

# TRANSCRIPT

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into Recycling and Waste Management

Melbourne—Tuesday, 22 October 2019

#### MEMBERS

Mr Cesar Melhem—Chair

Mr Clifford Hayes—Deputy Chair

Mr Bruce Atkinson

Ms Melina Bath

Mr Jeff Bourman

Mr David Limbrick

Mr Andy Meddick

Dr Samantha Ratnam

Ms Nina Taylor

Ms Sonja Terpstra

#### PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Ms Georgie Crozier

Dr Catherine Cumming

Mr David Davis

Mr Tim Quilty

**WITNESSES**

Cr Natalie Abboud, Mayor, and

Ms Karen Davies, Manager, Roads, Fleet and Waste, Moreland City Council.

**The CHAIR:** I would like to welcome our next witnesses from the City of Moreland: Mayor Abboud and Karen Davies. Thank you very much for making yourselves available today. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you give today is protected by law. However, any comments repeated outside this hearing may not be protected. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the Committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament. All the evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript in the next few days. I think you witnessed the last hearing, so we allow about 5 minutes as it is only one council and then will go to questions. The Committee members are shrinking, which is good. Who would like to start?

**Ms DAVIES:** Bear with me a second. I have made copious notes.

**The CHAIR:** That is all right. We did receive your submission, so if you want to take us through some of the highlights from that. Hang on. That is the wrong one.

**Ms DAVIES:** I was going to say, I am not aware that we put a submission in.

**The CHAIR:** Sorry. We do have one. It is submission 496.

**Ms DAVIES:** Well, that is extremely embarrassing because I have not seen the submission.

**The CHAIR:** Someone else wrote it then.

**Cr ABOUD:** Actually I asked for it this morning and was told there is not one. We are in between CEOs.

**Ms DAVIES:** All right. We will just go with the flow.

**Mr HAYES:** Just for your information, that is it.

**Cr ABOUD:** I know that I will recognise it all, but it is good to have a copy, so thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Anyway, fire away. You do not have to stick to it. The reason I was saying we have got your submission is that a lot of the information is in the system. That will be taken as evidence as well. But please talk to us about the particular points you want to make and then we will have questions and answers, and I am sure we can cover pretty much everything.

**Ms DAVIES:** Yes. Excellent.

**Cr ABOUD:** Go with your presentation, and I will see if you have left anything out.

**Ms DAVIES:** Fantastic. It sounds good to me. What we did was we wanted to respond to the terms of reference that were provided. In terms of the first one, 'the responsibility of the Victorian Government to establish and maintain a coherent, efficient and environmentally responsible approach to solid waste management across the state, including assistance to local councils', we do agree that it is their responsibility. That does not mean we negate responsibility entirely as a council, but we definitely believe that it sits with the State Government and then obviously we are required to implement it.

The next point was around the China Sword policy and was it anticipated and was it responded to properly. We know that the rate of contamination was reduced and the quantities reduced and that was what caused it. We believe the sorters—meaning your Visys et cetera of the world—could not meet the contamination levels and then it fell back on councils and ultimately residents to actually meet that. We knew about the China Sword policy 18 months prior to its implementation. However, it really feels like no-one did anything about it. The

processors did not seem to act. Perhaps people thought China was not serious. But the general consensus and feeling was that there was nothing done in anticipation of it.

Point 3 is around identifying short and long-term solutions to the recycling and waste management system crisis, taking into account for a start the dangerous stockpiling. I will go through each point. Although the State cannot change the market, we do ask the question: should the EPA and other agencies have done something about auditing the stockpiles and the approach before it reached the level it did? By the way, everybody, I am sure there is nothing new here, and if you have got any questions at any point, feel free to jump in.

The sorting was not the real issue for us. It is the market and where to sell it. So we could source it, but then we would have bales of product—and what do we do with that?—as SKM did, unfortunately. It is not our primary business to do that. However, with Cleanaway buying SKM it will make it harder for smaller players to enter the market in the future, and that is one of our concerns at present.

**Dr RATNAM:** Sorry to interrupt. You are with Visy, is that right?

**Ms DAVIES:** We are, yes.

**Dr RATNAM:** So were you materially affected by the crisis? Were there flow-on impacts for your contract negotiations?

**Ms DAVIES:** There always is in any contract; the market gets smaller. Like any company or business it is their job to make money and they will take the opportunity to try and make that money.

