

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities

Golden Point—Wednesday, 18 September 2019

MEMBERS

Mr Darren Cheeseman—Chair

Mr David Morris—Deputy Chair

Mr Will Fowles

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Mr Paul Hamer

Mr Tim McCurdy

Mr Tim Smith

WITNESS

Mr Terry Demeo, Director, Infrastructure and Environment, City of Ballarat.

The CHAIR: Welcome to today's session in Ballarat. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning Committee's public hearing for the Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities. I would also like to extend a welcome to the public and to the media present. We have a few.

All evidence taken today will be recorded and protected by parliamentary privilege, therefore you are protected for what you say here today, but if you go outside and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by privilege. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript of today's evidence at the earliest opportunity. Transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the Committee's website.

As is customary, we will allow 5 to 15 minutes for a presentation and then the Committee will ask a number of questions. Could you please state your name and title before beginning your presentation?

Mr DEMEO: Thank you. It is Terry Demeo. I am the Director of Infrastructure and Environment at the City of Ballarat.

The CHAIR: Welcome, Terry. We might hand over to you. I believe you have some presentations there that you would like to table.

Mr DEMEO: Thank you very much. I would firstly just like to start by thanking the Committee for attending Ballarat and taking the opportunity to come out into the regions and hear submissions. It is very much welcomed. I appreciate it. We have submitted a written submission. I will hand that over. I will summarise that with a PowerPoint, but I will do it on the paper rather than electronically.

The CHAIR: Fantastic. It might be helpful, Terry, if you are able to provide an electronic copy to the secretariat following today's meeting.

Mr DEMEO: Certainly. I have done that. As I said, thanks for coming out. It is an enormously significant issue from a regional perspective, as it is statewide, obviously. Councils, and Ballarat is certainly no exception, are looking to be leaders in this space in terms of tackling climate change and have set ourselves some very onerous targets. Ballarat's target for carbon neutrality is for the organisation to do so by 2025, which is causing me a little bit of grief, I must admit. But it is a target which council is very committed to, and today's submission is really focused around what we would love state actions to look like in terms of being able to deliver on some of those commitments. So if I can, I will just take you through the PowerPoint, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIR: That would be fantastic.

Mr DEMEO: Thank you very much. So, as I have said, council is a really strong advocate for climate change. We have specifically focused on carbon emission reductions and climate adaptation strategies, and we will talk to those today in particular. So we are members of a number of groups, reflecting our commitment in that regard—I will not read each of those. But just to reinforce that we are looking to be part of not only advocating in our own right and be a leader in our own right but combining our efforts with others in looking to make a difference from a climate change perspective.

In relation to corporate governance, we have undertaken a detailed climate risk assessment in part, and that is ongoing. There are mitigation and adaptation requirements—each one of the key risks in our corporate strategy, our corporate risk profile across the whole of the municipality. Climate change and the need for adaptation is one of the big risks that we have for our community. And it is probably no surprise to yourselves that our principal request is that there are resources available in a coordinated and collaborative manner from Government to assist in that process.

Mr MORRIS: I am shocked!

Mr DEMEO: I thought you would be. So in terms of some of the actions—urban forests and conservation. So again, we are not changing the world as such but leveraging some fantastic work, with the City of

Melbourne being a leader in that space in terms of the *Urban Forest Strategy*. We have a target of the public realm to have a 40 per cent tree canopy. At the moment we are in the order of about 17.5 per cent cover across our streets, and Ballarat, as you well know, is a very treed city. There are some areas that do not have that distinctive character, and they are the more socio-economically challenged communities. So Wendouree West and Delacombe are the areas which are least treed—the old chicken and egg scenario. They are areas that are not treed and therefore suffer the most in terms of that heat island effect and the like. Council has committed \$5 million, so \$500 000 for a decade, to put an urban forest in place. That comes with a myriad of responsibilities in terms of maintaining that and workforce changes and the like. So it is a big commitment in and of itself, but it is really just the start of a process to deliver on a changed landscape.

Mr MORRIS: Can I just ask, Mr Chairman, is it your preference, given this is the first one we have done, that we hold any questions until the end or can we have a bit of an exchange on the way through?

The CHAIR: Particularly given the way Mr Demeo has set out his submission, I think we should pause on each one and ask questions. So if you have any questions at the moment—

Mr MORRIS: Just on that, I notice there is a reference in the written submission to potentially using planning controls to assist in achieving that target.

Mr DEMEO: Retention, yes.

