 70th year. Our vision is that Victoria is a place with a diverse, healthy natural environment protected, respected and enjoyed by all. We are a charity and also have a whole lot of enthusiastic members that care passionately about Victoria's natural areas.

By way of context, Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia—60 to 80 per cent cleared. Many of the highest biodiversity values are on public land. We have got a bit of a two-track landscape, with large areas of cleared landscapes used for production and fairly fragmented place. It is important, I think, in the context of this inquiry to consider that this landscape, while it is challenging to manage now for biodiversity and a whole other range of issues, is really in lots of ways a product of our historical trends of development, going back to the gold rush, clustered settlement and now, I suppose, urban development.

In terms of our submission, we covered five main themes. We talked about the importance and accessibility to nature and open space for particularly urban populations. We talked a bit about enhancing Melbourne's green edge, thinking about not just access to open space and natural areas outside of the formal metro boundaries but how to better plan, create and enhance networks that are closer to people's homes within the urban fabric.

As our name suggests, we care deeply about national parks, but we also do broader biodiversity, marine and coastal issues and a range of other policy advocacy as well as citizen science programs, and so funding for management of natural areas and national parks is always a key issue along with marine things.

By way of introduction, just in terms of green infrastructure and the terms of reference of this committee, a thriving natural environment—I think it is well recognised in everything from national to international law that the conservation of biological diversity is good for people as well as nature. Increasingly there is a big body of evidence that is coming out showing the importance of that access to nature for mental health and wellbeing, not just sort of physical activity but also connection to green space and natural areas for mental health particularly and other health benefits. It is often forgotten that we think about natural areas as isolated, but they also often have many multiple functions. This is particularly true in urban contexts, where they are often drainage lines, bike paths, stormwater and the rest of it, and they are popular.

We have seen this even more in the COVID context, and I will just share with you a recent poll, which was from October 2020, of 1000 Melburnians by Lonergan Research. I suppose we know from the chatter in the media and social media that the lockdown had a particular impact on people's wellbeing. This is reflected in this poll, where you had a particularly significant increase in people's value of nature, so a 56 per cent increase or a little more in people's perception of valuing nature, and an increase in the interest of visiting national parks and conservation areas and likewise at a local level. So this poll, I suppose, reaffirms what a lot of people have been saying. We have also seen that manifest itself in terms of visitation to parks, particularly around the urban edges, where they have never been busier, and some have had to be restricted to deal with some of those issues.

Just a couple of other points from here. There is—and this is consistent—widespread support for the protected areas of the state. Around 81 per cent of people when asked, for example, support new national parks in the central west, which I will talk a little bit more about, and that is consistent with polls we have done previously over the last five or six years. It is usually in the 70s, 80s, sometimes 90s, depending on who you ask. The drivers of the interest are well known: walking tracks, interesting features, but the proximity is an important one. So less than 90 minutes these days seem to be a key thing, which is one of our points in our submission thinking about Melbourne and the edge of Melbourne in a sense. In contrast with Sydney and probably Brisbane to a certain extent and elements of Adelaide as well, we do not actually necessarily have large areas of national park or conservation areas that close to metropolitan areas. You can drive to the Grampians in a couple of hours, the Prom in a couple of hours, but you have got these edge spots. So there is the Yarra Ranges, obviously. Wombat State Forest, which is part of the current central west proposal, is less than 90 minutes from Melbourne. It is going through the formal process and is proposed to be a national park. Then we have got things that are a bit similar, like the proposed western grassland reserves on the west of Melbourne. I suppose one way to think about this is enhancing the edge to improve the access for people within the urban context to get out into real, natural areas relatively close to Melbourne, and we would probably throw in the bays to that, but I will talk a bit about them separately.

