

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Electricity Supply for Electric Vehicles

Melbourne – Friday 13 February 2026

MEMBERS

Georgie Purcell – Chair

Richard Welch – Deputy Chair

John Berger

Gaelle Broad

Katherine Copsy

Moira Deeming

Tom McIntosh

Evan Mulholland

Sonja Terpstra

WITNESSES

Mike Fisher, Manager, City Planning and Sustainability, and

Renaë Walton, Principal Climate Officer, Port Phillip City Council; and

Sam Sampanthar, Head, Sustainable Futures, Knox City Council; and

Michael Oke, Unit Manager, Sustainability, Yarra City Council.

The CHAIR: I declare open the Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee's public hearing for the Inquiry into Electricity Supply for Electric Vehicles. Please ensure that mobile phones have been switched to silent and that background noise is minimised.

I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the Aboriginal peoples, the traditional custodians of the land we are gathered on today, and pay my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee or who are watching the broadcast of these proceedings. I also welcome any other members of the public watching via the live broadcast.

To kick off, we will just have committee members introduce themselves to you, and we will start with Mr Berger.

John BERGER: John Berger, Member for Southern Metro.

Tom McINTOSH: Tom McIntosh, Member for Eastern Victoria.

Richard WELCH: Richard Welch, Member for North-Eastern Metro.

The CHAIR: Georgie Purcell, Member for Northern Victoria.

Moira DEEMING: Moira Deeming, Member for Western Metro.

Gaëlle BROAD: Gaëlle Broad, Member for Northern Victoria.

Katherine COPSEY: Katherine Copey, Member for Southern Metropolitan.

The CHAIR: Thanks so much for being here today. All evidence taken is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during this hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same things, those comments may not be protected by this privilege.

Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament. All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following this hearing, and then transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

For the Hansard record, could you all please state your full names and the organisations you are appearing on behalf of.

Mike FISHER: Mike Fisher, Manager, City Planning and Sustainability, at the City of Port Phillip.

Renaë WALTON: Renaë Walter, Principal Climate Officer at the City of Port Phillip.

Sam SAMPANTHAR: Sam Sampanthar, Knox City Council.

Michael OKE: Michael Oke, Unit Manager, Sustainability, at Yarra City Council.

The CHAIR: Great. Thank you. We now welcome your opening comments but ask that they be kept to around 10 to 15 minutes maximum. I presume you will all be going separately, so it does not matter if you go slightly over. We just need to ensure plenty of time for discussion and questions.

Michael OKE: Firstly, thank you for inviting us today and for running this inquiry as well. Yarra council is strongly committed to transitioning to a zero-carbon municipality. As part of that we know that we need to accelerate the shift to electric vehicles, and our council is committed to increase options for EV charging across our city. You heard just before from the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances. We are part of the Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action. Rather than double up on what they have said, what we can provide is the local context for our experience in the City of Yarra.

As an inner-urban municipality we do have some unique challenges which are relevant to this committee. More than 80 per cent of our residents live in medium- or high-density dwellings. Often they are without the ability to charge in their homes. That challenge is exacerbated by the fact that 51 per cent of Yarra residents live in either private rental or social housing, again further limiting the opportunity to make infrastructure changes. We regularly hear from our community that they want to make the switch to EVs, but a recurring concern is that they do not feel they can now, because they are not sure they will be able to charge them. As you have probably heard, any non-EV bought now is likely to still be driving around in 15 to 20 years time. That really highlights the need to make that transition as soon as possible. I would say from the Yarra perspective there is certainly no one silver bullet where I am coming in saying, 'This is what needs to be done' – there are a multitude of actions, and that is where the state government can really play that leading coordination support role.

For us, one of the key challenges as mentioned is multi-unit dwellings. Being able to charge in your car park at your home is really important. The National Construction Code sets that all new dwellings will be EV ready, but what about the existing dwellings? They have limited power supply. There are high connection costs and complex governance arrangements. The state government can support through increased awareness, removing barriers, helping to reduce those up-front costs for those early adopters and reducing the high bar that is set for owners corporations for approval for sustainability works. For on-street EV charging, that really is the way to provide that confidence: 'If I buy an EV, I will be able to charge it.'

We need to support more fast charging stations to be rolled out quicker. We have supported the installation of three. They provide a backbone of fast charging but do have greater impacts on the network and also promote driving to charge, so increase driving across the municipality, and we need to reduce car trips in general. Associated with that, we need to see a wider spread of slow and medium chargers across the community, where cars are going to be sitting anyway, and they can also support network benefits. Pole-mounted chargers represent a really strong opportunity, and we are looking to install 20 in Yarra by 30 June this year. We are really at the coalface of that. To support that rollout, we really need a wider uptake of this technology. It is a slower charge, so we need many more of them across the municipality to facilitate the benefits they provide. Support can include reducing the up-front costs, reducing the barriers, optimising the customer experience of these different providers and different chargers and ensuring that that technology helps to strengthen the electricity network. Lastly on that point, we also regularly receive requests from residents to access home-to-kerb charging – another great avenue for those that have it – but also with up-front costs and other barriers.

