

PROOF VERSION ONLY

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the Supply of Homes in Regional Victoria

Traralgon – Thursday 22 May 2025

MEMBERS

Juliana Addison – Chair

Martin Cameron – Deputy Chair

Jordan Crugnale

Daniela De Martino

Wayne Farnham

Martha Haylett

David Hodgett

**Necessary corrections to be notified to
executive officer of committee**

WITNESSES

Cr Nathan Hersey, Chair, and

Tony Peterson, One Gippsland.

The CHAIR: Welcome back to the public hearing in Traralgon. It is great to be here.

I will just run through some important formalities before we begin. All evidence taken today will be recorded by Hansard and is protected by parliamentary privilege. This means that you can speak freely without fear of legal action in relation to the evidence you give. However, it is important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to comments made outside this hearing, even if you are restating what you said during the hearing.

You will receive a draft transcript of the evidence in the next week or so for you to check and approve. Corrected transcripts are published on the committee's website and may be quoted from in our final report.

Thank you for making the time to meet the committee today. Would you please state your names and titles before we begin, starting with you, Nathan, please.

Nathan HERSEY: Thank you. Cr Nathan Hersey, councillor for South Gippsland Shire and also Chair of One Gippsland.

The CHAIR: Terrific. Thank you so much for being here, Councillor.

Tony PETERSON: Tony Peterson, interim CEO at South Gippsland Shire Council.

The CHAIR: Terrific. Thank you so much, Tony. Deputy Chair, would you like to kick off?

Martin CAMERON: Yes. Tony and Nathan, thanks for coming in. Nathan, you are the Chair of One Gippsland. Can you let the committee know what does One Gippsland do, and because it is a housing forum that we are here discussing, what are the challenges around housing right across Gippsland at the moment?

Nathan HERSEY: Sure. Thank you. One Gippsland is made up of member councils in the Gippsland region, the six councils being Bass Coast, South Gippsland, Baw Baw, Latrobe, Wellington and East Gippsland. We also partner with industry partners including GLAWAC, Food and Fibre Gippsland, Federation University and TAFE Gippsland. What we do as a group is come together regularly to meet and to discuss how we can put forward priorities for the Gippsland region both to state and federal governments, with an aim of having Gippsland become an even better place to live, work and enjoy. Our overall goal is we want to see Gippsland as being one of the most livable, if not the most livable, regions in Victoria. I am already of the opinion that it is a fantastic place to be. It is somewhere where I was born and raised but also came back to to choose as my home, and I am certainly of the view that it is worth fighting for and promoting in a way that is very positive for the future.

Martin CAMERON: Thank you. Are there different challenges in each LGA are you finding, or is everything similar? What are the differences getting everyone together in the one room?

Nathan HERSEY: Yes. With respect to housing, there are always similarities that local government in particular is facing, maybe less so with the focus today on our industry partners. Of course, we have got some concerns coming in particular from our education sectors in Gippsland wanting to make sure that there is available housing supply for attracting new students. But I will focus more probably on the council side of things today. Gippsland wants to attract 75,000 new residents by 2040. The region needs to embrace a new way of thinking, which includes being more culturally and socially diverse, as well as ensuring that housing stock, health, education and community assets are appropriate to accommodate that population growth that we want to see.

One of the things that we do know is that there are social issues that we are experiencing in Gippsland across the region. That is not necessarily a problem just in any particular LGA. Some areas that we hear from, like Latrobe city, obviously are experiencing more issues than others. For example, where I am in South Gippsland

we have a very low unemployment rate and good general incomes across the board but also a very dispersed population, so we have issues with social aspects because of that. The region has a shortage of housing stock, as you no doubt are aware, and that is including affordable and social housing. That is a largely a result of what we are seeing with the increase in population already.

