

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the closure of the Hazelwood and Yallourn Power Stations

Melbourne—Wednesday, 16 March 2022

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Ms Harriet Shing

Ms Kaushaliya Vaghela

Ms Sheena Watt

WITNESS (*via videoconference*)

Mr Scott McArdle, Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director, Gippsland Circular Economy Precinct.

The CHAIR: The Economy and Infrastructure Committee public hearing for the Inquiry into the Closure of the Hazelwood and Yallourn Power Stations continues.

I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land, and I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

My name is Enver Erdogan. I am the Chair of the committee, and I would like to introduce my fellow committee members that are here present today, Ms Harriet Shing and Ms Melina Bath.

To witnesses giving evidence, all evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act* and further subject to the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during the hearing is protected by law; however, any comment repeated outside the hearing may not be protected. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing. Transcripts will ultimately be made public and placed on the committee's website.

We welcome any opening comments but ask that they be kept to a maximum of 10 minutes to allow for any discussion and questions with the committee. If you could begin by stating your full name and the organisation you are representing and then starting your presentation. Over to you.

Mr McARDLE: Thank you. Scott McArdle is my name, and I am representing the Gippsland Circular Economy Precinct.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr McArdle. Would you like to make an opening statement or go over to your presentation?

Mr McARDLE: I would love to.

Visual presentation.

Mr McARDLE: Thank you for the opportunity today to present to this hearing. Really what I want to give you as an opening statement is an overview of the approach that we as Gippsland Circular Economy Precinct and our partners have taken to a forward-looking economic development and social and environmental development opportunity, beginning in Gippsland but really certainly not restricted to Gippsland as well. Our observations through this have some opportunities to reflect on current practices both in industry and in government and then look at what the opportunities are to really support a forward-looking development of a new growth sector and industry.

To begin with I do just want to acknowledge that part of this presentation is talking about a consortium of businesses. It is not just Gippsland Circular Economy Precinct, but the views that I will talk about today are those of our business, not necessarily those of the partners. They all have contributed to the thinking and the practice here, but they are our views as this particular business.

When looking at the terms of reference for the inquiry we really wanted to focus on the options the state government and industry can have to pursue the offset of loss of the jobs that currently do exist within the coal-fired power station sector. Now, we have seen what that looks like in the past with obviously the closure of Hazelwood. We really want to present some opportunities here and a different look at what forward-looking regional development and economic growth opportunities are. So that is going to be the focus of our discussion. I am more than happy to provide some commentary in the background.

I should just state as a disclaimer here too: I previously spent 17 years in the state government and spent some time in the Latrobe Valley Authority, so it is coming from a number of different perspectives. But specifically here our interest is in looking at that industry-side growth.

I want to open by talking about how this is a partnership opportunity that we are delivering here. It is a consortium of regional, national and global businesses all establishing and all looking at how we work together, work collaboratively, around developing new opportunities. So here we are looking at H2X Global—we will talk a bit more about them shortly; Dasma Group, Dasma Environmental; Gippsland Circular Economy Precinct; the Australian Renewables Academy; and Dyers Distribution, so a large tier 1 national transport trucking business who are headquartered and based in Gippsland. These are some of the businesses—there are other businesses that we are working with behind the scenes; we are not ready to name those yet—just to give you an idea. This is a consortium-led approach.

So our focus really is on investing in the future. It is a collaborative approach, as I have said, and it is locally based. We are grounded here—we are Gippsland businesses who are at the backbone of this—and we are looking at establishing advanced fuel cell electric vehicle and hydrogen technology manufacturing and bringing that capability here to Australia, centred in Gippsland. We are coupling that with local hydrogen production, distribution and refuelling infrastructure development. So our focus is on building that whole domestic value chain of renewable green hydrogen produced locally and used locally.

One of the phrases we have used a number of times is that our focus is on developing the domestic economy, not watching our value float off on a boat to somewhere else. It is a circular economy and a zero-emissions energy approach in action here. As I said, it is about local businesses driving this, but it is also bringing global innovation here to Victoria and to Gippsland. One of the elements of that is that we are targeting to be the first region in Australia to remove the need for landfill almost completely. So we are really looking at materials re-use and diversion and getting them out of high-cost, high environmental impact operations, which is landfill.