To summarise, we believe the state government can assist through developing a statewide EV charging strategy and implementation plan, which needs to incorporate a focus on equity in the way forward and also on sustainable transport strategies and link in with national directions and initiatives as well; ensuring strong engagement from the local government sector – we are on the ground, we are delivering these works, we are dealing with parking, we are a really key facilitator; playing a coordination role, especially with DNSPs, as I am sure you have heard, as well as with the wider sector; and lastly, providing funding and assistance – a lot of what we are talking about is the early adoption of new technologies. That support can help to get this mainstreamed and then can take it on from there.

Sam SAMPANTHAR: Thank you, Chair; and thank you to the committee members for the opportunity to speak today. I am here on behalf of Knox City Council to share our recent experience with the rollout of public EV charging through licence agreements with charge point operators, or CPOs. In doing so, I want to highlight one particular issue affecting metropolitan councils, an issue which, if resolved, could open many more suitable locations for new charging stations across metro Melbourne. I would also like to acknowledge the important work of the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, and Knox is part of the eastern greenhouse alliance, whose submission to this inquiry addresses a broader set of matters that we lend support to.

I would like to start off with some background and context. Knox is based in Melbourne's east, covering suburbs such as Bayswater, Boronia, Ferntree Gully, Rowville, Lysterfield, Knoxfield, Scoresby and Wantirna.

The municipality spans over 114 square kilometres and is home to 162,000 residents. Despite having the Belgrave train line servicing the north-east of the city, residents rely heavily on private vehicles. Over 90 per cent of the trips in Knox are made by car, making on-road transport a major contributor to local carbon emissions. Expanding the EV charging network is a key action identified in the *Climate Response Plan* for Knox, as it helps our community transition to electric vehicles and supports efforts to reduce carbon emissions. In a survey conducted by council last year, 25 per cent of EV drivers said they use public chargers at least once a week. While many drivers in Knox will have access to home charging, public charging still plays a vital role, we believe. This includes visitors to Knox, renters or people living in apartments without access to home charging. This highlights why accessible public charging is essential for the community.

Knox's first public charger was opened at Knox Civic Centre in April 2019. Nearly six years later, there are now 32 public charging bays available in the City of Knox. These chargers are both privately owned and council owned, and include both fast DC charging and slower AC charging. In June 2025, council adopted the *Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Policy* to guide the sustainable expansion and operation of EV charging stations on council-owned or managed land. The policy also identifies council preferred sites for additional charging infrastructure to be rolled out in the future. The sites identified are usually within local shopping centres, often next to major arterial roads across Knox. It is important to emphasise that council is not aiming to install fast chargers itself. The policy simply identifies council-owned or managed car parks where private charge point operators can install and operate chargers at their own cost under a licence agreement from council.

This model allows council to support EV charging expansion without the need for council to fund installation or ongoing operational costs. In the last three years, we have seen nine charging bays installed on council land, all fully funded by charge point operators under a licence from council. However, during this licensing process, we encountered an issue that prevented us being able to install chargers in several key local shopping centres, because some or all of the car park is within the arterial road reserve. This barrier is preventing chargers from being rolled out in some of Knox's most strategic and high-value locations for EV charging. This issue relates specifically to urban arterial roads in metro Melbourne, so it does not apply to regional Victoria.

Local governments cannot enter into licence agreements with third parties like charge point operators on these arterial road reserves. This is despite councils being the responsible road authority for these car parks and carrying out key functions including lane marking, resurfacing, maintenance and repairs, and parking enforcement. So there is a mismatch: councils manage and maintain these car parks, but do not have the authority to licence parking bays for EV charging installations. The advice we have received from the Department of Transport and Planning is that arterial roads are Crown land, and the Head, Transport for Victoria is the coordinating road authority for arterial roads. Leasing and licensing powers for any part of the arterial road reserve can only be carried out by the coordinating road authority, as outlined in the *Road Management Act 2004*. To our knowledge, it appears there is no process in place to facilitate licence agreements with charge point operators and local governments.

The discussions that council officers have had with a number of charge point operators indicate that they have avoided these car parks in metro Melbourne due to this issue. It is estimated that Knox has over 500 car parking bays in local shopping centres, including car parks in Studfield, Knoxfield, Wantirna South, Mountain Gate and Wantirna Mall, where charging stations are not able to be installed under the licensing model that council has identified as our preferred way forward. This represents a missed opportunity for those that live near these shopping centres, particularly those that live in apartments.

