



T: [REDACTED]
E: [REDACTED]

October 28, 2021

The Secretary
Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

C/- chypsinquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

The local government area of Latrobe City is located approximately 150kms east of Melbourne. It is recognised as one of Victoria's major regional centres and is one of six local government areas that make up the broader Gippsland region.

Latrobe is home to 73,929 residents and 5,019 businesses. Latrobe City is made up of four central towns; Churchill, Moe, Morwell and Traralgon, and several rural townships; Boolarra, Glengarry, Toongabbie, Tyers, Traralgon South, Yallourn North and Yinnar. It has traditionally been recognised as the centre of Victoria's electricity industry with local coal mines and power stations providing significant employment opportunities and contributing to the local economy for much of the past century.

In 2014 a fire ignited and took hold in the Hazelwood Coal Mine, it lasted for 45 days. Latrobe communities were significantly impacted by this event and subsequent Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiries were held. These inquiries found that the health profile of the Latrobe Valley is poorer compared to other local government areas in Victoria and the average for the state. The Inquiries established that there was a strong case for the health of the Latrobe Valley to be substantially improved.

In response to the 2014 -16 Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiries, I and II the Victorian Government designated the Latrobe City local government area as a Health Innovation Zone, the first of its kind in Australia. This designation included the establishment of the Latrobe Health Assembly and appointment of the Latrobe Health Advocate.

The Latrobe Health Advocate and Latrobe Health Assembly are key structures within the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone to empower communities to have influence on health promotion, health planning, priority setting and service and program design.

Central to the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone is the Government's commitment to enable changes in the pattern of investment in services in the Latrobe Valley. Developments and projects in the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone are characterised by a new, innovative, community-led approach of co-design and community engagement.

As Latrobe Health Advocate I provide independent advice to the Victorian Government on behalf of Latrobe Valley communities on system and policy issues affecting their health and wellbeing. I maintain a focus on strategic outcomes and systemic change, ensuring advice and activities within the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone are informed and underpinned by a strong collaborative approach.

My role reports directly to the Victorian Minister for Health. I am required to develop an annual Statement of Intent outlining priority areas of work for the year ahead. I also produce an annual report that includes my key

Since commencing in the role, in 2018, I have maintained a commitment to engaging with Latrobe communities, hearing their views and aspirations for health and wellbeing. I listen to the stories, concerns and aspirations from people in Latrobe. I share them with key stakeholders and decision makers within local organisations and all levels of Government. This amplification of community voice forms the basis of conversations and decisions about systems change and innovation, with the intention to improve health and wellbeing outcomes in Latrobe.

I engage with communities across all towns in Latrobe, hearing from people from across the lifespan that represent a broad range of demographics. I have made a deliberate effort to reach out to those that may not usually have their voices heard.

Since the establishment of the Latrobe Health Advocate's office, I have engaged regularly with local businesses, including ENGIE, Australian Paper, AGL Loy Yang, Chunxing and OSMI on matters that have the potential to impact the health and wellbeing of Latrobe communities. In 2019 I was appointed as the independent Chair of the Latrobe Valley Asbestos Taskforce. The taskforce brings together government agencies, local council, unions and community groups to work together to deliver the best outcomes for the management of asbestos in Latrobe Valley.

My aim is to influence development projects, government planning and decision-making processes in terms of how they:

- Actively involve communities in the design and decision-making process
- Create a healthy community
- Impact on climate change and the determinants of health; and
- Do not adversely affect community health

It is in the context of this framework that this submission is made.

We know that income, employment and economic circumstances are recognised by the World Health Organisation as key determinants of health and wellbeing. In engagement conducted to date, I have heard from communities about their aspirations for a 'just transition' as the world moves away from coal powered energy generation.

What I have heard from communities in Latrobe:

Latrobe communities have experienced significant impacts from changes to the economic landscape, all of which have impacted on their health and wellbeing. In the last three years, the top five aspirations I have heard from the community are:

- Mental health and wellbeing
- Access to Services
- Social Inclusion
- Healthy Lifestyles and
- Safe Environment.

When hearing from people experiencing financial stress, I have heard how life events, health conditions, the rising cost of living and employment circumstances can all impact a person's finances and their ability to support themselves and their family.

There is an opportunity to work towards an equitable transition that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to take their place at the table. Aboriginal people have spoken to me about a Latrobe Valley with 'no sides'. They shared their aspirations for a more tolerant and respectful society and acknowledged that it needs to come from all sides. A 'just transition' includes everyone.