**Dr RATNAM:** So you had to recontract with an increased price?

**Ms DAVIES:** We have not right now, no.

We believe that legislation can assist in the use of recycled materials in manufacturing. Whether you use a carrot or stick approach is the question. For example, you could tax or you could give tax breaks or you could legislate. But we would love to see some support in that realm. Moreland is a council that fully supports zero waste to landfill and zero carbon emissions.

**Cr ABOUD:** And just to stress that, in 2018 we adopted our waste and litter strategy, and one of the goals is that we will achieve zero waste to landfill by 2030. We are very ambitious about our waste targets. Before the China Sword stuff happened that was really determining our position in terms of the way that we treat waste in the city and the way that we perceive even usage from before it gets to the stage where it is waste. That sort of feeds into some of the stuff that we have opinions about, like waste to energy: that rather than continuing to use whatever we feel we need to or want to, the best idea would be to aim for a reduction because we do not feel confident that waste-to-energy projects are as safe as they need to be for them to be rolled out.

I have asked a lot of questions. I went to the launch of the feasibility of the Australian Paper-Suez-Nippon project down south just to ask some questions about some of the by-products—you know, the furans and dioxins and heavy chemicals that are produced when you burn waste. I have also asked questions about the gasification project up in Lara, just mostly because there is an implication that those projects need a huge amount of waste rather than looking at reducing or closing the loop in terms of how we re-use, you know, the conversations about how we repurpose recycled glass and everything that could be used from recycled plastic all the way up to the way that councils in their procurement policies insist on recycling—you know, ‘All of this stuff could be made of recycled plastic’. So we do have a zero waste to landfill goal by 2030. Sorry, Karen.

**Ms DAVIES:** No, that is fine.

Other points we would like to make are around a container deposit scheme. We are very enthusiastic about that and would fully support any move by the State Government and anyone else to implement that in Victoria. I think it is very unfortunate that we have not done it yet, and it would be wonderful if we could.

We are obviously a huge supporter of banning single-use plastics. We have an internal policy on this at Moreland, and that extends to some of our community events. We have not yet implemented our policy in the community.

**Cr ABBOUD:** The goal is to get to them all.

**Ms DAVIES:** Yes.

**Cr ABBOUD:** So at festivals and that sort of thing we are asking stallholders not to use single-use plastics, and all of our catering—we do not even use Glad wrap, we opt for foil.

**Ms TAYLOR:** Good on you.

**Cr ABBOUD:** And all of the plates are washable. We have this kind of ethic where it is okay to do the dishes. It is totally fine.

**Ms DAVIES:** A big fan of that. And use the water after on the plants. There you go.

**Cr ABBOUD:** I think it is about, you know, we have these aspirational goals but it needs to start with us. And if we are not walking the talk, then how can we try and put that stuff onto the rest of the community? So we are trying to be exemplars in this field of saying, 'This is how easy it is for it to be done and why it is so important'.

**Ms DAVIES:** With regard to Moreland's waste and litter strategy, we state that we have a zero waste to landfill target, and we also do not support thermal waste-to-energy, gasification, combustion and plasma rocks et cetera. There are two elements as to why we do not support these things. One is emissions; there are toxins that are emitted. And the second point is that they require the waste to generate the energy, so you then become reliant on the waste and it is no incentive to reduce the waste that is being generated and head towards that circular economy that we speak about. Infrastructure Australia is talking about six bins; it was mentioned recently.

**The CHAIR:** I think that was the ABC.

**Ms DAVIES:** Sorry, there we go—the ABC.

**The CHAIR:** They have denied that this morning. There is no 'six bins' in the report.

**Ms DAVIES:** No, no. There you go—do not believe everything you see in the press.

**The CHAIR:** Maybe four.

**Ms TAYLOR:** Wait, what?

**Ms DAVIES:** I know—shocking!

Listen, Moreland would be like anywhere; we struggle for space. We talked about multi-unit developments—as I heard the previous councils talking about—kerb space, high-density populations. It is an added cost to collections for the ratepayer. It has added emissions from multiple trucks et cetera, and also we need to really be looking at separation at source as well. The household is what we need to get back to, because commingling is a problem for us, and it invites audits from the sorters. It invites them to fine us or in some cases to refuse to take the loads.

**The CHAIR:** Just on that, help me through it. You said on the one hand you do not want to have additional bins because of the pressure or the costs to the environment of trucks going around, but on the other hand you said something about our needing to encourage people to do the separation at source.