The other element of our submission was really talking about urban nature networks. This is probably within the urban footprint and urban fabric. There was quite a good VEAC investigation done some years ago which looked at Melbourne and is an important dataset. So about one-third of the vegetated land within the

metropolitan area is public land, of which about half is in some sort of conservation or protected area, mostly probably metropolitan parks and other locally protected parks. One of the things we picked up in the exercise of doing the submission—and we have had this conversation with various government agencies over the years, particularly in the context of grasslands in the western suburbs or grassy woodlands in the northern parts of Melbourne—is the recognition of the smaller areas of native vegetation, which are not necessarily pristine but nonetheless they still have a structure created to them. We note in *Plan Melbourne* it is recognised, but there has been no real strategy for natural open space. There is a tendency to focus only on the sporting grounds and active use. Some of those can have mixes of natural open space. I suppose the point here is that while *Plan Melbourne* has quite a strong policy about creating a network of green spaces that support biodiversity conservation as well as opportunities to connect with nature, there is no mechanism or real initiative in the *Plan Melbourne* implementation plan. There are some other things in there around waterways and some great work done around the Yarra River, but for this piece on important natural places, in some cases in the urban context these are relatively small and need to be intensively managed.

The other theme was management of parks and reserves both in the urban context but also broader across the state. We fully recognise that you need to protect areas through their legislative basis and ensure the integrity of those areas from threats, but they also need to be actively managed. In an urban context where there are higher points of visitation this can be intensive and expensive. It is worth noting that over the last few decades particularly local government I suppose has developed quite extensive—particularly in the sort of middle suburbs and peri-urban suburbs—well-trained and specifically skilled bush crews, which are in need of support and do great work along things like Merri Creek and the Yarra River and many other natural areas across the metropolitan area.

Our problem with parks funding, and I think it is a broader question statewide, is that funding for parks as a whole is only about 0.5 per cent of the state budget, and we do not see it as a competition with health or education or police, which are, you know, 10s and 20 per cents of the state budget. It is about having an appropriate level of funding, and while there were some cuts in 2013–16 and we have slowly crept back up, we are still probably \$20 million to \$30 million below what you would spend if CPI was included. A big chunk of that—and it is sort of a bit of a vexed issue—is about 37 per cent of the total budget comes from the parks and reserves trust, which is a sort of complicated historical piece of revenue collection. It is probably a positive in the sense that it is a hypothecated fund that goes to the management of those natural areas, but it is a bit inconsistent—it only covers certain parts of Melbourne, it only provides money for management in urban areas and so on. So that is sort of the parks funding: \$260 million—probably the size of a mid-sized local government—to manage 17 to 18 per cent of the state. Our objective there is we would suggest that maybe 1 per cent of the state budget would dramatically improve the capacity to manage natural areas across the whole state and achieve those community expectations as well as the legislative requirements for the parks estate.

The final point I will make is that we often talk about open space and we often think of terrestrial open space, but our bays—in the context of Melbourne, Port Phillip and Western Port—are critical and key pieces of natural infrastructure, so we should think about those as well. We are obviously very keen on marine national parks. We think those should be increased, and there are some priorities in Port Phillip and Western Port—relatively small areas, both marine and coastal areas—that would benefit from better protection. But there is also a potential for better planning of those spaces through using things called marine spatial planning or environmental management plans, which are tools that are entrenched in the new *Marine and Coastal Act*, and working with stakeholders and so on to essentially come up with a thoughtful, spatially based plan which recognises the conservation areas as well as the commodities. Uses of bays: one of the things with bays and marine areas particularly is a lot of the focus is on use, whether it is shipping channels, fishing, oil and gas or so on. There was not necessarily a planning instrument until this new marine spatial planning was introduced to manage the ecosystem side in a thoughtful and sensitive way. Thank you. That is probably the end of the presentation. I will stop sharing. I am happy to take questions.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Matt. That is great. I am going to throw over to Paul to ask the first question.