Young people and people over 60 have aspirations for a brighter future in Latrobe. Young people said there needs to be equality and a world without discrimination. Some young people pointed out that they have no control over the world or circumstances that they have been born into and want others to have greater awareness of the context in which people live their lives. Young people in Latrobe want to see action taken to address human and environmental rights.

It is important to young people that they are supported to advocate for themselves and others. There is a strong awareness amongst young people in Latrobe about the need to protect the planet and take action to prevent the effects of climate change. Young people want to see more protections in place to end unsustainable and polluting industries.

Older people have shared their experiences and said that education and employment are essential and can provide mental stimulation, connection to others and a sense of purpose throughout life. Reflecting on past jobs can help people understand the journey they have been on and how their employment has impacted their health and self-identity. Education is a foundation for young people and provides a platform that helps them take the next step after school. They expressed concerns for other young people and what the future might hold. They shared their view that without education and skills training, young people may struggle.

What have we learned from COVID-19?

When analysing the impacts of COVID-19 on industry and businesses in Latrobe, I have made recommendations for recovery. The recommendations draw on the lessons learned throughout the pandemic and are equally valuable when considering the way forward as we transition into a low/free emissions economy.

In preparing the recommendations, consideration was given to the 2020 Victorian Government Budget. In particular, the Budget principles of “creating secure, decent jobs, taking care of those we love, looking after families, building strong, connected communities, and strong recovery” were considered. Recovery investment and action underpinned by shared commitments and principles will be more likely to achieve results. Among my recommendations are:

- Support for people to access technology and data.
- Organisations working together to implement the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.
- Social determinants of health model as the cornerstone of system reform.
- Collective leadership and systems driven by authenticity and empathy.
- Innovative, multidisciplinary models of service delivery.
- Community defines and leads recovery/transition.
- Community needs are central.

Achieving the recommended commitments requires a whole-of-government approach to the solution, an established shared understanding, and common goals. Collaboration with key stakeholders will be integral to building cross-sector digital infrastructure, access and maturity. Just as services and organisations have been and continue to be aligned during the response to COVID-19, the same degree of consistency and partnership must be established when working towards recovery/transition.

Engaging with communities:

Since commencing in this role, I have consistently put forward the view that governments and industry need to actively involve communities in the design and decision-making process. Research undertaken by my office has found:

- As economic transition and industrial developments occur, there is a need to address any knowledge gaps there might be amongst local workforces and communities in relation to chemicals, health, the environment and renewable energies.¹
- There is emerging evidence that shows that as the science of wellbeing moves towards an understanding of the influence of social experiences shared by many at an individual and group-level, a new approach to measuring wellbeing is required that takes into account the process by which people form, maintain and

¹J. Roden, Exploring the Perceived Health, Community, and Employment Impacts of an Announced Closure of a Coal-Fired Power Station in Upper Hunter Valley, Australia, *Journal of Environmental Health*, Vol. 83 (7), 26-35 (2021)

change their understandings of risk from urban and industrial projects, and any subsequent effects on individual psychosocial wellbeing.²

- The information that is first presented to communities by industry can significantly influence community members' attitudes toward a proposed development. This highlights the importance of having concrete community engagement plans in place and demonstrating strong commitment to regulatory requirements right at the beginning.³
- When communities are experiencing a situation where they are feeling helpless it can have three causes;
 - 1) a weak foundation for public participation
 - 2) limited public participation channels and
 - 3) ineffective community engagement committees⁴
- Communities are not typically involved in Health Impact Assessments (HIA), as these assessments are often a desktop exercise undertaken by scientists and health experts. There is some research that highlights the benefits of directly involving communities in what is described as Participatory Health Impact Assessments. Although this can be challenging to do in practice, it can also help to build greater understanding for policy makers and within industry about the needs and views of communities, particularly communities who may not usually have their voices heard.⁵
 - Community involvement may have a positive impact on the success of project development and implementation. Participation may also directly affect individuals by changing attitudes and actions towards the causes of ill-health, promoting a sense of responsibility and increasing personal confidence and self-esteem. Involvement in the policy process may decrease alienation among socially excluded groups and reorient power relationships with the “professional” decision-makers.
 - Participation is intuitively appealing but participatory approaches do not always run smoothly. Establishing relationships with communities and participatory partnerships takes time to do well. And herein lies the problem: HIA usually have to be done quickly, but when this occurs in the absence of community involvement, it can lead to further, avoidable problems into the future
 - Health Impact Assessments should explicitly acknowledge the tension between the time required to deliver on a government policy agenda and the time required to build true participatory partnerships with communities.⁶
- Good practice health impact assessment is only one component of a successful community engagement strategy. Complementary strategies are essential to extend the benefits of development to local communities and for companies to establish a ‘social licence to operate’.⁷
- There is still much to learn about bringing community engagement together with industrial and environmental communication. As such, this needs to be approached with a mindset that allows for a greater degree of investment of time and resources and with a genuine curiosity about ways to engage and listen more effectively with communities.⁸

