Submission Text: Submission from Gippsland Trades and Labour Council to

Victorian Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee on

The development and expansion of waste-to-energy (WtE) infrastructure in Victoria

31/3/2026

The Gippsland Trades and Labour Council have prepared this submission in support of the Maryvale Energy from Waste Project and recognise its importance to the communities of the Latrobe Valley.

We write in support of the proposed Energy from Waste (EfW) facility at the Opal Maryvale Mill in the Latrobe Valley. This project represents a unique opportunity to deliver jobs, at a time when new employment opportunities are urgently needed. If approved, this project will support existing industry, reduce landfill and help our region transition through the closure of the coalfired power industry.

The Latrobe Valley has powered Victoria for decades. Communities in our region have been built around electricity generation, and workers in the Latrobe Valley continue to supply the bulk of Victoria's electricity needs on any given day. The Latrobe Valley is now facing major change. The planned closure of Yallourn Power Station and Mine in 2028 will see the loss of 500 direct jobs and an estimated 2000 contractor and supply chain jobs from the region. The Latrobe Valley has experienced transition before, including the privatisation of the SEC during the 1990's and the closure of the Hazelwood Power Station and Mine in 2017. The social and economic impacts on the Latrobe Valley were significant and remain today, evidenced by dire socioeconomic and health costs that have not been adequately addressed.

For these reasons, projects that provide sustainable industrial employment and long-term economic viability in the Latrobe Valley are crucial. The proposed Maryvale EfW facility can provide exactly that. Project information from Opal indicates that the construction of this facility would create "a further 500 Victorian jobs each year for the three years of Stage One construction and 455 jobs ongoing (including flow ons)"1

These jobs will be high skilled, well paid industrial jobs that align with the skillsets and experience of the Yallourn and local workforces. Many of jobs at the facility will require operations experience and maintenance skills including electrical and mechanical trades. This is opportune as these jobs are directly transferable from the coal fired power industry and other heavy industry sectors already present in the Latrobe Valley.

Equally important, the EfW project would support the ongoing operation of the Maryvale Paper Mill, one of the largest manufacturing employers in regional Victoria. Through the EfW process, the EfW facility would help stabilise the mill's energy supply and improve its long-term viability. Maintaining and supporting strong employers like Opal Maryvale is essential for stability within the Latrobe Valley.

Energy from waste also plays an important role in waste management and environmental sustainability. The EfW facility would process non-recyclable waste that would otherwise be sent to landfill. EfW facilities significantly reduce methane emissions which are 80 times more potent than carbon when measured over a 20-year timeframe.2

EfW is not new or experimental technology. EfW facilities operate safely in many countries, especially those in Europe. EfW also operates successfully in Japan and the United Kingdom and United States. These facilities are often located close to communities and operate without causing any health or environmental hazards.

Australia has started to embrace EfW technology, demonstrating it can operate within state and local council regulations while supporting local communities and economies. Unlike Laverton, this Maryvale proposal is a fuel substitution process for an existing industry. Once the steam has generated electricity, it will be further used to power the plant, thus more than doubling the energy recovery than for a plant such as the Laverton example.

EfW facilities should only process material that cannot be reused or recycled, EfW can form part of a balanced and responsible waste management system in Victoria. In addition to the social and economic benefits of increased employment opportunities in the region, we wholeheartedly support the EFW at Maryvale for environmental reasons. It will reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions by over 250,000 tonnes per annum because:

- it displaces the use of natural gas – methane is a fossil fuel

- it eliminates landfill, which emanates methane, from anaerobic decomposition

- the bottom ash collection process will further sequester carbon

- carbon capture and storage technology can further reduce emissions and support other industries at the site.

For our region the Latrobe Valley, the Maryvale EfW project represents far more than waste management. It represents industrial investment during a period of uncertainty and transition, something the Latrobe Valley has had very little of since the privatisation of the SEC. It can provide employment, strengthen local existing industry and local business, help reduce landfill, reduce methane emissions and support the development of the Latrobe Valley, a region that is far too often neglected, a region that has powered Victoria for generations and continues to do so.

As Victoria continues to manage its transition from coal-fired power generation, projects like the Maryvale EfW facility demonstrate how industry can be developed in regions like the Latrobe Valley maintaining skilled employment and economic prosperity.

We encourage the inquiry to recognise the benefits of the Maryvale EfW project, and to support the development of the EfW sector in Victoria broadly.

1https://opalanz.com/sustainability/energy-from-waste/#:~:text=Energy%20from%20Waste%20facility,Maryvale%20Energy%20from%20Waste%20project.

2https://www.csiro.au/en/research/environmental-impacts/climate-change/State-of-the-Climate/Greenhouse-gases