I want to talk a little bit about, just in opening, innovation. For us I think innovation has often been referred to as sitting in startups, incubators and R and D units in universities. For us innovation sits in collaboration. It sits in the collective knowledge, wisdom, experience and relationships that local businesses have and being able to partner that with global innovation. So innovation for us is a very different look to probably a traditional and programmatic look at how you might get new things up and running. Those partnerships for us reflect on the whole value chain. Hydrogen—there is a lot of hype around that. For us to do that domestically, to do that locally, we needed to build that whole value chain concurrently. We could not wait for somebody else to do it, so it is not a one-out approach.

For us relationships are at the centre of our business opportunities. They form the backbone of how something like this can be delivered and developed. It is a centre-out design and a very systemic design. It is not just about a linear one-to-two-to-three kind of business relationship; we are looking at that whole value chain and how we build everything concurrently and ensuring that all the pieces of the puzzle happen together, and that is where the value of that consortium really comes to the front. We could not do that if it was just us as one single business. So that integration of business opportunities, of relationships, is central to how we are looking at building this, and it really reflects a local and regional scale of operation that is replicable and that can grow to a national and international scale of impact.

So if we take that as, I guess, a bit of the foundation, really what we want to do now is just present some quick observations—and undoubtedly we will be able to delve into these in a bit more detail—on state government practice. This is really from a number of different perspectives. One of the points we wanted to make was that a singular, one-off business investment focus from government is not reflective of the approach that certainly we are taking. A lot of other mature, forward-looking business growth is not based on one single one-off opportunity in one business.

The capex jobs matrix that is often used to assess government's approach to how they might support an individual business really limits the scope and potential of a collaborative growth opportunity. We know that in part, and it is not reflective across the board, there are some slow and unresponsive engagement practices from government in relation to how industry operates and where the opportunities are. Our reflection as regional businesses is that there is a very metrocentric investment approach from government. The big flagship opportunities often sit within the metro environment.

A point we wanted to make was that 'risk based' really means minimal reach and impact, particularly in the regions, and that flows back to how we look at individual businesses and how we look at consortiums. The government does need to be very risk aware in terms of its policy and its investment practice—we understand that—but it also limits the ability of government to meaningfully support opportunities.

Three years trading history is not a measure of potential and actual growth, so that is often an early point and the end of a conversation with particularly investment representatives from state government—‘Oh, so can we have a look at your three years trading history?’. Now, some of our partners are intergenerational, multigenerational trading businesses, but for the particular growth opportunities they are all new businesses, so we do not have that history. So that is a very limiting factor in terms of actual and potential growth.

In many areas policy and regulatory support and the practice that sits underneath that lags behind industry, and so that has the limiting effect on where and how we can grow, because that leaves room for uncertainty in investment. And another point that I will just make is our activity—and this is a top-of-the-fingers exercise—touches at least nine government portfolios. Now, that does not sit comfortably in a standard conversation with any particular one of those portfolios, because particularly when you look at that consortium, we cover so many portfolios of government. There are not many we do not touch. That can often have a limiting effect on effective conversations.

So if I just switch quickly to the recommendations from our experience, and this is recent experience as well as our backgrounds as businesses and operators in the region, government looking at how they support the growth potential of collaborative business models would be a fundamental shift that would support significant growth opportunities across the board. That is not just looking at a supply chain—so the two or three bits that make an input-production-output element—it is actually looking at that collaborative relationship and what that means. We recommend recognising in program design as well as in how government works with businesses the strength in value chains that do sit either as an existing value chain—or in our case we are building a whole value chain from scratch but also integrating that into existing business operations. The growth in innovation point that I made before does not only reside in start-up, incubator and accelerator programs, it actually exists and sits in relationships and in collaborative opportunities. That need to be industry driven but supported by good policy is a real key point here, and I have no doubt that we will delve into that a little bit further later.

An observation and a recommendation is that industry does not operate like granting guidelines and structures. We are much more fluid, much more responsive. A good set of guidelines can open up an enormous amount of opportunities in an investment program, but they can also shut down opportunities very, very quickly. I will talk to a recent experience with one of our partners. We applied for a particular program. We did not get past the expression of interest and eligibility because we were not industry—in their version of what industry needed to be. And that was not in the guidelines; that was an unwritten rule. Our inference here that was sitting behind it: we were not the right industry to be able to go through, but that was not evident in that practice.