Mr HAMER: Thanks, Sarah, and thanks, Matt. My first question is actually in relation to funding. You mentioned that it is not a competition between health, education and the environment, but I am just wondering how you would propose a doubling of the budget if you are not proposing to cut it out of other portfolios. Where would you recommend that that funding comes from?

Mr RUCHEL: I think the point I am trying to make there is that health, for example, is roughly 24, 26 per cent of the state budget and education is 15, 16 per cent of the state budget. They are big chunks, and so our view is you could look at it in a couple of ways. There are health dividends that come from parks. I think by one of the preliminary estimations there is \$240 million in avoided health costs just related to the parks estate and 2-point-something billion dollars in tourist economy related to that. It would have to come from somewhere—so I am agreeing with that—but we are not saying a couple of per cent off the health budget or a couple of per cent off the other budgets. Even points of a per cent are not going to make a huge difference to the scale of those programs, but a jump increase in the level of parks funding would make a dramatic increase to the level of management in our parks estate.

The point I am trying to make is it is often about the longevity. So we are not saying we want 10 per cent of the budget, we are saying 1 per cent of the budget on a longer term basis. Often for natural area management it is about not so much the huge quantum but the consistency of the funding as well over time. So the example is: for pest plants and animals, if you have a program for one year, you will reduce the population, but if you stop doing the program, they will be back the next year. So a lot of this effort is about having consistency of funding. The 1 per cent is a way of capturing the imagination, if you like, but there are a number of ways you could cut it. You could look at it as a dividend or you could look at it as mucking around with the parks and reserve traps, if you want to hypothecate things, but the magnitude is not huge I suppose is the point we are trying to make.

Mr HAMER: I would be interested if you could send through—I did not see that in your submission, but I would be interested in that data or research on the health benefits. I assume that that is an aggregated level, but if you have got that information I would be interested in that if you could send that through to the secretariat.

Mr RUCHEL: Yes. That is fine. That came a bit later, after the submission, so I thought I would include it.

Mr HAMER: Yes, no worries. The other question was just in relation to the metropolitan area. You were comparing it with other cities, and, as you mentioned, the geography of Melbourne is quite different and the way that Melbourne has developed is quite different to some of the other cities in terms of having very large areas of urban bushland close to the city out along the Yarra corridor. What would you be proposing? I know you have talked in your submission about particularly parks on the growth—at the edge of the city—boundary at the moment and expanding some of those areas, but for the metropolitan areas that are well-established suburbia that might be 20 or 30 kilometres from those areas, what would you be recommending? I mean, I guess it is not national parks as such but in terms of that environmental infrastructure.

Mr RUCHEL: So there are some challenges. I think the two things are the accessibility—or transport is much better these days so getting out is sort of easier, pending traffic of course. So those edges are one way to manage that lack of access to local parkland, but in established suburbs—well, there are two sets. In urban growth areas or developing suburbs, there is a need for a process to recognise those natural areas. Some of that through things like the Melbourne strategic assessment is very complicated and fraught, and so improving, say, waterway corridors, where they have got multiple use and there are natural values and you are not just planning for your high-intensity activity areas and your water infrastructure, you are also picking up some of the remnant vegetation and the natural areas that could be restored over time.

I think in the established suburbs—and the VEAC report from some years ago identified this clearly—that is a challenge because there is not a lot of space and you would have to purchase. But there are opportunities also around particularly some of the waterway restoration. So the great examples in Melbourne, people may or may not be aware of it, are places like Merri Creek, which 30 years ago was largely drained—you know, concrete drains—and partly due to great community effort with support of local government and state government that has become a great natural asset for those northern suburbs. So those are examples where you can modify, restore and improve existing natural features, incorporating your active areas, but you need to have a focus on the natural areas as part of your planning system—and that is often left until last or forgotten about. So I think those sorts of opportunities, but I admit that it is a challenge for those established suburbs. There is a whole lot of work also happening with things like biodiversity roofs and pocket parks and so on which also are worth investigating.