Mr MORRIS: But given what you are saying about Wendouree West and Delacombe particularly, and it is effectively public land, is there sufficient public land in that precinct to achieve that sort of target—

Mr DEMEO: Well, it is predominantly within the streets.

Mr MORRIS: or are we talking about streetscapes?

Mr DEMEO: So we are talking about the public realm with—

Mr MORRIS: Yes, so we are not talking about land acquisition, I guess, is where I am heading here.

Mr DEMEO: No. In that we do not want to grow the land mass because it will increase our requirement to cover that land mass, so it is the public realm in terms of streets and park areas that we are targeting to achieve that outcome.

Mr MORRIS: So presumably the lower level of courage at the moment is as a result of past policies rather than—

Mr DEMEO: It is advocacy strength in some respects I suspect, so both areas were public housing estates and have not attracted that level of investment or were not required to in terms of delivering to the market. So there is a history of that and clearly a lack of investment from our end over that period of time, which probably translates to the squeaky wheel effect in terms of not having the advocacy and lobbying that we get from other areas, I would suggest, without having clear evidence to that effect.

Mr HAMER: Can I just ask a question also on the urban forest? So in regard to planning controls over privately held land in other areas, is there—

Mr DEMEO: It is something that is contemplated in that unlike many eastern suburbs, where there are tree controls, we have no tree controls. We are purely reliant on the state controls, which do not require a planning permit to remove a tree if you are under 4000 square metres in area in a residential precinct, unless there is an environmental overlay or the like. So one thing which we are contemplating is for the private realm to maintain key trees, and that character is the potential or the exploration of tree retention requirements.

The CHAIR: Can I just ask—obviously this is a reasonably new initiative—what sort of species are you looking to put into these communities? Are they indigenous to the area, are they generally Australian natives, are they introduced species or is it a bit of a mixture of all categories?

Mr DEMEO: It is the final of those, in that Ballarat's inner area is known for its exotics, so it is about—

The CHAIR: Plane trees, oaks.

Mr DEMEO: oaks and the like, so reinforcing that in that inner area. As you go out, it is a combination, so the predominant boulevards within the new estates will have exotics to maintain some character links to the existing and then a blend of natives into the lesser streets or the more residential streets and then a pure native approach to waterways and the like.

The CHAIR: When you say ‘native’—so there is a difference obviously between natives and indigenous.

Mr DEMEO: So of local provenance, yes.

The CHAIR: Perfect.

Mr MORRIS: Sorry, just very quickly, going back to that planning issue. Has the city looked at introducing vegetation protection overlays or subdivides, things like that?

Mr DEMEO: We have in part, but this is about where there is not. They generally apply to natives, so a significant tree register is the first foray into this and then there is the potential for that to translate into a statutory control not dissimilar to a Whitehorse or the like, where there are tree controls.

Mr MORRIS: I am from the Mornington Peninsula and there are—

Mr DEMEO: Multiple tree controls.

Mr MORRIS: VPOs everywhere, yes, and very effective too.

Mr DEMEO: In terms of the last dot point under governance, it is just the sub-bioregional-specific planning considerations, so it is a policy position around that in terms of addressing it. We are doing it in our own right but having some broader regional guidance around how we best deliver revegetation and the like would be ideal, if that makes sense, rather than each municipality making some sort of guidance around achieving that outcome on a regional basis. That would be welcomed.

The CHAIR: Just teasing that out a little bit, so you would be talking about the Central Highlands collection of councils perhaps investing cooperatively together in coming up with a piece of work that might lay that out?

Mr DEMEO: With assistance from the other tiers of government ideally, as I suggested earlier, which is of no surprise, yes. So if I can move on, Mr Chairman—

The CHAIR: Sure.

Mr DEMEO: As to that social infrastructure and heat health, again you will no doubt hear lots about this in terms of your Inquiry, but there is the desire to have, again, a clear policy position with us not reinventing the wheel. Adelaide—we have certainly learned from them. They are well advanced in some of this heat island effect and their specific planning approach. But rather than every municipality defining the way or finding their own model, some guidance around how to best use planning to improve community health outcomes would be desirable from a state perspective. It is clear knowledge and there is certainly plenty of evidence to the effect that putting vegetation back in and addressing the bitumen is really important and will change the heat on a significant day, but having some guidance around how to do it rather than everyone having to go off and do their own level of research and policy basis is seen as desirable.