One of the things that I will point to is the state government's targets for Gippsland. We have got – this is for 2051 – 19,250 for Bass Coast; Baw Baw, 27,500; East Gippsland, 11,000; Latrobe, 13,000; South Gippsland, 8000; and Wellington, 8000. That is 86,750 new homes as the target for Gippsland. The Gippsland councils have come together through One Gippsland to discuss this. We are okay with that target. Bass Coast is the only one that has expressed a little bit of concern that maybe it is slightly too high. It is not necessarily too high to achieve, but the problem that Bass Coast has expressed – and I will go into this – is around the support from government for the wraparound infrastructure that is needed for housing to be able to make sure that the housing that goes in is liveable and that the council is not going out the back door financially whilst trying to work towards delivering that housing supply.

Gippsland is made up of, to your point before, different councils that are experiencing different issues, because we do have that peri-urban interface, particularly with Baw Baw shire and also Bass Coast, as well as the issues of a lot of rural and remote areas of the region. Some of the remote areas, quite frankly, will not contribute very much, if at all, to the increase in housing supply, and it is not appropriate to do so. We have, as a region, a huge agriculture industry. Big parts of the region will need to continue to provide food and fibre, and therefore we would expect that those areas that are remote really would be for that rather than the housing growth.

The existing challenges are that we have that interface with metropolitan, and we are seeing a lot of people move now from metropolitan areas into what we would call really a rural setting and expecting that when they come into the area they have got the same sorts of services that they would have in metropolitan, which for a lot of councils is hard to deliver in a way that we can afford to. As you know, we are in a rate-capped environment. Latrobe city is also a regional city that is growing extremely rapidly, and Latrobe is going to continue to have issues, particularly with an economic change in direction with energy, which also brings me to another point – that we expect to see a growth in different areas of the region where housing supply will need to be provided as a result of that energy transition. A lot of that is in South Gippsland and Wellington in particular.

Peri-urban municipalities are growing faster than some regional cities, and I think that there is probably a lack of understanding from those councils as to how to address that issue. One thing that I hear quite commonly from the region when we are sitting down and discussing this is that Baw Baw shire has had an instance, or many instances now, where infrastructure improvements to accommodate new housing supply, particularly in housing estates, have meant that the infrastructure, including roads in particular – and if you talk to Danny Goss, who is not mayor at the moment but has been the mayor, about the costs of putting in roundabouts in particular, they are at far greater cost than what any developer contribution will ever be set at, meaning that councils really are footing the bill for that growth to be able to be realised in real terms. That is causing problems because at the end of the day we cannot have people coming into this area to live in a way that is not liveable, where congestion is completely unrealistic and where safety aspects with intersections are just not attended to. So councils are stepping up in that area.

Now, as for the rest of the region, what we do – and it is a bit of a joke amongst us but it probably should not be – is we look at Baw Baw shire to see what has gone wrong and see how we can avoid that. Probably something that I would encourage the state government to look at is what has gone wrong in these interface councils, where the councils are footing the bills for significant infrastructure improvements to actually accommodate housing growth, and then try and avoid that and put policies in place and support in place for wraparound infrastructure in particular. That would mean that that is not going to happen as the growth either occurs from sprawl or in localised areas in rural and regional settings as well.

There is a policy gap when it comes to peri-urban areas and outer regional areas. As I have just said, there is no plan in policy that we can see at the moment where planning or funding for peri-urban communities exists in a way that is going to cover that gap. This means that the unique issues that are outside of Melbourne are not yet being considered in a way where we can see a way forward.

The next point I will go on to, unless you want to ask questions –

The CHAIR: Can I just ask you: we had the opportunity to be up in Mount Alexander shire, and we met with council in Castlemaine, which probably is similar to Baw Baw in some of the geographical – people are wanting to live there and be able to be in commutable distance. Mount Alexander shire told us that housing is their number one issue, more than all the normal stuff that local governments do. Where does housing fit into the priority of your council and other councils across Gippsland?