Ms GREEN: Matt, it is Danielle Green here. I just wanted to point out that with the Merri Creek you mentioned the community and local government, but it has actually been very progressive developers as well.

Mr RUCHEL: No, no, I recognise that too.

Ms GREEN: And I think that is really important to acknowledge. There is that tension in the inner urban areas around Merri Creek that is against development, but as someone that has represented along the Merri Creek for 18 years and who used to live in the inner city, the water quality, as you have correctly identified, has improved markedly, and everything around it, and a lot of that has in fact been led by developers, so I think that it is really important to say that. Yes, we might have to do some small stuff overall, but I actually think that some of the stuff that has occurred around the Merri Creek could be a model for other areas of the state.

Mr RUCHEL: I think that is right, Danielle, and I think it is one of the key things with newer developments. We have learned a lot over the last 30 years—the introduction particularly of the water-sensitive urban design features to protect Port Phillip Bay were a key driver. I worked also in one of my earlier careers as an environmental manager in a growth municipality, and that shift which has now become fairly mainstream for developers—you know, having proper stormwater retention and all that internal planting—has been critically important. So that has been a real shift I think in the last 20 years or so.

Ms GREEN: It is actually a market thing now in that the community is demanding that, and I think when you look at the northern suburbs with the retention of river red gums and all of that it really has been consumers that are driving it but also progressive developers like Mirvac and Lendlease and Stockland. Stockland received a UN environmental award for its work in Mernda, for example.

Mr RUCHEL: I think that is an interesting one, because that development pattern can be a bit patchy. I fully admit Whittlesea—even Hume to a certain extent, but Whittlesea particularly—with their red gum protection policy really led the way on that, and there are some great examples out there. It is not always consistent, and it is partly driven by the natural area. So if you go further west, red gums are beautiful and people like them but grasslands are a bit more of a challenge because they are not necessarily seen as an important natural asset. While they are critically endangered and a real remnant and some people love them, they are a bit of a harder sell. In our submission we also talked about the need for integrated urban design to sit with some of the protection of your natural areas. The landscape architects talk about things like what they call ‘cues to care’—good signage, appropriate seating and appropriate fencing that encourages people and sends a message that these places are looked after. So it is both a design thing and an ongoing management thing that really helps people’s interaction in an urban context.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Matt. I just want to draw your attention to the submission talking about the COVID-19 pandemic. You talked about how this has temporarily slowed Victoria’s population growth and that this actually represents a really important opportunity to redress some of the challenges and deficiencies in the state’s approach to environmental infrastructure. Can you talk a bit about what your organisation would suggest are the priority areas the government should focus on in the short to medium term to take advantage of the opportunity?

Mr RUCHEL: Yes. So the sorts of things we were thinking about there and pointing to are, for example, the western suburbs and the implementation of the Melbourne strategic assessment, and I will use this as a bit of a case study. It was a regime put in place in 2009–10. It was a very rushed planning process even though it took some years to fully implement the various bits of policy—it is a complicated regime. At the time it was rushed to meet objectives about urban growth and population growth related to expansion of the urban growth boundary. It has essentially failed as an exercise in balancing conservation. Less than 10 per cent of the proposed reserves which were supposed to have been finished in a decade—the western grassland reserves—have been delivered. The funding model has not worked. The scheme itself was a giant offset scheme, and one of its big failings is it did not really address particularly smaller areas with value that could have, say, been used along waterways, been added to the local parks estate and had important ecological features. And it was driven by this rush that we need to meet the growing demand. The population forecasts, even when we were pre-COVID, did not really meet what the expectations were. I think it is that sort of thing where we can look for opportunities if development indeed does flow, because I get differing advice that the rates of urban development are actually slowing on the back of population growth. So if it is slowing, there is an opportunity to do better planning. That would be my point there.