**Ms DAVIES:** It is a huge catch 22. In an ideal world—

**The CHAIR:** It is how you separate glass from others. So can you expand on that?

**Ms DAVIES:** As you would probably notice by the accent, I am not from around here. I come from a little village in North Wales in the UK. Over in the UK they have a unique bin collection service.

**The CHAIR:** So IV went and interviewed you.

**Ms DAVIES:** You probably spoke to some of my relatives.

**The CHAIR:** They focus a fair bit on Wales in their report.

**Ms DAVIES:** I am from the county of Conwy in North Wales. We have four bins and three bags.

**The CHAIR:** Right, bags instead of bins.

**Mr DAVIS:** Seven.

**Ms DAVIES:** I have got a lovely video to show you, if you want to see it, from the Conwy council website. We can do that whenever you want. I have got it here on my laptop. Bear with me 1 minute; I will shoot it over.

**The CHAIR:** Okay, and then when it is ready we can play it.

**Dr RATNAM:** While we are doing that, can we ask the Mayor a question for the next couple of minutes?

**The CHAIR:** Sure.

**Dr RATNAM:** Can you run us through the system? You talked about zero waste to landfill by 2030. Can you talk to us about the systems you are using at the moment? How many bins, and how do you plan to get to zero waste to landfill by 2031? What are you doing to get there?

**Cr ABBOUD:** The first thing that we have which is a legitimate asset is the will of the people. That has been proven with a 1000-house food organics, green organics trial recently. It was an absolute roaring success so we have rolled that out.

**Dr RATNAM:** Three bins for organics and then landfill?

**Cr ABBOUD:** Yes, so we have a regular landfill bin; a green bin which is food organics, green organics, so anything from the garden and any kind of food, including meat; and recycling, which is commingled recycling.

**Dr RATNAM:** Fortnightly collections across the board?

**Cr ABBOUD:** Yes, which is set to change. At the moment the green bin is fortnightly, the regular bin is weekly and the recycling is fortnightly. What will happen is the green bin goes to weekly and the regular bin goes to fortnightly.

**Dr RATNAM:** Okay, so you are swapping that around. Great.

**Cr ABBOUD:** Because we know that 41 per cent of our waste stream is food and green organics, and we have actually got a scenario where that is going off to Veolia. It is being processed and we have literally had the first load dumped back at a local community garden as compost.

**The CHAIR:** That is the recycling and the organic bin. Now on the red bin or the waste bin—

**Cr ABBOUD:** The regular bin.

**The CHAIR:** the regular bin, I am interested in your comment that by 2030 that should not be going to landfill, and I like that. How will you deal with that? Where is that bin going to go? It has got recycled stuff, it has got a bit of everything. I just want to know what is—

**Cr ABBOUD:** At my house, we do not have three bins. We have more like six bins. The soft plastic goes back to REDcycle, and there are companies operating in the city—Reground is a good one—who are starting to

experiment with collecting soft plastic so that it can be repurposed and have a longer life as something productive rather—

**The CHAIR:** Who pays for that?

**Cr ABOUD:** At the moment we take a football-sized bundle of soft plastics in a plastic bag and just leave it at the supermarket, at Coles or Safeway, which is REDcycle.

**Mr HAYES:** You do it at home. That is not something the council is trying to implement.

**Cr ABOUD:** Yes, that is right. But if you are talking about aspirations and how to get rid of that last bin that is full of the landfill, obviously with the electronic stuff the loop is being closed on that. Anything that is organic goes in that green bin and then the recycled stuff all goes in the recycling bin. If you consume things well, you do not actually end up with that much in your rubbish bin. We put our rubbish bin out every few weeks. It is never full and we are a family of five. This is a huge piece that must go alongside anything that happens to the state, it is about education. When we rolled out— we call it FOGO obviously—there was a huge education piece that went along with it and there was lots of talk through different social groups on social media about, ‘What about the meat? Won’t it stink?’, and people who have had more experience with this kind of stuff through their own composting at home or whatever were saying things like, ‘You can freeze all of that stuff and put it in just before bin night’. I do not freeze my rubbish, but if you were worried about the smell—and until it goes to weekly this is one of the things. So it is just really about conversations and education that goes along with the whole thing. But ultimately it is about educating people about the way they consume.

