Dear Darren,

Re: Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities

Thank you for your invitation to make a submission to the Victorian Legislative Assembly Environment and Planning Committee’s Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities. Please find below Council’s response to the noted issues identified in your invitation.

- **Actions being undertaken by community members and organisations to mitigate the severity of climate change, including actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.**

Baw Baw Shire contains two sustainability/greenhouse alliance community groups that provide education material and advocate for action on climate change. These two groups include the Baw Baw Sustainability Network (BBSN) and the Gippsland Climate Change Network (GCCN). Both groups are independent, not-for-profit organisations and in addition to having established visions, objectives and terms of reference, both groups have a climate change/sustainability strategy (Beyond Zero Emissions Strategy – BBSN) or project/program schedule that identifies the groups actions and projects to address climate change. This information is available on the relevant websites for the groups.

- **Actions by community members and organisations to adapt to current and future impacts of climate change.**

Strategies and programs prepared by the above two community groups (BBSN and GCCN) as well as Council’s Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2018-2022) contain actions to address climate change mitigation and adaptation, with most actions focusing on mitigation at this time. The BBSN does provide a service to assess the sustainability of residential households from an energy, heating, cooling and insulation point of view (Residential Score Card) for a fee as well as providing information on community gardening and renewable energy. The GCCN has been very active in delivering renewable energy programs (*Solar Bulk Buy*), conducting feasibility studies and providing technical information to the community on microgrids, with support through the Latrobe Valley Authority (LVA) and the formation of the Latrobe Valley Community Power Hub.

Council’s Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2018-2022) also contains several actions to support the community in addressing climate change, particularly in the area of adaptation and resilience.

- **Ways in which the government can best support communities in their efforts.**

The government can provide additional support to these sustainability/greenhouse alliance community groups by providing improved leadership and delivery of mitigation and adaptation projects and programs as per existing state plans and frameworks, including funding support for groups with an
existing plan and governance structure.

- Interstate and overseas best practice models that could be implemented in Victoria.

Baw Baw Shire Council believes that the Victorian State Government should be a leader in climate change and have the knowledge and expertise within its structure to both track and distribute information of best-practice models for local government to consider. Our Council is classified as a ‘resource-constrained’ and we struggle to deliver the current services that we provide. We therefore rely on state government or other councils to learn and gather information on best-practice.

Do date, most states in Australia have already adopted a ‘container deposit scheme’ and yet Victoria continues to not put this scheme in place. Such a scheme should at least be considered in the short term whilst the current recycling and waste industry crisis is put onto a more stable footing. Council acknowledges that there is still not a recycling solution in place to process the containers that would be collected as part of such a scheme, but does believe that the benefits of such a scheme, including addressing the increasing litter problem as the population increases and educating the community about recycling (reducing landfill) and resource recovery (the Government’s ‘circular economy’ theme) are additional significant benefits.

Local government is eager to lead their communities to address climate change but needs clear and bipartisan direction and support from State and Commonwealth Government to achieve this.

Yours Sincerely

Greg Hollis
Environment Sustainability Coordinator