A cross-portfolio approach to regions and investments is critical here—as I said, at least nine portfolios. So really understanding where and how a collaborative business model sits in this environment is critical. Supportive, proactive, forward-looking local government—obviously this is a state government inquiry, but the role of local government is crucial here. I can tell you that one 5-minute phone call lost an opportunity for one local government in the region here and gained it for another one. That first filter of how you engage in local government is crucial. Where we have a supporting local government—and I will put a shout-out to Wellington shire here. They are phenomenal; they make things happen. And, you know, a lot of the investment that we are working at will be centred there because of their approach as a local government. So how state government supports local government to be really proactive in working with business is a crucial element here.

There is a lot of talk about transition or translation. Really I guess what we are looking at here is how you use the existing industry base in a region and actually create a transformation off the top of that. You know, there are lots of different tags that get put around here, but transformational business practices and technologies do not really sit comfortably in an existing government portfolio that knows what it knows. And so being open to what these new global technologies and business practices look like in a state government setting is certainly a crucial element to that.

Ten minutes is not long. That is our opening statement, and I will leave it. Back to you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr McArdle. I really enjoyed your presentation. I also like the fact that you came with some recommendations or practical considerations for the committee to consider going forward. I always appreciate that. It is very easy to point out, I guess, deficiencies, but it is another thing to actually offer possible solutions or improvements going forward. So I always love that input from witnesses—that constructive feedback.

Mr McARDLE: Pleasure.

The CHAIR: On that note I might pass over to committee members to ask questions. I might ask committee colleagues to limit the question/discussion time for each to 8 minutes. I will be keeping time going forward. I might start off with Ms Bath and then Ms Shing, and then I will go last. Ms Bath, please, over to you.

Ms BATH: Thank you, Mr McArdle. That is very interesting and I think most worthwhile to listen to and understand. There are many elements here, and I might end up putting questions on notice. I want you to explain what your circular economy would look like. You have talked about repurposing waste hydrogen. Walk us through that cycle so we can see in our minds and the community can see what your vision is, and I am going to underline what the jobs in regional Victoria, Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley are.

Mr McARDLE: Absolutely. If I can take half a step back, when we looked at the opportunity that sat around renewable hydrogen and growing a domestic economy, one of the key things that we saw was the domestic opportunity. A lot of the big projects were looking at export—that is great. We really wanted to look at how you integrate hydrogen as an energy source into a local and regional economy. Parallel to that we were having discussions with local government and with other industry parties about how we use our waste materials and resources in the region more effectively. We did not want to have a look at those materials where there is an existing mature recycling or re-use market in operation. We were only going to look at the lower value opportunities where they are currently—essentially they are being landfilled. They are being dumped, and we know the cost environmentally. We also know the cost to community of owning, operating and managing landfills for our councils. That sits back at each of us as community members. So we are introducing a technology base that looks at the conversion of organic and waste materials to hydrogen.

I will not go into detail on the chemistry that sits behind that, but essentially it fits into that waste-to-energy broad environment. It is a non-incineration process, so we are not burning it. It is non-combustion, but we are looking at how we use heat and chemistry, heat and pressure, to convert materials to hydrogen. It is a very, very tight process. And then I guess the circular part of that is then looking at where those materials come from, so really diverting from landfill whether that be municipal solid waste, so our red-lid garbage; whether that be our agricultural waste products; our single-use plastic material—really anything that is not concrete, metal, glass and inert. That then takes those out of landfill, which is a good thing, but it also means that those materials, both the energy potential of that conversion to hydrogen but also the carbon potential that sits in that, can then be converted to materials that can be returned back into our environment and our materials usage one way or the other. So in our technology we have a solid carbon material that comes out of that. That can be used for a carbon-based soil fertiliser/conditioner, it can go back into construction materials—we can look at how we reuse that carbon in different ways.

When we talk about circular, it is about keeping these materials in operation rather than a make-use-dispose linear framework. So when we are talking to our transport partners we talk about their end-of-life tyres that can come back around and become part of their future fuel environment. We talk about, if we visualise a garbage truck picking up our municipal solid waste from our kerbs, bringing that waste into one of our facilities, driving around the back and picking up their fuel—their hydrogen into a fuel cell electric truck. We start to see that that energy and those materials start to circulate back through our economy rather than being disposed of and lost. And then the other bit of it is about how we integrate those future energy sources into our existing industrial waste both in terms of the transport but also in terms of our larger stationary industry energy demand.