From our perspective it is those natural bits. How can you better use those? How can they be better incorporated into your precinct structure plans? Can they be added to the waterway management areas? Examples in the west—we had quite a few battles at local planning level around, for example, the Melbourne

water guidelines for greenfield development. If there is an important natural area such as a grassland—and it might only be 4 or 5 hectares of grassland—that is adjacent to the creek, it should be incorporated in the creek corridor so it gives people some access to what the vegetation was previously, it provides open space. They are interesting ecosystems once you get to understand them, and if you provide appropriate interps, people get into them. But those things were seen as superfluous to the Melbourne strategic assessment, which ruled and would say things like, ‘If it’s less than 20 hectares, it can’t be kept’. So it is those sorts of things, I think—more detailed planning, looking at where those natural areas are. We talk about in our submission the need for a specific urban nature strategy, if you like, which could sit next to something like an open space strategy. But my experience with open space planning is that it tends to get dominated by the sports and active users, which is fine, and it is a very legitimate use, but the natural bits also need specific attention.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Matt. David, I am going to go to you.

Mr MORRIS: Matt, in your part 3, the third topic of your submission, the urban natural space section, you talked about protecting remnant vegetation through a reservation, large regional suburban parks and the need for an urban nature space strategy. Can you just talk to us a little bit about the reason for selecting those three things as the key focus and whether there are some other areas in that space that you might want to talk about as well?

Mr RUCHEL: I suppose in developing the framework for the submissions, in simple terms it is thinking outside the urban area then inside the urban area, and looking at the nature space strategy, there has not been a coherent strategy focusing on those natural areas and things like the metropolitan park system, the larger regional park system, for probably 17 years, since the 1990s and the Parks Victoria *Linking People and Spaces* strategy. Now, one of the reasons Melbourne has got a great sort of legacy of these larger regional parks was largely driven by the MMBW, who had a specific strategy for that. Places like Albert Park and Lysterfield Park, Plenty Valley gorge, all those sorts of places, were a long-running strategy which included both purchase and ongoing management, sometimes for decades to finalise the urban development to create the regional park. So I suppose the point we are making there is there needs to be a bit of vision about that. There needs to be some long-term thinking to ensure you do not miss the opportunities for those regional parks.

There have been some announced by the current government, and they are being implemented. There are some local concerns about how they are being implemented, but I think the metro area and possibly the broader peri-urban landscape need a strategy to think about those bigger chunks into the future. Then again I think you are into that detailed planning of where are those places that need better management that still exist in the urban context and can be part of the fabric, so big outside, smaller to medium need a bit of a strategy but then also the smaller places. Local government is doing some really great work in lots of places, even in the inner city really, with their bush crews and re-wilding strategies and so on. But there is a bit of a lack of coherence with some of that when you look across boundaries and across the greater urban area—or inconsistencies. Some places are fantastic, some places have got very little. It would be great that those local natural bits are seen as conservation important in terms of their local landscapes and they are really important socially because they are the closest bits for people to connect with nature.

Mr MORRIS: Would you say that the variation, particularly if it is local government-based, is because of a different policy approach or resources or what? Any idea what is behind that?

Mr RUCHEL: I think there are two levels. One is the state level, so the regional parks have generally been driven by the state government because local government does not necessarily have the capacity for it, so there needs to be more of that. We are supportive of the existing regional parks that have been done by the government, but I am not seeing the next wave after that in any formal policy or strategy, so at that statewide metro level. Then at a local government level I think it is the smaller areas. The piecemeal approach is driven partly by capacity and partly by priority. Some councils do not have the history of it or the capacity for it, so it would be good to see some consistency with that.

We did not mention this in our submission but in other places like the UK there is a voluntary standard, for example, which says something like you need a small natural area of 1 hectare within 1 kilometre of where you live, something larger within 10 kilometres of where you live to, I suppose, increase the prominence and importance of natural areas in the way we think about planning.

Mr MORRIS: That is useful. Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thanks, David. I am going to throw to Will.