Nathan HERSEY: It is legislated, obviously, that we have an affordable housing strategy and approach, and we have, at South Gippsland shire, which I can speak on behalf of, worked towards delivering that strategy and we have got that in place at the moment. It is a high priority because, if I talk about a localised setting, what we see is that we have got an ageing population in South Gippsland where people are not wanting to leave the family home, and therefore we are ending up with either an option of having to focus on sprawl, which we do not necessarily want to do because we want to protect the agricultural land that we have, or going higher density. So we have to look at that as to what we do.

From a priority level it certainly is up there as one of the major issues that we are facing. When I am talking to Baw Baw shire, as that example, I would say it is right up there as being a huge problem. Again, it is not just about providing the housing there by way of making land available. Making land available is one thing, and councils can do that. Obviously planning is within council remit, and we can do that. State government obviously can take over in particular instances, and that is fine. But it is that wraparound infrastructure that means that the support is there for the councils such as South Gippsland, Baw Baw, Bass Coast – those ones that are facing now that larger growth on the metropolitan edge – to be able to make sure that it is livable and it is sustainable and that it is not causing an unnecessary financial burden on the local government to be able to support that growth.

The CHAIR: Are there questions from the panel? If there are no questions, we are happy for you to continue. Wayne, do you want to jump in?

Wayne FARNHAM: Yes, sure. I will jump in. The housing targets that were set by state government – you ran through them just before. You said you think you will achieve those targets by 2051, and my assumption is that is across all Gippsland councils.

Nathan HERSEY: Yes.

Wayne FARNHAM: With the current planning regulations that we have, what changes do you think need to be made to make the supply of those actually more accessible? Because at the moment I and Baw Baw – I will reference Baw Baw council, because that is my council – are increasingly frustrated with regulation around planning and fast-tracking these developments and unlocking these areas. What regulation change do you think needs to happen at a state level to actually achieve these targets? I think you quoted 27½ blocks of land in Baw Baw, which I think is probably in their current PSP. It would be in the supply of the PSP, what they have got zoned. On what it is taking now – you know, in some cases five, six, seven, eight years – to get developments through, what do you think needs to change to expedite that process?

Nathan HERSEY: Tony could probably add from an officer perspective – and I might pass to you in a second, Tony – but what we would really ask the government to step up with is that statewide approach, with also flexibility in there for councils such as growth councils or rural councils, and the approach needs to be around developer contributions and coming up with those. I know as well as all of you at this table know that the economic situation in Victoria is tough and the economic situation for councils is tough. Developers can actually make money out of developments. I know it is becoming more difficult, but what we would be asking for is a state approach to be able to ensure that those people who are developing properties actually contribute to the costs of what it is that makes those developments useful. As I said before, opening up land –

Wayne FARNHAM: Sorry. Just on that point, don't they contribute already?

Nathan HERSEY: Yes.

Wayne FARNHAM: In Morwell I think it is \$12,500 per block that goes back to council.

Nathan HERSEY: Yes. Baw Baw is under a different agreement to the rest of Gippsland. The rest of Gippsland currently does not have as strong developer contributions, and there is a gap that is occurring with

every single development. Baw Baw is the same. There is still a gap that is occurring, but the rest of Gippsland is experiencing a greater gap in ensuring that just things like footpaths, intersections – that kind of basic infrastructure that you would expect – are being met.