Ms BATH: Thank you. Quite an exciting prospect, without doubt, and I think one of the interesting things that I am hearing is that you are a new consortium but the footprint of your various business partners has been local to Gippsland over time. Is that correct?

Mr McARDLE: That is correct. If you look at Dyers Distribution—a multigenerational trucking and transport company, one of the largest in Australia—it is Gippsland-based. Our founding businesses Ferguson Civil—the Ferguson family—Marathon Electrical and I are all Gippsland businesses. What we have found is building that consortium of businesses who are local, who are regional and who understand their operating environment well then gives you the leverage to attract global businesses who want to be a part of that operating environment. That is where H2X Global come in—an Australian business operating globally really focusing on that advanced fuel cell electric vehicle manufacture. So as an original equipment manufacturer, building that technology and then being able to integrate it into existing business becomes a key lever to then get that spanning from local to global.

Ms BATH: Thank you. My next question then goes to, this is the vision that you are painting for us and this is a state Parliament inquiry delivering back to state government in recommendations. What are the

impediments that you see at the moment from a state government level that would impede this, and therefore what are the requirements or the message back to government to help facilitate your vision and grow jobs in our region?

Mr McARDLE: I look at that question and look at the range of different ways that state government can support business to grow. The first and probably the most obvious one is: how do we work with government from an investment support perspective? That is actually important. There are policy and there are regulatory and practice elements that all feed into that as well. So at the moment introducing new technology into a planning environment is a long, slow process—that is our critical path. The technology supply and the market creation are, compared to the planning process, relatively easy. Government can slow planning down and government can speed planning up, so from a state perspective support to navigate that process—we would never ask for a shortcut, but to be able to navigate that planning process with new technologies is a really critical element to that.

Ms BATH: And nine portfolios to negotiate as well—that is cumbersome.

Mr McARDLE: Always a bit of fun. Yes, look, it is. Government in their policy environment, their legislative regulatory and policy environment, can accommodate and speed up and facilitate the introduction of new technologies into our community, and they can also impede it. So when we talk about zero-emissions transport, the government currently has some very strong forward-looking climate change and environmental platforms in place, and they are conducive to attracting investment and encouraging us as industry to invest. But there are also areas where government can very quickly put the brakes on forward-looking investment with new technology. So we have already got an environment where we know that our growth potential in Victoria will be potentially restricted in the waste-to-energy environment because of the waste-to-energy cap that is coming through in our planning environment.

Ms BATH: Could you expand on that, Mr McArdle?

Mr McARDLE: So Victoria has introduced the new waste legislation and a proposal to cap waste-to-energy facilities at 1 million tonnes processing capacity across the board. Now, that is a good chunk of Victoria's waste. Fortunately existing systems that have already got planning approval it does not apply to, but we know that that policy potentially, with us and other operators all looking at diverting out of landfill, can potentially restrict. That cap will get hit pretty quickly, I believe. We know what our volumes are in Gippsland. Certainly a number of our other regions are much higher in terms of their potential—we talk about it as feedstock, not so much as waste. The feedstock potential in Victoria is huge. But that policy potentially restricts our investment growth over time. So whilst we are looking at Gippsland from a Gippsland Circular Economy Precinct perspective, that model is replicable across the board. To any other region, any other municipality that wants to get out of landfill, that model is replicable. But that replicability will be restricted potentially by policies such as capping. Now, capping is a fairly crude regulatory tool. My suspicion is that when that was designed the primary technology in mind was incineration, waste-to-energy through incineration, and I have no worries capping that. I have no concerns with restricting—

Ms BATH: Well, that might help your business as well.