You do not need to buy your vegies from a supermarket wrapped in two layers of plastic to begin with. You can use cloth bags, and there are lots of companies coming up that are starting to bulk buy food stuffs in your own containers. There are even butchers in Moreland that will let you take your own container to get meat in, which did not used to happen, so it is really just about education and changing the way we consume. The same as your parents would not have had everything wrapped in plastic.

**Mr HAYES:** Can I just say that there will still be some residual waste left that will not go back to the supermarket or be recycled, like silver foil wrappers.

**Cr ABOUD:** Foil can be recycled.

**Mr HAYES:** Is there a separate stream for that yet?

**Ms TAYLOR:** You ball it.

**Mr HAYES:** I know it probably can be.

**Ms TAYLOR:** You ball it. You put it in your bin now, then whatever the magnet thing is can get it, but you have to put it into a big ball. The Easter push; I remember that.

**Cr ABOUD:** Yes, Visy. I had a tour of Visy, and by the time they got everything processed, everything was going where it needed to go. I do not know if they are stockpiling or if they are processing everything legitimately, but that does not mean that they are stockpiling—it is just that I do not know.

**Mr HAYES:** So you think everything can be recycled in some way?

**Cr ABOUD:** I think that a huge piece is about reduction of usage at the beginning. I think that is much more important to consider.

**The CHAIR:** The video will be emailed to members.

**Mr DAVIS:** I have got to go, so if I could just put on record the same question as to the other two councils: that we would appreciate information—you may be able to tell me off the top of your head—about the share of the council budget that is devoted to waste management and recycling.

**Ms DAVIES:** I did indeed hear you ask that question.

**Mr DAVIS:** The second thing is the budget, as it were; the breakdown of that budget would be helpful for us to understand.

**Ms DAVIES:** I can give you the first one. The total budget for 19–20 financial year was \$184.18 million, and of that \$16.4 million was for waste services.

**Mr DAVIS:** Thank you.

**Ms DAVIES:** Then I will take the other on notice if that is okay.

**Mr DAVIS:** Thank you, that would be wonderful.

**Ms TAYLOR:** With the zero waste, I am just getting on the back of that because that is very exciting. I think it is the right goal. I am being judgemental in saying that. I know for myself this is the challenge that I always have, and I am just wondering if you have observed—for me it is mainly kitty litter, the odd lid, and that is all that I am putting into landfill now. I have been able to trim it down. So what do you think are the main obstacles to overcome with the average household—I am saying ‘average’; how can you average them?—for the residual waste, and what tactics? I know you have already explained stuff, but I am just thinking.

**Cr ABOUD:** Would you like to take this one?

**Ms DAVIES:** I will attempt to take it. It is like with anything—education is what needs to be overcome.

**Ms TAYLOR:** That is a good one.

**Ms DAVIES:** Yes, honestly. We spend so much of our budget on educating, and you might deliver the message to that audience in whatever format they require, but sometimes they have got to hear it multiple times to actually understand it and process it.

**Ms TAYLOR:** They do. That’s human.

**Ms DAVIES:** Humans by nature, we are lazy beings and we will do what is easy—no offence to anybody. I know, shocking! So we do what is easy, and really for us as a council we have got to make it easy for our ratepayers to do the right thing. So I really think it is looking at that and looking at how we make it easy for people and then doing that and delivering the message. So we can talk about the actual facts and how to do it and the logistics of it, but in reality we have got to bring the audience along for the ride as well.

Everyone likes the carrot approach, no-one likes the stick approach. I have heard before some council saying that if you find a bin is contaminated, you text someone. We do often find bins are contaminated and we put stickers on the bin, and a large amount of people do the right thing and take the contaminants out, but then there are people that have left their bin there overnight or for a couple of days and someone else has actually put that contaminant in there.

**Ms TAYLOR:** It is not their fault.

**Ms DAVIES:** My experience is people normally try and do the right thing. People do things out of the goodness of their heart, and when people do the wrong thing it is through misinformation or laziness.

**Cr ABOUD:** The interesting thing about the comment about laziness is actually lots of people might find that they are working really, really hard to pay for convenience. Like really working really hard to pay for things to be easy to grab. It is kind of a bit counterintuitive in a way, because you need to earn more money so that you can pay to drive to park or something. There are lots of complexities about the way this would have been done back in the day and now what the implications are. We are almost at the stage now where some of the work that we are having to do for our convenience is even down to the way we are dealing with our waste.