The CHAIR: I am assuming that the evidence that the council has developed to date is that heat-related illness is more prevalent in those working-class communities that you described earlier where there is a lack of vegetation and those things and perhaps with those households not having the financial capacity to install air conditioning and the like. Is that what you have—

Mr DEMEO: Yes. Our evidence is limited. We are reliant on accepted research from elsewhere, but yes, certainly anecdotally that is the position that we are reliant on.

In terms of water conservation, the Victorian water plan is a great initiative and continues to be rolled out. We recently had a brief around the ministerial advisory committee for the Barwon and its tributaries. We think that further investigation into incentive mechanisms is required for growth areas. We have got integrated water management targets and plans, but incentivising plumbing in water tanks and the like and the use of greywater systems and the like to provide potable water substitution wherever possible we think is desirable. Certainly the clause 56 provisions of the planning scheme go some way, but further incentivising that we think would be desirable.

Mr MORRIS: Just on that point, I picked that up in your submission. One thing that I have become more conscious of is the impact of a big tank on a small block. Is that a factor in new subdivisions that are occurring in Ballarat?

Mr DEMEO: Definitely, if it is a retrofit. If you are trying to fit a significant-capacity water tank onto a site that has not been planned for, it is very problematic given our smaller lots. So it needs to be planned for and mandated early, therefore the concept, the building, is planned around that requirement rather than it being an afterthought.

The CHAIR: Can I just ask: the City of Ballarat is, I imagine, a pretty large consumer of water for your streetscapes, your parks—

Mr DEMEO: Filling our lake.

The CHAIR: Filling your lake, those kinds of things. Obviously with climate change and the fact that Ballarat is at the head of a number of catchments, it is difficult to imagine any way that additional bans or anything like that can be created. So as a large consumer of water, what initiatives is the City of Ballarat putting in place around stormwater capture and those sorts of things for public use, for public spaces and the like?

Mr DEMEO: Ballarat has got a really proud history with Central Highlands Water and others. The lake was dry, as you well know, for a decade almost, and it had a disastrous—that would not be too strong a word—impact on the psyche of Ballarat. We do not want that to happen again. So the plan that was put in place then was to develop A-class water treatment facilities at the northern water treatment plant, which Central Highlands Water run, and to utilise the bore fields of the Cardigan Aquifer as well as stormwater recovery. So the system is multitiered. We put 600 megalitres a year of water into the lake to maintain it at an adequate level for recreational purposes and for general amenity. And as I said, it is the heart and soul of the city. So we use a combination of the A-class treated water; stormwater from Pauls Wetland and from the Redan Wetlands, which is collected and pumped back up into the lake; and the Cardigan Aquifer—untreated bore water coming into the lake as well.

There are 11 sporting reserves that can be watered through the lake. We have 62 active playing spaces across the city that are maintained by our sports crew and that are used for sport rather than just the parks. Ballarat was known for playing in ankle-deep mud. If we now have a muddy day or a puddle, we get criticised. We have translated the vast majority of that, certainly at the high end, to sand-based turf tables and with warm season grasses so that we reduce our water usage and obviously save money along the way. So that transition continues as we roll out through our active living program a new oval or a couple of new ovals, or soccer pitches more so now, on an annual basis. They have all gone to water conservation, grass and treatment. That is our principal area.

One gigantic opportunity—an integrated water management plan is being developed in partnership with Central Highlands Water, Southern Rural Water and Corangamite Catchment Management Authority. All the agencies were involved in developing a plan. It has a number of key initiatives. They are to grow that bore water treatment to put it into a purple pipe and put that through to Victoria Park and other areas that we will look to irrigate in the future, but not use potable supply, and to put it through the Ballarat West employment precinct as well. So the two tiers of those initial works are extending the capacity, taking the northern treatment plant from 3 megalitres a day to 5 megalitres a day, from memory, and growing the network to take that across to the Wendouree West precinct, which is a State Government-funded project—there is \$7.5 million to lift that recreational precinct within an area which has a challenging SEIFA index in terms of Wendouree West, so that is a really important project—and then to bring the bore water network around into Victoria Park. That will

come via the Central Highlands Water plan and available grant moneys. Again, it is a bit of a common theme, isn't it? But it will not happen without further investment.