Mr McARDLE: Well, look, it certainly helps. We think there is a higher value end use to those materials. But policies that have a negative impact on the rapid growth and introduction of zero-emissions technology vehicles would be another area. We can create a really proactive state environment to get those vehicles on the road and get them on the road fast, and there are some existing state policies that do that, like Public Transport Victoria—it will only be zero-emissions buses introduced to the fleet from 2025. That gives business confidence that we are on the right track. But there are potentially other policy environments around how they are used, how they are integrated and how they are taxed, particularly in the early days when a new technology is getting up and running, that could put the brakes on that introduction. So it is a complex argument, I suppose, as to finding the sweet spot. But with emerging businesses that have got enormous growth potential, government working with industry to really design that end point I think is a really positive and proactive place, particularly when you are looking at the scale of the manufacturing side of those within the state, and that is what we are doing across the consortium. We are actually looking at that fuel cell electric vehicle manufacturing at scale in Gippsland, and that is what our partners are committing to do. But the state environment can restrict that, yes.

Ms BATH: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Ms Bath, I might go over to Ms Shing. If we have time, we will come back to you as well for a couple more questions.

The CHAIR: Ms Shing, over to you.

Ms SHING: Thanks, Chair. I actually thought that the advisory note at the start inviting us to speak was directed solely towards me on the basis that I had chewed up a lot of time with the last witness.

I want to thank you, Scott, for appearing today and also for the presentation and submission that you have provided. I would like to pick up on the themes that you have just explored with Ms Bath and the policy setting framework, which you say has a degree of confinement in it to the way in which you might examine and develop future business plans and that longer horizon that you recognise is part of determining the success of business across the board. I mean, it is a universal truth that you should plan for the immediate work but pitch toward a strategic horizon that continues to take you to where you want to go overall.

That sweet spot that you have talked about is something that I want to explore in the context of the opportunities to innovate where legislative and regulatory frameworks are perhaps requiring an evolution of business. This is something which again you have flagged in your presentation and have talked about as being perhaps, I think, an encumbrance—no, Mel, they were your words, ‘an encumbrance’. But the difficulty and the complexity of working through a changed regulatory and legislative environment is also something that presents opportunity, and that, as you would know—and thank you for the declaration at the start of your presentation around previous links to the LVA—is actually about the very nature of transition that we are talking about.

How do you factor that into the way in which you have developed and are running your business model in an environment where dexterity has arguably never been more important and has never been more important than perhaps in the space that you are talking about around waste conversion and that closed market opportunity from hydrogen and carbon conversion in other ways? What are you doing in that space to recognise the importance of agility?

Mr McARDLE: I think one of the approaches that we have incorporated all the way through our business model and our design is a co-design approach, so we design with. My job as an individual consultant or as part of this business consortium is not to come in with a presupposed solution. So that approach to designing with—or ‘co-design’ is probably in the popular lexicon at the moment—really is around designing with. So if I talk about a regulatory environment, at the moment we have got some really positive engagement with WorkSafe Victoria and Energy Safe Victoria about co-designing a new industrial environment, which is hydrogen manufacturing and hydrogen energy. That is not something that we have got a really well formed public regulatory practice around understanding. It is an old energy, but it is a new energy in its application. So we need to be really doing that work with them to understand what it looks like when we are manufacturing fuel cell electric vehicles and when we are integrating hydrogen for energy storage and energy production into mobile trucks and buses and vans but also into fixed infrastructure. What does that look like? How do we understand the safety environment for that? How do we design the training systems that sit around that?

So working with government regulatory bodies to do that work and to understand that work and to be proactive about it rather than presenting a fait accompli on the desk of the regulator and saying, ‘By the way, we’re doing this’, and them sort of having to stop and wrap their head around it, is a really central part of our business model.

Ms SHING: So an iterative process is important then as far as conversations to evolve the trajectory of specific projects and business development frameworks?

Mr McARDLE: Absolutely critical. And that approach, if I take up your question about agility, is really to apply thinking about how we do that with any of those other nine-plus portfolios and to think about those different operating environments and what that potentially might mean to work through rather than hit any potential barrier. We know that for some of our technologies we do not yet have Australian standards in place, but we also know that these are mature technologies that are integrated into business in Europe, in China and in parts of the US, so understanding that translation space. We are looking at hydrogen in a training context and saying, ‘How do we build off the work happening in Europe and apply that and customise that here, rather than start from scratch and have to learn ourselves?’. That collaborative environment extends to all of those different parts of not just our business environment but also our government relationships and also our skills. We have a

number of programs that we are starting to develop around commercialisation of Australian technology too, so it becomes part and parcel of how you look at the opportunity rather than just forging ahead blind to where those potential challenges may be in the future.