We consider that there may be a number of potential options that could unlock these sites for future EV charging stations. The first of these is for the Department of Transport and Planning to transfer the licensing function to councils on a case-by-case basis, with the consent of the Head, Transport for Victoria. Transfer of functions already occurs for activities like mowing parts of the arterial road. The second option could be for changes to the relevant legislation, so that councils, as a responsible road authority, have the power to enter into licence agreements with charge point operators in urban arterial roads. Another option could be for the Department of Transport and Planning to consider a licence directly with the charge point operators, similar to arrangements that already exist for certain advertising on bus shelters. This is not council's preferred option, as it would introduce complexity to the management arrangements to these car parks.

In summary, EV charging in accessible locations is essential to help the community shift to more sustainable transport options. This work supports council's goal to reach net zero by 2040. Major arterial roads with car parks on road reserves are currently inaccessible for privately owned and operated EV charging infrastructure. We are strongly advocating for changes that would allow councils to licence EV charging infrastructure on car parks that councils already manage. Unlocking this capability would enable up to six new charging sites in Knox alone. Thank you for your time.

Mike FISHER: Thank you for the opportunity today to speak to you. It is great to be here with the representatives of Knox city and Yarra, and also following submissions of the greenhouse gas alliance and SECCCA. Thank you. We will take our submission as read, but I have a few comments to make before we can take questions.

Along with our strong focus on growing active travel and public transport usage, the City of Port Phillip has a clear intent to support our residents in the shift to electric vehicles. As a densely populated inner metro council with a high number of multi-unit dwellings and limited off-street parking, Port Phillip faces some unique challenges as the progression to installation of EV charging infrastructure continues. We are working on a number of initiatives for EV charging, with the trends in EV ownership predicting upwards of 11,000 EVs in Port Phillip within the next five years. Stronger partnerships with the state government, council, utility providers and EV charging providers are crucial for successfully realising our aims for EV uptake in our city. Providing chargers that are easily accessible during the day to manage peak demand and support grid stability is critical, as well as ensuring that the sector continues to develop and innovate to make it simple for consumers to access the charging infrastructure.

We see an opportunity for state government to play a strong role in negotiating with utility supply companies to enable market share and choice for consumers. The state could also support local government with clear guidance and tools to be able to work through planning and building issues with home owners and developers; provide support particularly in our area in marine and coastal Crown land, with a clear process to follow allowing for the installation of more charging infrastructure on that land; and support the retrofitting of existing apartments.

The City of Port Phillip was also the first council in Victoria to permit the installation of privately owned chargers on public land. The process to enable this pilot took more than four years, and this timeline could have been reduced with greater guidance from the state regarding regulations. Council encourages the state to rectify this by looking at standardising safety regulations regarding the devices that enable this option for dense inner city municipalities where off-street parking is limited. Thank you again for the opportunity. It is great to be here with the team.

The CHAIR: Great. Thank you so much. We will kick off with questions. Members, we are going to have to keep right on time for these ones, please, so if you could keep it as tight as possible. We will start with Mr McIntosh.

Tom McINTOSH: Great. I am loving what we are hearing at Knox. Clear asks – it is really good. You said there are something like 500 bays that could have EV chargers put in, and you have put in nine on council sites. What sort are they? Slow, fast – what sort of kilowatt chargers are they? I know you are leaving it to the charge point operator, but what has been going in?

Sam SAMPANTHAR: Just to clarify, there are 500 bays that are in road reserves, not necessarily 500 chargers.

Tom McINTOSH: Because then at the end you said six or nine could be done.

Sam SAMPANTHAR: There are six car parks within Knox that are in local shopping centres that have this issue where we cannot licence them out because they are in road reserves. In terms of the nine that we have installed, all nine are DC fast chargers. When we say 'we', it is under a licence, so they are rolled out by charge point operators. All are fast chargers: 25-kilowatt and 75-kilowatt speeds.

Tom McINTOSH: Okay, sure. That is your focus going forward, to stay with those high, fast chargers?

Sam SAMPANTHAR: The focus is more around getting charging into those local shopping centres. We sort of see two roles for it. One is obviously bringing drivers to those centres so they can shop locally, buy a coffee or buy from some of our beautiful bakeries in Knox, and also servicing the people that live around there. Often these shopping centres are in local activity centres with a higher proportion of renters and apartments, so we see a sort of double benefit for that.