You have got to work hard. You have got to sort everything into six bins. But what if you start using less or using things differently and you do not have to sort all your bins because you just do not have that much rubbish?

**Ms TAYLOR:** Yes. That is a good point.

**Cr ABOUD:** I think there are great rewards, and certainly this is something that I notice, when you can close the loop on the FOGO stuff. It has happened in literally—like the trial was last year I think—a year that we have been able to see, ‘Okay, this is the plan; this is the trial. The trial was an amazing success. We’re rolling it out now. Come and get your free green bin, come and get your bench caddy. These are the rules. Everybody talk to each other and this is how we’re going to do it’ and then now, ‘This is the finished product. Look at it on this garden’. I think there is a great reward in that, and there is a certain demographic that will respond to that. I think that once you can see that something works—and it might be the same with soft plastics once you can see that, ‘Okay, take that football-sized bundle of soft plastics squeezed into a bread bag and take it back to REDcycle and then find out what is happening to that plastic and what it gets made into’ and you are at a playground and you are seeing that hard recycled plastic playground furniture—once you can see where the loops are getting closed—

**Mr HAYES:** But it is a matter of communication and mass communication getting through. Some people do not listen. I have got someone who lives in a unit near me and they just put everything into the rubbish bin and they do not listen to council.

**Cr ABOUD:** Absolutely, but there are places where our society and our communities get their messaging.

**Mr HAYES:** Yes, and we have got to hit them.

**Cr ABOUD:** Football.

**Mr HAYES:** Yes, that is right.

**Cr ABOUD:** When Carlton Football Club starts talking about respect, people start to hear things they have never heard before.

**The CHAIR:** That is only in Moreland, though.

**Cr ABOUD:** Carlton?

**The CHAIR:** Yes.

**Cr ABOUD:** The secret to being a Carlton supporter is being able to barrack for Richmond at the end of the season.

**Ms TERPSTRA:** Can I ask a follow-up question on what you are saying, because I am just a little bit concerned about how we view this. Like you were saying, generally people do want to do the right thing or cooperate and help and all the rest of it, but not everyone has the time. Some people have time pressures. They may not have the financial resources to talk about some of the things you are talking about. Do you have any demographic data that you have collected so far with your trial on FOGO, for example, about who is engaging in the system and who is not?

**Ms DAVIES:** I do not know the answer to that actually, but—

**Ms TERPSTRA:** Just as an example, I was just looking at how people from a public transport perspective get around, and there has been some interesting data collected about who uses public transport in the inner city and who does not—who drives to work. Interestingly there was a cohort of men who use their vehicles, like expensive vehicles, to drive even though the inner-city public transport is very well patronised, so there are demographics. We heard in New South Wales, for example, around the container deposit scheme, the demographic data that they are collecting shows that it is women who are using the CDS and not men so much. I am really quite interested—we can generalise and say, ‘Oh, it’s blah blah’—because I am principally concerned with families who have young children. They are going to be very time-poor. It is not that they do not want to participate, do not want to help, but when it gets down to it if you have got a screaming child that is unwell and all the rest of it, you are going to chuck your rubbish in the bin because that is where it needs to go at that point in time. So have you thought about how you can encourage people? I am not saying you are doing

this, but we do not want to judge people because it just makes people feel bad. For example, the other thing we heard in New South Wales—I think it was New South Wales—was when they talked about banning single-use plastic bags purchases of the round rolls of plastic bags went up. So you took something away, and it went up. Your point about convenience might be right, but the drivers are something else. I am just wondering if you have given any thought to those complexities.

**Cr ABBOUD:** As the mother of three children who only stopped screaming not so long ago and started getting their acts together and now understand sorting rubbish and everything—

**Ms TERPSTRA:** Mine have not stopped, and they are teens.

**Cr ABBOUD:** I think something that is worth acknowledging is that a lot of the education piece is actually going to come from this generation, from the children, who are saying, ‘Mum’—or in my case ‘Tata’—‘why are you are putting it in that plastic bag?’. They take the recycling out at Sunday lunch, because it is like ‘Tata!’, and she always throws all the veggies in the backyard straight to the bloody sparrows.

**Ms TERPSTRA:** But that is not typical of everyone so I am interested in how you get to the other people.

**Cr ABBOUD:** Yes, I get that. But I think that it is becoming more and more typical—that children in all types of schools—

**Ms TERPSTRA:** I am interested in how you get to the ones that are not the example you are offering. How do you get to the ones that are time-poor and what do you do to encourage that?