Ms SHING: So can I ask you then about the importance of, and you flagged this again in your presentation, the perhaps specific perspective that a Melbourne-based approach looks at when making decisions and the fact that in contrast to that we see frequent overlap between the LVA and staff of the LVA and people who are based in Gippsland—the CEO of the LVA said, ‘by Gippslanders for Gippslanders’—in the way in which that process happens. To what extent do you think that that local process of engagement has worked or indeed might need improvement? I note that you have shouted out to Wellington Shire Council in terms of that work associated with good practices of engagement and that co-design, and I note the business concierge service has been put in place to facilitate precisely that streamlining of what might otherwise be a pretty complex process on planning and everything else that goes along with that, but to what extent would you say the local approach to things from a Gippsland-centric perspective, as was designed within the machinations of the LVA, has worked alongside the transition process and the funding and access to support?

Mr McARDLE: My observation, if you like from both sides of the fence, is that that local engagement shifted the narrative or the dialogue quite considerably both from a community perspective but also from a business perspective. I think one of its challenges and where it really was limited was the ability for that local engagement to then translate back into state government agency practice. So LVA at times—and it is an observation from both sides—was kind of out there by itself, so very, very proactive local engagement practices but it did not necessarily bring the rest of the government bureaucracy along with it. So that ability to translate—

Ms SHING: Is that a process of maturity, like over time? I mean, noting that it is a relatively new agency, it was set up very swiftly around providing that direct support. Again, in that medium to long term what are the optics and what are the realisations of success? What does co-design look like? Is that something that you think can improve over time given those embedded relationships and the way in which they have, I think, solidified over time?

Mr McARDLE: It will depend to a degree on the authorising environment that is provided across the board to all of those agencies and departments.

Ms SHING: So what does success look like in that space then insofar as what is a good outcome around that dependence that you just talked about or that condition setting that you talked about?

Mr McARDLE: From an economic perspective, for LVA in Gippsland or RDV in the other regions—I think this flows through to a regional focus as well as just a Gippsland focus—it is that ability to then have that entry point that connects across the board and that facilitates rather than just says, ‘Yes, we have a grant program for that’ or ‘No, we don’t have a grant program for that’. That is often as far as you get—not uniformly. But in terms of how that practice looks into the future, it is thinking about then how you facilitate that business across the board as a facilitator rather than just ‘This is my job. This is what I do and have to offer. All the best’.

Ms SHING: And what about the commonwealth interface with the state government? And again, you have talked about Wellington and indeed the other councils as well. How do we work through across all three levels of government, and to what extent will that assist the LVA’s work? That is about six dinner parties’ worth of a question there, but what is your take on it, with the time you have available?

Mr McARDLE: Yes, I was going to say, what was the time cap on the answer?

The CHAIR: That can be the final question on this one.

Mr McARDLE: Look, if I take it from one particular perspective and that regulatory environment, it is crucial, because each layer of government has a role to play in that regulatory environment, whether it be the planning environment or whether it be the delivery and operationalisation of a particular technology or an opportunity. It is about being able to work across those three, ensuring there is continuity there where needs to be. We often find that what sits in one does not sit in the other. And particularly for a technology like fuel cell electric vehicles, it applies across states too, so ensuring that there is some continuity between different states. H2X is a partner here, they design a vehicle, but the vehicle in part has a different operating context in New

South Wales to what it does in Victoria or South Australia. And that is a real impediment to growth for technology as well as it is for business practices.

Ms SHING: So a harmonising framework would assist, then?

Mr McARDLE: Absolutely, particularly where it is conducive to enabling an emerging technology to gain traction in the market.

Ms SHING: Thanks, Mr McArdle, that is really helpful. I can see the Chair's face, and I am going to end it there. Thank you.

Mr McARDLE: Pleasure.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Mr McArdle. I have really enjoyed the discussion, especially around the role that government can play in partnership with business and regions about policy settings and how they impact the local economy at a local level, because we obviously know a lot about the broader impacts. It has been a very productive discussion. On that note, I note that the committee will need to end its session here. I want to thank you and the Gippsland Circular Economy Precinct for your submission and presentation today. It has been very helpful.

Mr McARDLE: You are most welcome.

Witness withdrew.