Tom McINTOSH: Great. Obviously you will have had much higher home charging possibility infrastructure, unlike Yarra. However, with Yarra, I just wanted to flag, we heard yesterday that the average car will drive 30 k's in Victoria. It is probably going to be at the very much lower end in Yarra, so they might be charging maybe even once a fortnight. Even leaving aside any government support for it, if we are looking at the investment – and it is good that you raised the National Construction Code, because it has not been raised yet – and if we are looking at upgrading existing homes and infrastructure, particularly for the inner city where they are not necessarily going to charge that frequently, it is not exactly apples and apples, but getting the public charging infrastructure may actually be the most economic model for people who charge infrequently. And if you are trying to get charging infrastructure into old buildings – I am just interested in your view. I understand it would be nice to charge at home, but maybe the best economic model with people who do not charge frequently is public charging.

Michael OKE: Yes, and I think that is where Yarra is in a way – and I think probably Port Phillip as well. It is quite complex in the multitude of different ways that occurs because there is not a lot of existing off-street parking capacity but with the number of existing high multi-unit dwellings that we have, they are driving into the car parks and they are leaving their car overnight. So as far as charging at home, charging within the capacity of the car park it is in can add to the grid's stability and support charging off our roads and reduce congestion going out to car parks specifically to charge. So I think there is a real opportunity and a real benefit to looking at the existing multi-unit dwellings and apartments we have and ways that we can get more charging into those. As far as the other dwellings and on-street charging goes, certainly that is a real focus for us. As I said, there is the backbone of fast charging, giving the confidence that I will be able to charge if I need to. But it is still not the best way for the grid, and it is still not the best way for your car, which like you suggest, is often sitting outside or near your house for a large percentage of the time. It is often a slow charge, so you will want it to be there for a few hours. What that means is you need quite a few of them. We are looking to put in 20 that are distributed across our municipality. That is a drop in the ocean compared to what we see in some other countries and what we probably need to see to have the confidence that you can charge your car while it is sitting there otherwise.

Tom McINTOSH: Something we have not talked about yet – this will raise a few eyebrows – is autonomous vehicles. In somewhere like the City of Yarra, if they hit our roads, I could imagine that private car ownership would plummet over time. But I do not know if you have put any thought or forward-looking to that.

Michael OKE: It is certainly interesting. It comes up a lot. I think one of the things I would say is we have got some solutions in front of us right now. We do not want to misstep and put a whole lot of energy and effort into solutions that are not going to be viable in a short number of years to come perhaps. That is where I think a coordinated strategy can help to incorporate that. But for us, we are really focused on what we can do now to support our residents right now.

Tom McINTOSH: Thank you, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Mr McIntosh – perfect timing. We will go to Mr Welch.

Richard WELCH: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, everyone, for coming in this morning and for your presentations. Given that we are tight on time, I will focus on where I think the best information we would hunt for is and it is around the DNS fees and the complexities and the negotiations. Could you illuminate us a little bit more about what the actual complexities you are experiencing are and whatever diagnosis you have of that?

Renaë WALTON: I am happy to talk to that. We have had a number of locations across our city identified as potential pole-charging locations by our community, so there has been community demand and a request for us to investigate. When those investigations were done by the pole-mounted charging providers, less than 25 per cent of those 150 identified poles were potentially available for pole-mounted charging.

Richard WELCH: Sorry, could you explain? So you proposed these poles; they said ‘Only these ones’ – is that what you are saying?

Renae WALTON: Correct. And there was a lack of transparency around, potentially, why those poles were unacceptable. I am also aware that there were significant challenges with the licensing fees or the permitting fees that the DNSPs were potentially going to be charging the charge point operators to put those chargers on the poles. Of course the charge point operators are looking for the best economical outcome from their perspective; we are looking for the best outcome for our community. That is what I understand, not being intricately involved in those conversations. We are involved in permitting the car parking location for where those charge points are.

Richard WELCH: Right. Any other –

Michael OKE: I might add to that. It is certainly a very similar experience in Yarra. I think one of the things that we have found – we are working with our provider at the moment, looking at putting in pole-mounted chargers as part of the waiver that they have at the moment. That is certainly highlighting the real benefit of working hand in hand and having the DNSP as a key stakeholder. There are issues around how many poles in Yarra actually have enough capacity, but CitiPower has the technology to utilise what is there to support grid stability and charging when it is optimal. I guess that highlights for us that there is technology that can use this to support the grid and the DNSPs have really good access to knowledge and information, but at the moment each council is working individually, trying to have these conversations, trying to pave their way. It is really complex, and it is really time consuming. It is time consuming for us, and it is time consuming for them. A coordinated role would really assist. Something that would assist us and assist for the pole-mounted charging but also for apartments and others that need to do upgrades is knowing where those areas of network constraints are. Can we get access to the information ahead of the work that goes out to the community to say, ‘There’s no power in this local network, so let’s not work through options there other than with those that can provide it in that area?’ I think that is a simple way, or not simple necessarily but it is a way, where the state government as a controlling, supporting body for the DNSPs can have influence to say, ‘What can you do to make sure that information is available to the to the sector?’ That then means we are not wasting their time constantly going and saying, ‘Tell us about this pole. Tell us about this pole. Tell us about this pole.’ We are not wasting our time, and it is more transparent.