It is meaning that local government is picking up the bill. Now, we can make land available. We have got land available, for example, in Korumburra, where there has been proposed to be about 170 lots going in. Council had raised a whole heap of concerns with that as to what we thought should be done by way of making that livable. For example, the plan that ended up coming to us had some blocks of land that would be in the shadow of the hill in winter all day and all night. Now, that is not a great way for anyone to live, and people who are not doing their background work would look at that and go, 'Well, this looks fine to me,' and they would buy it and end up in the shadow of the hill all day and all night. We put conditions on that to change that around. What happened in that instance is that the developer went to the state and bypassed council. Then we are concerned in that instance that we lose some of those things that we need to see as well, but what the developer then says in that instance where they bypass council is that they want to see some of those conditions removed, and a lot of those conditions that we put on mean that we are not going out the back door financially as we do it. So by opposing some of the conditions and moving to the state for approval – in this instance the state actually accepted the input and rejected the application, which I think was a good outcome – it meant that there was an opportunity to remove all those things that we are putting in place to be able to make sure we are not going out the back door. Is that answering your –

Wayne FARNHAM: Yes, sort of. I mean, it skirted around it a little bit, but I will go to Tony.

Tony PETERSON: I suppose developer contributions, the way they are currently managed, do not work for rural councils. If you use the developer contribution which we have from 10 years ago, the money we get in is not enough to build infrastructure 10 years down the track. You have seen the rise in –

Wayne FARNHAM: Well, it was never linked to CPI.

Tony PETERSON: No. And CPI, say it is running at 3.5, 4 per cent, the construction index is running somewhere between 7 and – over COVID concrete products were going up at 30 per cent. And social infrastructure: we talk about road infrastructure, but it is the social infrastructure which is that really long-term –

Wayne FARNHAM: Sporting facilities et cetera.

Tony PETERSON: Yes. Well, kindergartens, sporting facilities, community health centres, all of that sort of thing – playgrounds, open space, yes. If you look at, say, a kindergarten, we built a kindergarten in Korumburra in 2016. The cost per square metre was around \$2800. Build one now, it is \$6000 per square metre. The cost increase is huge. So yes, the way we manage developer contributions needs to be improved, especially for rural areas that are a bit slower to develop.

Wayne FARNHAM: Getting back to the point, developer contributions are one thing, and that is supporting the infrastructure going forward. But actual regulation change to unlock the land sooner – what needs to happen in that space?

Tony PETERSON: You need to make an incentive for developers to develop. If there is no money, they will not develop. Windfall gains tax is a massive impost on developers. They have got to rezone land, and then they are paying windfall gains tax at 50 per cent, up to 60 per cent. And that includes council as well. We own a lot of land. We have got excess land that we could develop, but we are subject to windfall gains tax as well.

Wayne FARNHAM: So you are not going to do that?

Nathan HERSEY: It is not viable.

Tony PETERSON: It is not viable, yes.

Wayne FARNHAM: No. You are going to get hit with 50 per cent, and you have got to pay it in 30 days, or you get charged interest.

Tony PETERSON: Yes, exactly. From that point of view, what is the incentive for landowners to develop their land? I suppose that is the key. I will talk from South Gippsland's point of view. We are a food bowl for

Victoria, if not Australia. We need to maintain our agricultural land, so we do not want just blanket green wedge development that is going to eat up that agricultural land. That higher densification, more European model style of towns is probably where we need to go.

Wayne FARNHAM: Does South Gippsland have a PSP or not?

Nathan HERSEY: No, we do not have a PSP.

Wayne FARNHAM: You do not have a PSP. Should you have?

Tony PETERSON: Maybe.

Wayne FARNHAM: Okay.

Nathan HERSEY: Probably some leadership from the state, stepping up with some sort of approach, would be appreciated, I would think. With the way our budget sits – and I am talking locally here; I will not talk for the whole of Gippsland, but from the South Gippsland perspective – we struggle to be even in a financial position to do a whole heap of this work that we know we need to do to plan for the future. That is why we would actually ask that the state step up in that space and contribute – not with a blanket approach across the state, because that is never going to work. Even if you look at Gippsland, with the way we are made up with different municipalities within one region, you cannot even do a region-wide one. But what we are seeing at the moment is that every council is doing its own approach, at its own cost, trying to come up with some sort of a way forward, and it is becoming quite expensive for councils to do. We are also struggling, as everyone else is, to get planners.

The CHAIR: That was going to be my next question.