² C. Baldwin, B. Cave and P. Rawstorne , Measuring the Impact of Public Understandings of Risk from Urban and Industrial Development on Community Psychosocial Well-Being: a Mixed Methods Strategy, *International Journal of Community Well-Being*: Published in collaboration with the Global Community Institute, Vol. 3 (1), 57 (2020)

³ A. Zhang, T. G. Measham and K. Moffat, Preconditions for social licence: The importance of information in initial engagement, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 172 1559-1566 (2018)

⁴ Y. Wang, R. Zhang, S. Worden, H. Cao and C. Li, Public participation in environmental governance initiatives of chemical industrial parks, *Journal of Cleaner Production*, Vol. 305 (2021)

⁵ A. Leuenberger, et al, Health impacts of industrial mining on surrounding communities: Local perspectives from three sub-Saharan African countries, *PLoS ONE*, Vol. 16 (6), 1-23 (2021)

⁶ Jayne Parry & John Wright, Community participation in health impact assessments: intuitively appealing but practically difficult, *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 2003, 81 (6)

⁷ R. Boele and C. Crispin, What direction for human rights impact assessments? *Impact Assessment & Project Appraisal*, Vol. 31 (2), 128-134 (2013)

⁸ S. M. Cruz, Themes Across New Directions in Community Engagement, *International journal of environmental research and public health*, Vol. 16 (19), (2019)

- When engagement is done well, it can lead to innovative solutions and stronger relationships with local communities, built on mutual respect and understanding. This involves a shift in mindset for infrastructure providers and their project teams. Through genuine engagement of key stakeholders, infrastructure providers can tap into the ideas and problem-solving abilities from within communities to assist in identifying innovative solutions that are far more acceptable to all parties.⁹
- Increasingly, communities are demanding more involvement in decision-making, with expectations of receiving a greater share of the benefits from industry. The general public require assurances that the industries are appropriately regulated. The combination of increasing pressures on industry performance and the associated societal acceptance of such operations can be described as the 'social licence to operate'. In many ways, the social licence reflects the evolving nature of the relationships between industries and the community. More recent research emphasises the roles of trust, fairness and governance that underpin the relationships between industry and society.¹⁰

Minimising the psychological impacts of industrial development processes and economic transition.

When exploring economic development in Latrobe I recommend the Victorian Government considers the psychological impacts of the approval process on those people who raise concerns and work to mitigate the effects raised, by maintaining a transparent process, and ensuring evidence-informed communication strategies are employed to prevent unintended harm. Research undertaken by my office has found;

- Energy developments affect communities in a range of ways. Impacts on communities can be caused by changes to landscape amenity and access, disruptions to community cohesion, increased or decreased income streams, effects on property values, and population changes. These changes are ideally captured through a social impact assessment (SIA) process, where proponents outline in a formal statement the balance of benefits and burdens on local communities, and measures that will be taken to minimise negative outcomes for the community.¹¹
- There can be positive and negative impacts on communities resulting from anticipation of a proposal. Negative community perceptions of a proposal can contribute to negative emotions that can lead to deteriorated psychological wellbeing. Conversely, perceived positive impact is conducive to positive emotions that in turn can foster residents' psychological well-being.
 - Importantly, these effects differ in strength for residents characterized by different ages, lengths of residence, and distances of their properties from the development.¹²
- A study that looked at the Pars Special Economic Energy Zone (PSEEZ) located in the south of Iran, found that the creation and development of industry can create major stressors in the community; due to a range of environmental and human health risks and, importantly psychosocial stresses associated with social change. This study concluded that community participation in health issues has many benefits because it increases problem-solving skills in communities so that they take responsibility for their health and well-being as much as possible. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the needs and issues of the community are properly addressed.¹³
- Another study that investigated the long-term and increasing pressures on Australian farmers and a developing knowledge of the mental health risks they face. This study revealed a comparatively new source of psychological stress - the impacts from the announcement of a mining development proposal. This study found that there are pre-development impacts that can occur with the announcement of large-scale developments

⁹ M. Brennan and T. Stinson, Seek First to Understand Before Being Understood, Australian Journal of Multi-disciplinary Engineering, Vol. 7 (2), 243-250 (2009)