Richard WELCH: I have got a minute left. Excellent. We will see how we go with this. We have heard a lot about the problems. Unfortunately, we need to hear the other side of the argument on what the complexities for them are, because there will always be two sides to this debate. But I often wonder about the alignment of interests in that it is not cost effective for them to make that pole available either, because of grid constraint reasons or some other infrastructure rationale to it, so getting their interests to align with your interests and with the community’s interests ultimately comes back to an economic interest, whether that is more flexibility in the way pricing works or something else that aligns interests. Do you have any views on that? Would you support variable pricing, pole to pole?

Michael OKE: Just from the Yarra perspective I think variable pricing is a real opportunity, especially for the middle of the day. The sun is shining –

Tom McINTOSH: Sorry. Are you talking about for DNSPs pricing or the pricing we charge to customers?

Richard WELCH: Through the whole value proposition, basically. There is the infrastructure part, there is the retailing part and there is the supply part, so all three of those could be up for grabs. You could actually get to an equilibrium. Sorry, Chair.

Michael OKE: Just quickly to talk to that last bit, the variable pricing for the consumer for being able to access energy that is cheaper when we want to fill those batteries full of energy is certainly a really useful tool that can –

Richard WELCH: I am going a couple of steps back up the value chain.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Mr Welch. We will go to Mrs Deeming.

Moira DEEMING: Thank you; and thank you, everybody, for coming in. Please excuse my voice. It is a bit croaky. I think it was Yarra City Council that I noticed recommended that we look into the success of the UK government in helping local authorities to develop policies on safe and effective use of cross-pavement solutions. Can you tell us a bit more about that?

Michael OKE: Yes. Cross-pavement solutions are for those that have the capacity to park their car outside their house but not on their own land. They do not have off-street parking. How can they charge their car and get across that pavement? This is a solution that has been trialled in Port Phillip. Merri-bek council is trialling a boom solution. There are a lot of different solutions out there, but there are a lot of up-front costs, a lot of learnings and a lot of barriers. In the UK a couple of things that they have done that are in those reports is the government there has produced a lot of work to help councils to overcome that. How do I step forward? What is the way forward? What are the barriers? What can we overcome? It is a bit of a how-to guide. There are 79 Victorian local governments. Each of us trying to do this individually is hard and complex. Secondly, they provide funding for the local governments to support it, and they provide funding for the for the home owner, for the resident, to cover or support the high up-front cost at the moment. As I said before, in a technology we will often see the costs come down over time, but early adoption also supports the market going forward.

Moira DEEMING: On that – and this might be a little bit out of scope, but just your best guess because you have all been looking into it – I was just thinking about how fast this actual area of technology is developing, and obviously I am very worried about the cost of pouring money into any sort of hardware that may then be developed more cheaply and better with not-so-distant future technology. Anyway, I could be wrong. I was just wondering what your experience is. What have you heard about the pace of development in these kinds of solutions?

Michael OKE: I might take the first crack again, just because you were talking to me. Absolutely, it is really moving very, very fast, and it is evolving quickly, and again all of us at council are trying to keep up with that, which is a process in itself that could be supported with coordination. What I know in Yarra is that a huge number of our residents cannot charge on their premises – cannot charge at home – or they can if they get that into their multi-unit dwellings. The multi-unit dwellings are moving really quickly and in a way whereby they can charge in a slow way with a power point that is added to their bays so it fits in with the amount of power they have. They can support the charger of their car. I guess fast charging is not as good for the battery and then also it does not have that power draw. So some of those solutions are coming through. I think that is where we see the pole-mounted charging – some of the ones in multi-unit dwellings – is not going to go away. It is the charging where the car is anyway and supporting that to be charged at that time. So, yes, it is good to keep an eye on it, but I think a lot of the technologies we have in front of us –

Moira DEEMING: There are some basic things that we can invest in safely. My other question is: I was thinking about the recyclable element of all these things. We have had problems with recycling solar panels and wind turbines, and obviously batteries are going to be an issue. I was speaking to some people who have a private company, and they are interested in getting involved in it. They were talking about how in Victoria we really lack the skilled workforce and also the infrastructure and the facilities that would be able to, at scale, do this kind of recycling, even though overseas in Europe and in some places in China they are doing quite well. I was just wondering: has that been thought about or is that part of the discussions? Are there any developments there?