Nathan HERSEY: Yes. Well, Tony can probably speak to that, but it seems as though every time we get a good planner another council tries to poach them. We poached our planner from Mornington Peninsula shire, and it just goes around. There is a problem there with having planners at a local council level.

Tony PETERSON: We have done okay because we are a place of choice to work – we have done a lot of work just building our culture. But we do have a lot of issues getting planners and holding on to good planners. It is the same with building surveyors, which goes to housing affordability. Anyone in the building industry is hard to get. We are short of builders, tradies. Even supply of materials – that is difficult. Just going back onto offshore wind, which is a multibillion-dollar industry off our coast which is going to grow our population numbers, on top of the livestock exchange expanding to be one of the biggest in Victoria, on top of the dairy industry and on top of the oil and gas decommissioning that is happening – just the growth in numbers around industry is huge. I lived through the desal plant construction and the pressures that put on social infrastructure, let alone physical infrastructure. I think we need to be learning from the desal plant scenario and do better than that in that space. Environmental issues are also a big key in terms of planning for growth. Along our coast we have got a fair bit of land that could be developed but is not suitable for development. That is where having a one-size-fits-all planning model does not work, because there is definitely land that we should not be developing because it will just cause long-term issues.

Nathan HERSEY: Can I add to that, Tony, because it is one of the things we have discussed in the Gippsland context from One Gippsland. There is land – you will see it in Wellington – that was previously divided up for blocks. And South Gippsland, Venus Bay – there are plenty of examples in East Gippsland as well, where it is just not suitable now. At one point in time it was decided that that was an appropriate location for development. Now it is not.

One thing that we have discussed, which has been I would say a bit of a disappointment when it comes to one-size-fits-all policy, is the second dwelling on a property, even of a small size. We have places where we have got emergency situations that could unfold like that. We do not want more people living there. Some of these places really need to be considered case by case, where we go, ‘Yes, all right, we need to put people somewhere, but Venus Bay is not appropriate.’ We have got coastal inundation, low-lying areas, drainage problems and bushfire risk – one way in, one way out – and yet now any person who has a house already in Venus Bay theoretically might have a small dwelling and more people in the space where we do not have transport, we do not have infrastructure, we do not have drainage and we do not have sewerage. people are

using bore water. So it is taking that approach where we look at 'Okay, this is the problem. This is how we can fix it', but in some areas that is just not appropriate. It is not going to work.

Daniela DE MARTINO: Can I just interject there just to say my understanding, because I cover the Dandenong Ranges, is that in terms of overlays that are a threat to life like bushfire or erosion management, it is not an automatic given. You still need planning permission for the second dwelling. So once you have got a BMO or an EMO sitting on top, that affects it. Are there other overlays that you want considered in that regard? Because obviously BMO, it is not – you cannot just drop a second dwelling in.

Tony PETERSON: Correct. Venus Bay does not have a LSIO over it.

Daniela DE MARTINO: Not a single one?

Tony PETERSON: No. And we can put one over it, go through that process. But community, the number of houses that are down there already – you know, their values will drop. So it is a really tough position that councils are in. We know what we should be doing. But then obviously you need to think about the community as well. We are a small township. Tarwin Lower – there was one road that was inundated for three months last year, and it is going to continue to happen. It is low lying. We had the king tides flooding in Tarwin River, the soil was saturated and water just sat there for a couple of months.

Daniela DE MARTINO: And that mapping was done quite a while ago actually; about 20 years ago we started to get an indication of inundation around that area forecasted.

Tony PETERSON: Yes. And you know, there is no solution to that problem. We have had one of the best hydrologists have a look and try to come up with a solution. They called it a wicked problem. We could throw tens of millions of dollars at it and it would not fix it. So it is more about how we live with it in that space. Just on that housing, we just want to make sure it is appropriately located within Gippsland.

The CHAIR: Jordan, did you have a question?