**Cr ABBOUD:** I guess what you do is you find where they hear their messaging. I mean, even Woolworths is now not giving away tiny bits of plastic; they are giving away plants, because they understand that people—

**Ms TERPSTRA:** They have still got plastic bags though; they have still got their organics and food wrapped in plastic.

**Mr HAYES:** That will take some changing.

**Cr ABBOUD:** I might not be able to give you the answer that you want.

**Dr RATNAM:** We have got some ways to go.

**Mr HAYES:** We have got a bit of work to do there.

**The CHAIR:** We have still got a long way to go.

**Dr RATNAM:** A few questions. Thanks very much for the submission and the presentation and the work you do on the ground as well. I am really interested in how you all got over the barriers to introducing a municipal-wide organics collection—what that has done. Have you got any data or impact known of what it has done to other levels of waste? So how is it calibrated; have you seen any changes? So, yes, barriers you are getting with the trial, because we want to know how it works. We have been trying to think about how we can generalise this cost wise, for example. Have you been able to absorb the cost or increased waste charges?

We heard some stuff about apartments before, so if there is any work you do in apartments we would love to know about that. The other question I have is on procurement. So have you got procurement targets? What would help in driving the market? We know, for example, one of the barriers to procurement is that material with recycled content is still more expensive than virgin material, and we are really interested in how we tip that balance. So what is the thing that is going to help you put more recycled content in your roads when you are doing local road production?

So the three things are: barriers to getting through organics, municipal-wide collection, how you got through them, and any impact on waste generation; apartments; and procurement—those three.

**Cr ABBOUD:** Four.

**Ms DAVIES:** With FOGO, we did a trial to begin with. People used to put food into their normal waste bin, and we thought it would just come out of the waste bin and it would go into the green bin and therefore the weights would go up and down relatively. I do not have any data for that right now, so I do need to find it, but my understanding—and it is a very elementary one—is that is not what has happened: people actually fill up the space that is left. So I need to get you some facts and figures around that.

The other one was around multi-unit developments as well. Specifically what was your question around the multi-unit developments or the apartments?

**Dr RATNAM:** Are you doing any work to get more separation from apartments?

**Ms DAVIES:** Yes. We are trying really hard. We are really promoting the use of shared bins. It is not something that is always implemented at a planning level, which I found really interesting hearing the last council speak about that. We too encounter those issues whereby, understandably, the planners are extremely busy. You know, they have got a job to do, and their primary role is to ensure that a safe building or buildings are made quickly and easily and with as little disruption to the community as possible, and it is not always the first thought or indeed a thought at all around ‘Where do we put the bins? How many bins can we fit in? And how easy is it for trucks to pick up?’. Looking at it purely from an operational perspective, on a daily basis we are unable to reach bins or we are slowed down in our capacity to perform that operation due to parked cars, due to misplacement of bins, and various issues that you come across in the day-to-day running of any constituency.

**Cr ABBOUD:** And contamination is a big issue for the MUDs. At this point it needs a heap of work.

**Ms DAVIES:** There is still a lot—we do not have all the answers, and we are definitely open to forums like this—and we would love to be able to tackle it. In an ideal world we would not have any waste and I would be out of a job—fantastic—but unfortunately we are not there yet.

**Dr RATNAM:** And procurement.

**Ms DAVIES:** With regard to procurement, you were talking about barriers to procurement. There is recycled, the use of recycled materials in roads et cetera.

**Dr RATNAM:** How do you increase the use of recycled materials?

**Ms DAVIES:** That costs.

**The CHAIR:** Do you mandate local governments and State Government, for example, to mandate certain product use? With VicRoads, for example, it is partly glass or plastic.

**Cr ABBOUD:** Or steel—steel slag.

**Dr RATNAM:** Do you have a mandatory recycled content target?

**Ms DAVIES:** I am not aware that we do; however, we do with regard to our procurement assessment policy. We take into account environment, and social sustainability as well. So normally a percentage of points are allocated to companies that are based within Moreland or close to it and also companies that are socially and environmentally conscious as well.

**Mr HAYES:** We probably need that led more at the State level, like the road making—

**Ms DAVIES:** We would welcome that.

**Mr HAYES:** and building materials or office supplies, things like that.

**Ms DAVIES:** Yes. I think it needs to be a holistic 360 approach though as well. Otherwise it could lead to some opportunistic companies probably putting some interesting prices on their products if they thought that they had a captive audience.