Sam SAMPANTHAR: I think it is probably more the opportunities in repurposing the battery into other uses. In terms of the support I think, yes, definitely there are skills and capability that need to be built up. I do not think we will see the quantum and the numbers of batteries that are at that end-of-life stage for many more years yet, but it is worth being on top of that before it actually becomes an issue.

Moira DEEMING: And they are very, very difficult and sometimes dangerous batteries, in terms of even just as waste. So if we are going to have such a big scale of them, I would love to know that we are planning well for the end-of-life cycle.

Michael OKE: Get in early.

Moira DEEMING: Yes. Anyway, I just wanted to hear about that, but my time is up so I am happy to take it on notice. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Mrs Deeming. We will go to Ms Copsey.

Katherine COPSEY: Thank you. I would love to talk a bit more about multi-unit developments and the technological challenges that they face and if there is stuff that the state government in particular can do to help overcome technological barriers like switch upgrades and so on. What barriers are units running into? Are they related to planning law or is it around owner corporations and issues such as buy-in from everyone in the building?

Mike FISHER: I think from our point of view, and Renae has been working more deeply on some of this, there is probably a range of issues. There is some planning and building, there is the owners corporation and there are some fire regulations. There are a number of things that start to add up when someone is looking at it. I live in an apartment and have the similar thing where people say, 'Oh, it's too hard.' We will go and investigate it, but we get to a point where we just cannot continue or it becomes another barrier. I think what we are looking to do is that additional support with the state to say, 'How do we bring together our local knowledge and what we are doing with private and what we can do with the charging companies. Can we pilot something? Can we start something and tackle some of these barriers to start reducing them?' Acknowledging we have got partners across the inner metro, particularly within the same situation, we can start to roll these out at scale, because we need to start and we want to tackle some of these. I think it is that partnership that we need to be able to get started, really.

Michael OKE: I will add, I think, that there is a multitude of issues, and one of the things we are trying to do is coordinate amongst ourselves and with ourselves through M9 and through other opportunities. We are working on a program at the moment to engage with multi-unit developments of different sizes and complexities to help them overcome that first barrier, which is 'What can I do? What actually is it? What is the barrier to me doing it?' And I guess that is where the industry has said back to us, 'Jeez, it would have been great if this was occurring a year or two ago.' So I think one element is that each multi-unit dwelling is unique and different in its solutions, but certainly looking at limited power supply so that the comments before around, 'Can we be more up-front around what the limited supply is' – how to get that information, how to move it forward. There is the cost to do the work and who that falls on. These are works that are being put in now but then will benefit forever, so can some of that be supported? Then there are some of the governance arrangements, especially with owners corporations. At the moment there is a bar of 75 per cent of an owners corporation needed to approve a sustainability change. In other areas we have seen that being reduced to 50, because that is a very high bar for what in many respects we know should be occurring. So they are some of the things that I think can occur.

Katherine COPSEY: Great. Thank you. I am interested in your views on some evidence we heard yesterday around barriers, real or perceived, around heritage requirements and how we balance between heritage preservation and also providing infrastructure that is necessary for tech that people are going to be using for the next 30 or 50 years. Is this a serious barrier in your council's experience? I know it varies area to area. How are you balancing it currently? Is it real or perceived, and does it need to change in terms of state guidance to help you strike that balance more easily?

Renae WALTON: I am happy to discuss the issues. We actually have not come across issues when it comes to the installation of the privately owned charging stations that have been installed on public land, which is, I guess, the difference that Port Phillip has to a lot of other councils in Victoria. Residents have to go through a planning permit process for that and as yet we have not had any rejected from a heritage perspective. There were a lot of conversations with the inventor of that product prior to ensure that it was sympathetic to the landscape. Merri-bek may have other opinions based on their pilot that they are currently going through in terms of installation of a boom arm. But again, Michael has mentioned the gully in the pavement, which is another option that the City of Port Phillip are potentially going to look at. That is another quite sympathetic option, not really seen. Heritage, as you have mentioned, is different in each municipality.

Michael OKE: From the Yarra perspective certainly on EV chargers, we are probably not at that point yet, apart from the boom. We are not looking at putting that in areas with a heritage overlay because that would contravene it, basically. It is a real barrier in Yarra, heritage, and it is also a perceived barrier that can be overcome, so it is a bit of both. We have certainly seen that through solar panels. Heritage in Yarra is really important to us. It is part of the fabric of the city that we are living in that we want to continue with. But we also need to provide that ongoing support. So it is one that is more than just a perceived barrier. We have constantly

heard from people they wanted to put up solar panels, but did not believe they would be able to, or we had to say 'No, put it in a more sensitive area.' We are working on provision at the moment to overcome that, as well as the time it takes to do that work. So when we have seen barrier after barrier after barrier, it becomes another barrier to not do it.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Ms Copsey. We will go to Mr Berger.