Jordan CRUGNALE: Yes. Thanks for coming along today. I wanted to go back and talk about the housing estates and the development and the infrastructure, social and capital infrastructure, essential infrastructure, being in at the start. We heard from other councils as well that there is that sort of funding gap, because developer contributions tend to come in as each section of the estate gets released. So we did hear from other councils around the state to consider low-interest loans. What kind of mechanisms do you see that you would like to speak of in how we can get that infrastructure in as those developer contributions come in over time?

Nathan HERSEY: Personally, low- or no-interest loans for our council would be welcomed, and I think we could use that in a positive way. I will go to what Tony said before about the windfall gains tax issue with councils receiving an impost from windfall gains tax. If council had land that we believed could be rezoned and developed into housing – without the impost of windfall gains tax, mind you – to provide for the housing supply and we also could fund appropriately the infrastructure that was required through a no- interest or low-interest loan, councils could move into a space that we have not been able to play in before, meaning that we know exactly what is going in, it is done to our requirements and to what we are hoping for and it meets the community expectations. We know that when that comes onto the market, everything that we are hoping for in a housing estate is done.

Now, some of those would be only small, because we are not talking massive amounts of land here. It could be an option forward. But when it comes to housing estates that developers are doing, the same would go, because at the moment we are holding a massive financial burden – and I am not talking South Gippsland here; I am talking councils in the region – when it comes to that difference between what is required to put the infrastructure in to make it liveable and usable and to meet what we know is the community expectation as well in a way that means that people will want to be there as well and that it is longer term.

For example, I will use Nyora as a case, which I have discussed directly with Minister Kilkenney, who is coming down to have a look in person. I am very pleased that she has accepted our invitation. We have there a new housing estate that was approved quite a long time ago. Developer contributions pretty much will cover footpaths and things in it obviously. It will cover a footpath to the town, and that is about it. Am I right, Tony? That is the extent of it. So from that development we are not going to see any funding to be able to go into what

we need, which is a kindergarten. We are not going to see anything to go into there for a council depot or services. Basically, anything that we need to make that place livable there is no funding for. So council is going to have to come up with that money.

Mind you, in this town where we have got 300 new lots going in, there is also a pressure system there for a sewer, which our water authority has told us really is not suitable as a long-term solution for a town that is growing in that way. So then there are going to be other costs there, which are not council costs but that other costs that need to be considered. We only own two parcels of land in the whole town, which are a drainage way and a drainage way, meaning we do not even own land to be able to put in there what it is that we know the community is expecting.

The concern is then that you end up with people moving from probably just outer metropolitan – maybe Berwick, Cranbourne or wherever, which we see a lot of in Nyora – where they are used to having a different level of service and then coming to council on the regular complaining: ‘We don’t have this.’ A developer contribution for a 300-lot subdivision that provides for one footpath to connect the estate to the town is just not suitable, and that is probably because it was set so long ago.

Tony PETERSON: Further to that, even if we got a no-interest loan, it is still a loan. We cannot manage the infrastructure we have got at the moment, and we are not the only ones who have got ageing infrastructure. We have got five outdoor pools and one indoor pool. The outdoor pools were built post 1950s. We have just had one in Korumburra costed, and it is over \$10 million to replace that, and that is just one of many. So we have just got a lot of pressure on infrastructure and maintaining infrastructure. We try and retire infrastructure or get rid of it, and no-one likes losing anything. It is really tough to think about new infrastructure when we cannot even manage what we have got – that is the trouble. In terms of South Gipps we just need some assistance in that space as growth occurs.