¹⁰ K. Moffat, J. Lacey, Z. Airong and S. Leipold, The social licence to operate: a critical review, Forestry: An International Journal of Forest Research, Vol. 89 (5), 477-488 (2016)

¹¹ R. M. Colvin, G. B. Witt, J. Lacey and K. Witt, The community cost of consultation: Characterising the qualitative social impacts of a wind energy development that failed to proceed in Tasmania, Australia, Environmental Impact Assessment Review, Vol. 77 40 (2019)

¹² P.-H. Lai, K. D. Lyons, S. P. Gudergan and S. Grimstad, Understanding the psychological impact of unconventional gas developments in affected communities, Energy Policy, Vol. 101 492-501 (2017)

¹³ d. behzad, et al, The Effects of Energy Industry Development on the Health of Residents of the Pars Economic Energy Zone: viewpoints of people's mediator, Salāmat-i kār-i Īrān, Vol. 17 (1), 1-10 (2020)

and concluded that there is opportunity for such impacts to be anticipated, prepared for and resources set aside, with which to assist communities and individuals whose lives are adversely affected.¹⁴

- There is emerging evidence that shows that as the science of wellbeing moves towards an understanding of the influence of social experiences shared by many at an individual and group-level, a new approach to measuring wellbeing is required that takes into account the process by which people form, maintain and change their understandings of risk from urban and industrial projects, and any subsequent effects on individual psychosocial wellbeing.¹⁵
- Environmental psychologists and sociologists examining community acceptance of energy development have recently argued that disruption to social-psychological values such as attachment and community- and place-based identity may drive oppositional behaviour to large land use changes.
 - Clearly, physical, environmental, social and psychological factors all play important roles as people are faced with potentially transformative changes to their landscapes and communities.
 - Accordingly, a better understanding of social psychological disruption and incorporating these understandings in the planning process can aid in reducing these types of disruptions and associated deleterious effects on the social fabric of communities, allowing decision makers to better understand – and hopefully incorporate – them in the planning process.¹⁶

As related above, I seek out and listen to the voices of sometimes underrepresented communities and elevate the voices of people who may not otherwise have their voices heard. I promote health as everyone's business and have joined communities, industries, education providers and governments in thousands of engagements since commencing in 2018.

I have heard from people living with disabilities, people living with chronic conditions, people from multicultural backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ people, young people aged 12-25, people over the age of 60, people experiencing financial stress and people experiencing family violence. The diversity of voice in Latrobe shows that people are interested in improving their health and wellbeing, they have something to say, and they want to be part of positive change. People in Latrobe care about their health and wellbeing and they care about each other.

Over time, I have gained further understanding of the interactions between government departments in relation to health impact assessments and internal government processes that relate to industrial development proposals. It is evident to me that health experts do review and contribute to government decisions in a range of ways. However, this is not necessarily visible to members of the general public. Local communities could be further supported if there was greater visibility and a proactive sharing from government of the health advice that is being provided and the government interactions that do occur to ensure human health is protected.

In summary, this approach could also be described as sustainable development, which is a way of organising society so that it can exist in the long term. This means taking into account the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Health is at the centre of sustainable development. Investment in health supports social, economic and environmental sustainability, while investment in a healthy planet with inclusive and sustainable growth and fair and secure societies supports the health of individuals, families and communities.¹⁷

¹⁴ J. Moffatt and P. Baker, Farmers, mining and mental health: The impact on a farming community when a mine is proposed, *Rural Society*, Vol. 23 (1), 60-74 (2013)

¹⁵ C. Baldwin, B. Cave and P. Rawstorne, Measuring the Impact of Public Understandings of Risk from Urban and Industrial Development on Community Psychosocial Well-Being: a Mixed Methods Strategy, *International Journal of Community Well-Being*: Published in collaboration with the Global Community Institute, Vol. 3 (1), 57 (2020)

¹⁶ Jeffrey B. Jacquetta* and Richard C. Stedman, The risk of social-psychological disruption as an impact of energy development and environmental change, *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* (2013)

¹⁷ Jones, A, Morelli, G, Pettigrew, S & Neal, B 2021, Integrating wellbeing into the business of government: The feasibility of innovative legal and policy measures to achieve sustainable development in Australia, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation by The George Institute for Global Health, Melbourne.

The impacts of economic transition on Latrobe communities will be significant and long lasting, it is imperative that in considering the options available to the Victorian Government to support the economic transition of Latrobe, community health and wellbeing be uppermost in the minds of governments and decision makers across industries.

Should you have any further questions about this submission, or the engagement model used to undertake this work, please feel free to contact my office on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Jane Anderson
Latrobe Health Advocate