John BERGER: Thank you, Chair, and thank you all for your appearance today. I think I might direct this one to you, Mike. In relation to the *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*, what are the main barriers for Port Phillip?

Mike FISHER: Effectively – and I will work with Renae here a little bit – we have obviously that marine land, and some of the operators are looking at how they can use that opportunity in some of those car parks along that land to put in charging infrastructure. It is the permissions and working through the requirements. We are looking for that proactive approach, I think, from the state to say, 'Here are some areas that we think are suitable,' so that we can go away and work with those providers, as opposed to having to go through and navigate the multitude of permissions that we might have to do. Again, it becomes a barrier to progressing that.

John BERGER: So it predominantly just applies to the coastal side of it? If I look at Port Melbourne, say Bay Street, and then do 200 metres back in, you might hit some parking that is over the back where some parkland is. Does it apply there?

Mike FISHER: No; it is coastal land. I am not sure how far back it goes in terms of – is it 200?

Renae WALTON: Yes. One of the issues with the *Marine and Coastal Act* land is that the charge point operators have come to us and identified locations that are obviously economically viable for them. For us it is a destination parking location – so people will come, they will charge and they will enjoy the local area. On navigating the marine and coastal consent process, any infrastructure put within that area should benefit or should be sympathetic to the landscape. Some would say electric vehicle chargers do not necessarily fit in that sphere, so assistance with navigating the process, and as Mike has mentioned, identifying certain locations where the state would be comfortable with the installation of those would benefit Port Phillip and the people wanting to use chargers in those locations.

John BERGER: Thanks. That is all I had, Chair.

The CHAIR: Great. Thanks, Mr Berger. We will go to Mrs Broad.

Gaëlle BROAD: Thank you very much. I appreciate all of you presenting today. We have heard the word 'transparency' used, and I think it would be very helpful to be transparent on the costs involved. I am interested in the cost generally but also the cost being borne by council in this work. I think for Bendigo their experience of a power upgrade was between \$30,000 and \$100,000. I also read that the verification process with the DNSP I think cost council \$100,000 in one example. The cost of a fast charger and the cost of a slow charger – you guys have installed them, so can you give a summary of the different costs involved?

Sam SAMPANTHAR: I can have a go at that. Certainly getting power to a charger is often the costliest component. While the nine chargers that I mentioned earlier were not installed by council, we do have experience and have heard some figures bandied about in terms of the installation. The slow chargers that have been talked about previously could be anywhere from \$10,000 to \$15,000 to fully install and operate or at least to install the charger. But for fast chargers we are starting at \$50,000, and I have heard figures as high as \$250,000 to get power to those sites. They can be quite expensive depending on the number of charging bays that you are going to be installing.

Gaëlle BROAD: That is the cost of the charger plus the power upgrade, provided it is permissible. What about the cost to upgrade a multi-unit development? I did read that in Yarra 51 per cent of residents live in private rentals or rented social housing, and 90 per cent of dwellings in Port Phillip are semi-detached terraced homes or apartments. What is the cost of upgrading a multi-unit complex?

Michael OKE: I would not have exact figures. I think in my experience it is really unique to the size of the building – the power constraints it has, what its needs are, what the upgrades are and what you are looking to do. Certainly, a bit like Sam was mentioning, the cost is often around how much power you are looking to get

in and how much is available at the moment. Do they need a new kiosk? Do they need a new switchboard? What are those sorts of elements for EV charging?

Gaelle BROAD: Ballpark, you do not know?

Renaë WALTON: I cannot guess either. I do know that the federal government are currently providing funding through an ARENA grant for the upgrade of apartment complexes, and I know that the City of Port Phillip has had –

Gaelle BROAD: How much is a grant for that?

Renaë WALTON: That would be a question for those providers that are delivering that service – upgrades et cetera.

Gaelle BROAD: Okay. And just the verification process – the cost was \$100,000 on a council for one. What has been the cost borne by council?

Renaë WALTON: For apartments?

Gaelle BROAD: No, no, not apartments, just on a standard fast charge station.

Renaë WALTON: All the costs, for our point of view, are from the charge point operator, so they pay all of those costs. For council it is staff and officer time.

Gaelle BROAD: Yes, okay. And what do you think the cost has been on councils? I was part of the local council sustainability inquiry, which looked at a lot of costs that were moving onto councils. In a way I think it is interesting councils are so involved in this space because it is talking about power supply in a way. Why is it that councils have got so involved? What is the state's role that you see in this and what is the cost that you are bearing, having to drive – excuse the pun – in this area?