Mr FOWLES: Thanks very much, Sarah. Matt, I am interested in the blue wedges and the marine parks. You say in your submission that Parks Vic manages around 70 per cent of the Victorian coast as—this seems to be a staggering number of categorisations—

Mr RUCHEL: Yes.

Mr FOWLES: national, state, coastal reserve, marine national park or sanctuary—that is screening out the simple vocation I would have thought. I just want to understand: what are the additional protections offered under those designations and why are they important? Why would you like to see more of that?

Mr RUCHEL: Yes. Look, Will, Victoria historically has a very complicated tenure system, so yes, there are probably 16 categories of different conservation reserves, so things under the national parks—

Mr FOWLES: Sixteen, did you say?

Mr RUCHEL: Yes. There are two parts to that: one, it looks overly complicated. There are advantages and disadvantages. There is a proposal for a reform, and in fact there is sort of some consultation going on on some elements of it already. There are two ways to look at it: one, it is a bit confusing to the public, but essentially there are things under the *National Parks Act* and things that are protected for conservation, so things like coastal reserves. The advantage of them is that they are nuanced levels of protection. Wilderness areas are probably the highest level of protection. National parks are a higher level of protection and have particular objectives, where coastal parks allow a broader range of uses. While it gets confusing, having a nuanced tenure approach allows you to put tenures for the best use I suppose. So that is an advantage, although it is overly complex. That has been recognised for some time. There was a major statewide review of all that last year or the year before, and it is sitting there to deal with—

Mr FOWLES: But your hope is that more of the coastline is captured by a nuanced categorisation?

Mr RUCHEL: Well, look, put the categorisation to one side. It is a complex tenure system. It can be simplified. There is stuff going on there that is complex. We would say that there are significant gaps in protection. The coastline is relatively well protected. It is a historical thing: Victoria is one of the few states that kept control of its coastlines and did not sell them off to private ownership. That is an advantage these days in terms of climate change and management of that, which is why Parks Vic has got 17 per cent of it. So it is historical really. There are gaps in that. In the marine space—so separating the two things because they are slightly different—Victoria was a world leader in terms of the world's first system of marine national parks and sanctuaries. Marine parks are as they say, they are slightly bigger; sanctuaries are smaller. They are pretty much the same.

We have done research—it is well recognised in a range of other government documents that there are still significant gaps in that reserve system. What you are aiming for with the reserve system is not everything. You are wanting a representative, comprehensive and adequate representation of the ecosystem types with a higher level of protection to ensure that their integrity is maintained into the future. That is both the protection part and the management part so that you can ensure their survival. Those areas that we are picking, they are gaps in the reserve system in that sort of technical way, but they are also places in Port Phillip and Western Port that have got important natural features, important ecosystems that you want to make sure are highlighted for the future and not subject to development I suppose.

Mr FOWLES: And finally, if I can give you a tiny bit of homework because we are running out of time, but if you were to rewrite the remit of the parks and reserves trust, how would you do it?

Mr RUCHEL: Jeez, it is a really difficult question. I think there is a really obvious one, which is that it probably needs to cover more of the metro area. At the moment it is still restricted to the old Melbourne board of works boundary. So it is an equity question: some people buy it, some people do not. That is the simple part of it, or simpler—I am not sure any revenue measures are particularly simple. Depending on how much money it raised, maybe it is broadening its remit to ensure that the whole park estate, which is used by everybody, is paid for would be my initial thought. Or whether it is an urban levy to cover that recreational and conservation estate would be the other way to think about it. I can send you some thoughts on that.

Mr FOWLES: Yes, please. Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Will. Members, I am just mindful of time. David, did you have any last questions? No, okay. Matt, thank you so much, on behalf of the committee, for taking the time to speak with us today. That was really interesting. It has given us quite a bit to think about. I am going to pause the live broadcast there.

Mr RUCHEL: Good luck with it.

Witness withdrew.