That is really where our chief efforts are going in. In terms of stormwater recovery, the Ballarat West growth area is 1200 hectares of residentially zoned land—so former paddocks, which are all effectively captured via 29 sub-catchments down at the bottom of Cherry Flat Road and Bells Road, just on the border with the Golden Plains municipality. I will not get the gegalitres right, but there is an enormous amount of stormwater that will come out of that precinct when it is fully developed—capturing that, bringing it back up into an area and potentially reinjecting it into the aquifer for recovery at a later date. This aquifer recharge, as it is known, is a project that we have been working with Central Highlands Water on as well. Again, a very significant investment is required, but it will yield significant benefit in that whilst we have the super-pipe, which takes water out of Waranga Basin and brings it across via Waranga to Eppalock and to Ballarat, we do not want to use that super-pipe if we can at all avoid it. Whatever opportunities there are to grow local capacity to capture stormwater, to re-use et cetera, we want to explore all of those.

We have covered water. Urban stormwater and flood mitigation—I have probably covered a lot of that, but perhaps focusing on the flood mitigation challenge in that, Mr Chairman, as you pointed out, we are at the top of the catchment; we are at 600 metres in height, which is reflected in our climate during the cooler months. But we are at the top of a catchment and we suffer from that flash flooding. Unlike at Geelong, where they have 24 hours notice that the Barwon will flood and to put the floodgates around Godfrey Hirst Carpets and the like, Ballarat does not have that benefit. We have a very quick time frame in terms of our small catchments like Gnarr Creek, which runs up from North Ballarat and through and discharges into the Yarrowee in a form, but not in a very orderly form at the moment. That is the principal cause of flooding through the Ballarat CBD. It is not really the Yarrowee; it is predominantly from the Gnarr and the Yarrowee is, as a result of the freeway going in 25 years ago, dammed upstream and therefore the peak of that is at a later date than when the Gnarr floods through the city.

The east is another example. Charlesworth Street, which is a culvert structure that sits above a retirement village today, is significantly substandard. We have got five key flood mitigation infrastructure requirements across the city, and again we are looking, with the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority and the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority, out in Miners Rest at the Burrumbeet Creek, to get some funding to deliver on that infrastructure—they are very important or becoming more important. With climate change and the frequency and significance of those storms, that reinforcement necessary for flood mitigation becomes more important.

Carbon emissions and renewables: we are pursuing a program of changing our streetlights to LED lights. We have committed with the greenhouse alliances across Victoria and with approximately 45 municipalities. We are out to market at the moment for a power purchase agreement to purchase renewable power to replace our current contractual arrangements. The target, as I said earlier, in our carbon neutrality plan has 100 per cent renewable as a target. We will be a long way progressed if we can enter into that power purchase agreement, and the market will determine that to a degree but we are working in collaboration with multiple other stakeholders.

Mr MORRIS: How far away are you from a conclusion of that process?

Mr DEMEO: By the end of the year we hope to have settled it.

Mr MORRIS: Mr Chairman, can we ask the city to, once it has settled, provide the Committee with advice on where the costs have gone relative to the previous agreement so that we can get a line of sight across whether it is a financial positive or whether it is a financial negative, and if it is, by how much so that we can get some idea of the comparison. That would be handy.

Mr DEMEO: Certainly I would suggest that you ask the submitters from the greenhouse alliance for that in that we have done significant prework before going to market from a quantity surveying perspective, for want of better terminology, market analysis, and we believe that it will be no more expensive than a brown coal solution. The market will tell that.

Mr MORRIS: Yes. I am interested in getting the actual outcome as opposed to all the speculation that we hear on both sides of the debate.

The CHAIR: Can I just follow up on that too. Has there been any work undertaken on that policy front with collecting up a number of municipalities so that you are not only bringing the leverage of Ballarat but potentially a much bigger population base, where you may actually potentially be able to, because of the market share that you can bring to the table, go to a renewable energy entity, company, where they might actually be able to purpose-build a wind farm to support that collective buying capacity that you might bring to the table? Has that been looked at at this stage? I would be interested in your comments on that.

Mr DEMEO: That is certainly the model that we are pursuing. I think now the number has grown from 40 to 45 municipalities that are in this collaborative. Greenhouse alliances across the State have certainly been the catalysts to bring those councils together and to have done that market analysis work to give confidence in pursuing this course of action, and we have engaged the Municipal Association of Victoria as the procurement agent. The expectation is that it will be predominantly that new wind energy in western Victoria—which we are certainly experiencing, not individually within Ballarat but in the broader region—and that it will be those sources that provide the renewable energy for our agreement.