Mike FISHER: From Port Phillip's point of view there is the cost. We have the facilitation. We have obviously our strategies and community intent to shift to EVs and provide this infrastructure. We are not directly building these things, but we are facilitating that. And so the work we are doing in the team is to work out the policies and mechanisms to ensure that that can happen. I think the same with the private chargers. That has been a lot of the work we have had to do in the back as to how we navigate the internal referrals, the flooding, all of those things.

Gaelle BROAD: Can I just ask, because I know time is short, but with Port Phillip you did a pilot program. How much did that cost or what did you need to run that program?

Renaë WALTON: It was predominantly officer time, so there have been some back of the envelope-type calculations of more than \$100,000 to get that pilot working, in officer time. That has resulted in a groundbreaking pilot. It was 16 when we put in our submission; we have had at least 20 installations now and absolutely no complaints from the community. We have had residents who are coming to the council chamber and shouting from the rooftops about how it has really made charging for them incredibly accessible. So in terms of officer time, it was, yes, significant. And now we run it on a permitting process where it is a cost recovery for the investment of time that we are doing for the permitting process, which is now taking an hour or so.

Michael OKE: As far as apartment costs again, one of the costs to be borne is around the cost to find out what you need to do. So that might be \$5000 to \$10,000 to actually get an assessment done of your premises to say what the costs are that need to come. That will include looking at the electricity supply and the needs. The other thing I will say is – and I took your question more around the costs of an electricity supply upgrade – a lot of the works do not need that to occur. So the new technology can modulate to allow it to work within the capacity of the electricity that is available. It can move it to different cars that are plugged in at different times. And that might be in the order of, I am hearing, \$1500 to, I do not know, maybe \$5000 – probably less, but from \$1500 up per single car bay to have that actual technology put in. The scale can be quite different because there are different elements and different technologies that come with it.

Sam SAMPANTHAR: Just in terms of that question about why councils, we do manage quite a lot of car parks within our city, so we are probably the largest landholder of car parks. And in terms of the skill upskilling, there is a huge network that we could tap into so that we do not make the same mistakes. So that has been a great advantage for us to be able to do. There are quite a few colleagues here. We are part of a network, and we ring up each other and say, 'How did you deal with this?' We are not then having to repeat that mistake. So certainly we are very conscious about our role and not wanting to be playing in that private space. Enabling parking spaces for charging to happen in our cities I think is our role.

Gaelle BROAD: Great.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I will go quickly. I think you have briefly touched on this talking about apartment living, but something that we spoke about quite a bit yesterday was charging options for renters, which I imagine is probably a significant issue across all of your councils. Is there anything else that you think could be done to encourage and facilitate uptake for renters as well, beyond sort of insulation in apartment buildings and things like that? Or is it something councils have considered? Is it one of the barriers, do you think, in your areas having a higher renting population?

Mike FISHER: I think we are trying to look at a spectrum of things, not one thing. I know from my personal experience in apartment renting I cannot get the body corporate to, but pole-mounted chargers in the local neighbourhood and having them rolled out is going to support that rental population, because effectively it is not always going to happen with the strata and the body corporate. We are looking at a spectrum of interventions. I think we have started here with the doors opening to poles and these private chargers. We do not know what will come next. But we have a large rental population, so we need to keep looking at these things. Having the policy enablement to keep going effectively is really critical for us.

Michael OKE: I would agree. The wide spectrum of opportunities – being able to charge where your car is, whether that is in your multi-unit car park in that situation or on a pole near where you are renting – is probably going to be the simplest way to have that confidence as a renter that you will be able to charge your car.

Sam SAMPANTHAR: Knox do not have the same level of rentals as these two councils, but our focus is trying to get charging stations in local activity centres so that it helps with that.

The CHAIR: Great. We have got very limited time. I know Mr McIntosh really wants to ask a question, so I will give up some of my time.

Tom McINTOSH: Yes, a very, very quick one – historically have councils worked in the planning space of petrol stations and approvals?

Mike FISHER: Yes.

Tom McINTOSH: Would you be able to quantify the total cost of that to LGAs across Victoria? Or would it just be deemed that consumers need to transport from A to B, so council have helped assist with planning for the needs of moving their vehicles?

Mike FISHER: In terms of that facilitation of that infrastructure, council has always – or for a long time – played a role since there have been petrol stations.

Tom McINTOSH: So private investors built the petrol stations and councils helped facilitate that?

Mike FISHER: Yes, councils will have a permitting role, and particularly looking at our strategic planning and where things are located, those will also come to pass.

Tom McINTOSH: Councils are continuing to enable private infrastructure to meet community needs; now we will just have EV charging instead of or additional to petrol stations. That is very enlightening. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Great. That is about all we have time for, so we might cap it there. If members have other questions, they can submit to them to you on notice through the committee staff. Thank you so much for taking the time to appear before us today and answer our questions. That concludes the public hearing.

Witnesses withdrew.