Nyora is almost like a blank canvas – there is nothing there. The pricepoint of those blocks I am thinking is probably going to be lower than the neighbouring municipalities, so that will be an attraction for young families. But then, as Nathan said, they get there and they want the services, and there is nothing there. We are really conscious of planning for it, but yes, we are struggling to see how we are going to deliver in the current environment. South Gippsland is made up a lot of small towns; there is no one dominant town. Nyora has got the ability to be the biggest town in South Gippsland, just through the land available for development, which is pretty amazing. We think it is a massive opportunity. Not often do you get a blank canvas to develop a town, and we want to do it properly and do it well and be a bit of a role model for what we can achieve. It would be great, but we just need some assistance.

The CHAIR: Excellent. I am just conscious of the time. We do also have East Gippsland shire and Wellington shire coming in this afternoon, and we are really looking forward to continuing this conversation. But I will look to my colleagues and ask if there are any question.

I will also ask you the question that we finished on with Chris from housing. Do you have a top three strategies that the Victorian government should be taking to increase housing supply and diversity in your region of the world?

Nathan HERSEY: I reckon I could do you more than three, but let us stick with three.

The CHAIR: Let us stick with three.

Nathan HERSEY: Funding for councils for enabling infrastructure –

The CHAIR: So trunk infrastructure?

Nathan HERSEY: yes – is by far the number one thing that we need across the region.

The CHAIR: We got to go to a housing estate in Ararat two weeks ago, and the state government had provided some of that enabling infrastructure as a model. So yes, we understand that is an issue – tick.

Nathan HERSEY: Support for the offshore wind proposal and funding for that and the planning, which is something that we have we have put forward. We are still waiting to hear back from them. Is that correct, Tony?

Tony PETERSON: PPP funding, which is federal funding, but the state are advocating on our behalf. My understanding is it will come to the state to administer, through RDV.

The CHAIR: Okay. Terrific.

Nathan HERSEY: I will just touch on that a little bit. If everyone is telling us the truth of what will happen with offshore wind, we are expecting around 17,000 workers to come into the region in the foreseeable future. What I do not want to see and what the region does not want to see is FIFOs. That does not contribute to the economy, likely it does not contribute to our local area. It does not actually help. What we are asking for very clearly is some support with planning for the future of that energy transition – and this is a One Gippsland priority, mind you. But this is in a way where we can see that we are going to get infrastructure investment locally, we are going to get population locally, we are going to have our communities, you know, increased and buoyed by this. We do not want to just see a case where we have people coming in, doing the job, flying back out on a chopper and they are gone. That is so not appropriate for what it is.

The CHAIR: We also heard that from Horsham shire council, about mineral sands mining; that if there is nowhere to live in Horsham, they do not want a situation where people are driving up the highway or staying in motels. They want families moving in, building a home. So, some really consistent themes. And your third one?

Nathan HERSEY: That is on the back of that: live, work and stay, is what we say. Councils in rural areas need to have an opportunity to be able to review the rate cap where they are currently sitting. A lot of councils in rural areas, including Gippsland, are set from quite a low base. What we would say is that if there is a particular focus on that review, that could mean that we are able to better support the growth. That would be welcomed.

The CHAIR: So, with a housing lens to it.

Nathan HERSEY: Yes, with a lens on that, because as I think I have expressed very strongly, if we continue to go out the back door financially, we are not going to be able to do much to help work with government to be able to deliver these targets, to deliver what it is that we want to see and to have a place that is a great place to live as well.

The other part I would say is money. I mean, everyone is asking you for that, but it has got to come from somewhere, whether it is developers or whether it is from ratepayers or whether it is from government. But we probably see an approach where we can look at perhaps all of those in a way that would mean that we can assist and work with government effectively.

The CHAIR: Thank you very much. I just need to read something official before we let you go. Let me just find it so everyone is happy with me and I get my gold star for being a good Chair.

Thank you for making the time to participate in our inquiry. If you would like to provide any additional information or responses to any questions taken on notice, please speak to our secretariat. Really great conversation and thank you for all the work that you have done. We look forward to tabling our report in November and a government response, but you will get the opportunity to go through the evidence you have given in a draft. Thank you so much.

Witnesses withdrew.