But perhaps to add to that answer, one of the major challenges that we have—or benefits; we do not see it as a challenge anymore—is waste. It is obviously very topical. Ballarat has been working for a decade almost on a waste-to-energy solution, where we have set aside land with the appropriate buffers within the Ballarat West employment precinct to accommodate a waste-to-energy facility. We have been—we have used the term—technology agnostic. We have not set a parameter as to the specifics of the technology that we want, but we have got ambitions to be the first on the eastern seaboard to deliver a significant waste-to-energy facility. There are some significant and perhaps—I will probably simplify it—policy initiatives that would make it very much more palatable. The major landfills, as you are probably aware, across the west of Melbourne effectively provide for the waste out of all of Melbourne now, with no real facilities in the south-east or anything of that nature at the moment. They are losing their social licence to a degree in terms of their growth of those facilities on the edge of suburbia, for a raft of reasons which I will not pretend to be fully across. We have a significant—not perhaps in the national sense—waste levy, EPA levy, that is charged on every tonne that comes across the weighbridge into a landfill, and that is likely to increase, as I understand it, or there are certainly rumours to that effect.

If there were a policy position that said that waste delivered to a waste-to-energy plant did not attract a levy, that would change the business case for significant investment overnight. It would be the catalyst to see that investment happen, in our view, in that the levy was always put in place and the policy drivers were very clear and very appropriate to two things—to provide for a deterrent and a divergence of waste from landfill and to also provide a financial capacity to undertake research and market development and the like. Our position, our submission, is that if we do not have a levy on a waste-to-energy facility, the market will respond immediately and we—

The CHAIR: So you are saying the levy would apply?

Mr DEMEO: Well, there is no policy position today.

Mr MORRIS: I was going to ask the same question, because my reading of the legislation would be that the levy does not apply for that purpose. I was actually going to ask if you had legal advice to suggest that it does.

Mr DEMEO: No, we have not got legal advice to that effect. The policy—

Mr MORRIS: I am no lawyer but certainly I have studied that legislation reasonably closely in the last six months and if it is not going to landfill—

Mr DEMEO: It should not attract a levy.

Mr MORRIS: It should not apply, yes.

Mr DEMEO: And I think one can read that legislation to that effect, and we certainly agree with that view, but if it were enunciated very clearly in the future circular economy policy and the like, that would certainly assist the market response.

Mr MORRIS: So it is more about the explicitness. Yes, that makes sense.

The CHAIR: Can I just ask: your submission highlights fugitive emissions from landfill in the area. Obviously Ballarat in an Australian context has been occupied for a very long time, so there are obviously a lot of landfills around that may have been closed decades ago. Is the city aware of the emissions that might be coming out of those landfills, and have you considered ways in which you might capture those gases, I think it is mainly methane, for the purposes of generating electricity? Has the city done that work?

Mr DEMEO: Yes, Mr Chairman. We have an existing landfill, which is within the Golden Plains municipality, but it is owned by the City of Ballarat. As of three, four months ago, LMS, who is the contractor who manages the gas for us, installed a new generator. So we have had a generator for over 10 years. A second generator was put in about four months ago and is now commissioned and operable. With that, we are capturing 100 per cent of the methane gas and generating electricity. So we are effectively removing those gases that were being flared off. Up until recently approximately half of it was being used for electricity generation and half flared off. Now we do not see the flare operable very often at all.

The CHAIR: What about your previous landfills that perhaps have been closed for decades?

Mr DEMEO: So we have a number, as you say. Ballarat has got a long history, longer than most parts of Australia. There are not many spots where there was not some form of landfill. We monitor gas in some of those locations, but they are not of significance to accommodate generation facilities. So they are subject to closed landfill orders in many instances, and we work with the EPA in relation to compliance. That involves monitoring, but yes, there is not gas of a nature that would see it, in that they are all old. So as you peak, your gas production levels peak. As the organic material breaks down the bell curve drops away, and those closed landfills are at that bottom end, where the gas is of a minimal nature, not of a nature that would generate significant electricity.

Mr MORRIS: Can I just go back to the waste to energy. I have just two quick points. Firstly, I understand that at the moment, as far as the city is concerned, the project has been paused—I assume to get clarity coming out of the circular economy process.

Mr DEMEO: Correct. That is what the council's resolution is.

Mr MORRIS: The second question relates to the disposal of the residual product. Given it is fuel agnostic it is hard to know what is going to be left, but has the city done any work on that? There seems to be a growing argument that waste to energy perhaps may not be the solution that it was thought to be five to seven years ago.