**The CHAIR:** Let us say you are doing some back roads and company A comes to you and says, ‘We can do that where 20 per cent of the asphalt is recycled product’—and I am talking about plastic and various other things—where that is going to cost you an extra 5 or 10 per cent, versus company B, which has all virgin product. As a council would you rather go with company A or B?

**Ms DAVIES:** It depends. There are a lot of metrics in that. We need to know that it is a safe product.

**The CHAIR:** No, it meets the standard; it is purely cost now. So the standards are fine.

**Ms DAVIES:** If it is purely cost and we get our money back in terms of depreciation, so our ratepayers are not losing their money and so that we are not digging up the same road or footpath again in 12 months time, then we would definitely be open to it. We are looking for a high-quality, sustainable product that is safe and has recycled product in there and that is good to use in the environment. We cannot always find that. We are still using concrete in this day and age, and my personal—not my professional, my personal—opinion is that we should not be using concrete at all, unfortunately.

**The CHAIR:** What would you use?

**Cr ABBOUD:** We have done a trial with steel slag. It is a by-product—

**The CHAIR:** I know exactly, yes.

**Cr ABBOUD:** Asphaltech, yes. The road is beautiful. It is just that it is brand new for that company as well. We have done a trial in Oak Park. Hopefully that would be an alternative as well. There is no virgin aggregate in that road product; it is just the steel slag and the tar.

**The CHAIR:** So if I go back to the question earlier about A and B, A is the recycling bit and B is the virgin product. A ticks all the boxes environmentally and with safety and even longevity and stuff but it costs an extra 2 per cent. Would you go for contract A?

**Ms DAVIES:** The panel would award marks, and we do award marks for environmental sustainability; therefore A would come out on top, and therefore they would probably be awarded the contract.

**The CHAIR:** The reason I am raising that point is that if we want to talk about zero waste and we are talking about closing the loop and talking about a circular economy, we cannot have it both ways.

**Ms DAVIES:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** If it is going to cost more, so what?

**Ms DAVIES:** No, we agree completely, and that is why we allow for that in our procurement policy. And that is what we would like to see at the state level. I do not know what the current procurement policy is, but does it allow for environmental and social consciousness and sustainability?

**Mr HAYES:** If it was mandated at the state level, you would not have such a hard decision to make.

**Ms DAVIES:** Exactly.

**The CHAIR:** Following from that, an overarching state policy to basically put it out for consultation, working with all the stakeholders—do you see a role for a statewide policy on various things like, for example, procurement is one, common lids, for example, is another one. Do you see a role for the State to actually come up with a consistent policy across the board so we have got uniformity? Is that something the council would be looking at to support?

**Ms DAVIES:** If you look at what is happening across the board and how many councils have declared an environmental emergency, I cannot see how anyone could argue against something like that, provided it is implemented in the correct way and that people and stakeholders are allowed to contribute to it.

**The CHAIR:** Absolutely. The last question from me: I know you have got three bins, including the FOGO bin. What is your feeling about going, for example, to a fourth bin for glass?

**Dr RATNAM:** Have you all considered exploring it at all?

**Cr ABBOD:** We have looked at the trials that Hobsons Bay and Yarra are doing. We do not have anything planned at this stage, but they look like they are quite successful, and potentially the success is from the fact that Hobsons Bay is right next to O-I, and Yarra obviously has the Abbotsford brewery right there. It is the same glass; it is going back to make more bottles. That would be definitely beneficial for both of those councils—that the facility is right there in the city. At this stage it is quite new for both of them as well—it has been happening in the last year or so—but we are definitely watching on because we probably have residents who have the wherewithal and the interest in separating their glass out for that as much as Yarra and Hobsons Bay have had people take it up so quickly and well. Certainly on re-using glass, I mean Lebanon is a perfect—the green glass initiative. And everything that we can do with salvaged glass—there is a great opportunity to take that out of the waste stream to be re-used; commingled, that opportunity is not there like it would be if it was separated out.

**The CHAIR:** Excellent. Thank you both for your time and contributions. We really appreciate it. A copy of the transcript will be emailed to you shortly, in the next few days, so if there are any corrections please feel free to make whatever corrections and send it back.

**Witnesses withdrew.**