Mr DEMEO: Yes. We have done some work on it. The proven technologies are effectively incineration, and they have two by-products. One is potash, which is effectively the ash that is left from the burning, which is relatively inert and does not present major issues, but it has some recoverable products within it. The more difficult is the fly-ash, which is scrubbed out of the scrubbers. It is scrubbed within the chimneys et cetera—I do not pretend to be the scientist here, I should say, Mr Chairman, but that is the more difficult and would potentially be of a proscribed nature. However, it also has some of those heavy metals and the like in it. So from a full circular economy perspective there have certainly been discussions. We have certainly had overtures from companies that suggest that they could mine that product and recover elements out of it. I think in the brave new world of the circular economy and a waste-to-energy plant, from what Ballarat has put to us over the years, we believe that the market would respond to those by-products and look to use them productively.

The CHAIR: Okay, but in order for this particular proposition to get up, having clarity out of the circular economy policy around the levy not being applied—do you think that would provide clear signals to the market that would enable private sector funding to deliver this project?

Mr DEMEO: Yes, I think that would certainly be one. The other is the very clear—so certainly there is potential. The legislative framework does not prohibit a waste-to-energy outcome today, and the Australian

Paper mill in Gippsland has seen a works approval issued; however, the ideal scenario for us would be, perhaps not reinventing the wheel, but adopting European standards, a world's best practice standard so that there is a very clear direction that the market can respond to, rather than a works approval, which is case by case, without that direction. So we think those 'market triggers'—if you want to use legislative tools—would be instrumental in assisting us to get a waste-to-energy plant up and running. There is also, to come back to that old theme, but in terms of facilitating the market response, running an EOI process.

Managing the feedstock—so the big chunks of the argument are you obviously need feedstock and that feedstock is plentiful but it is a competitive process as well. The metro areas go through a collaborative procurement process where landfills will bid effectively, will provide a price for the disposal, and I understand—again I am not letter perfect on this—that that is 12 months away or thereabouts. Having a facility that has been approved and ready to go that could bid into that process would assist as well.

So council, we estimate it to be in the order of \$1 million, as a rough figure, to do justice to a worldwide expression of interest. So we have had an unsolicited proposal, which for a raft of reasons we are not proceeding with today, but to run an extensive international expression of interest process to genuinely assess those and move to a request for proposal and ultimately agree on a contractual arrangement over land or deliver that outcome, our view is that with the moving parts involved of feedstock, logistics approvals around a site, obviously agreement on the technology to be used, then an offtake arrangement as to who is going to use the power, be it behind the meter or into the grid, with all those moving parts, some assistance, some greasing of the wheel would be really helpful to make that happen. Rather than let the market find its way, if we can define a system—if there were some support to run a process of that nature—that would be inordinately helpful.

Whilst I am on that, in terms of land, we have defined the land and we are working with Development Victoria—and I do not expect the Committee to make recommendations, but just so there is a complete picture—around having that land available under a council banner in order to run a process of that nature. Now, whether that is ultimately Development Victoria or ourselves that have control of the land to run it, we will see, but just so the Committee is aware that we are pursuing that course of action as well.

Mr MORRIS: So that is unreserved Crown land, is it?

Mr DEMEO: Yes. It has had the reservation removed.

The CHAIR: Mr Demeo, I am just conscious of the time. I think we had you scheduled up until about now—we are just a little over—so I will just give you a couple of minutes to make any concluding comments.

Mr DEMEO: No, you have been very generous, Mr Chairman. I think the last slide I have got is around the circular economy and innovation. Given my evidence in that regard, we genuinely believe that with that waste-to-energy facility—I will just close by saying this—we have got some of those jigsaw pieces right: we are on the rail line and we have the ability to bring waste out of the metro environment via rail to Ballarat. That is logical. We have got a site identified for the offtake facility and Powercor and others queueing up to build a facility to take power. We have major industries in Mars and McCain on the doorstep, which would take steam and/or power behind the meter. It is really that feedstock and technological solution that we need some assistance in delivering. I might leave it at that.

The CHAIR: Terrific. Thank you. Any final questions?

Mr MORRIS: No, it has been very useful. Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Terrific. Thank you, Mr Demeo, the Committee very much appreciates your evidence today, and I just remind you of the opening comments that I made as the Chair.

Mr DEMEO: Thank you, Mr Chairman, and again thanks for making the effort to be sitting regionally. We really appreciate it.

The CHAIR: Our pleasure.

Witness withdrew.