

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities

Geelong—Wednesday, 20 November 2019

MEMBERS

Mr Darren Cheeseman—Chair

Mr David Morris—Deputy Chair

Mr Will Fowles

Ms Danielle Green

Mr Paul Hamer

Mr Tim McCurdy

Mr Tim Smith

WITNESSES

Ms Fran Macdonald, Executive Officer, Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action; and

Mr Tim Mordaunt, Senior Sustainability Officer, City of Greater Geelong.

The CHAIR: Welcome to the Geelong public hearings for the Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities. I would like to extend a welcome to any members of the public or media present here today. This is one of several hearings that the Environment and Planning Committee is conducting to inform itself about the issues relevant to the Inquiry. 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 no legal action can be taken against you in relation to the evidence you give. However, this protection does not apply to comments made outside the hearing, even if you are restating what you said during the hearing. You will receive a draft transcript of your 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 with the Committee today. Could you please state your full name, your title, and then you may begin your presentation.

Visual presentation.

Ms MACDONALD: Thank you very much. My name is Fran Macdonald, and I am the Executive Officer of the Western Alliance for Greenhouse Action, WAGA, which is a partnership of eight councils in the west of Melbourne from inner west right out west, including Geelong and north to Melton. Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity. These are just copies of the presentation. I also have copies of the written submission.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms MACDONALD: I have already made that written submission on behalf of WAGA, so I do not intend to go over that in a lot of detail. I will just really focus on some highlights today and leave enough time, hopefully, for you to ask question. As this is a PowerPoint, I wanted to really take advantage of that and show you some pictures that demonstrate really what is going on in our region.

Before I go any further I should add also that I am here with my colleague, Tim Mordaunt, Senior Sustainability Officer from the City of Greater Geelong, who can also answer questions particularly related to this region of Geelong.

This is the WAGA region of about 4700 square kilometres. That photo that you see in the presentation is of Caroline Springs in Melton looking south-east to coastal Melbourne and the Melbourne CBD. I really included that to show you that it is fairly flat and treeless because we are situated on volcanic plains, as you can see. On the left there is the map of the region, which is extensive and overlaps about 60 per cent of metropolitan Melbourne.

The CHAIR: Sorry, can I just ask on that: prior to European settlement they were open grasslands—

Ms MACDONALD: Open grasslands and woodlands, yes, but grasslands are the predominant geographical feature in our region, and there is a very little forested area, naturally.

As you no doubt know we are experiencing strong planning pressures in the region. It is one of the fastest growing regions in Australia, with a population due to increase to about 1 million in 2020. That photo there is of new housing in Melton encroaching on rural land, as you can see. That graph at the top left—and apologies that it is not very readable, but I just really wanted to show you the broad outlines—shows housing types in the region and their contribution to greenhouse emissions. Detached houses are shown over on the left, those blue and orange bars, and you can see that they are by far the greatest contribution there, with expected increases from 2012—that is the baseline blue bar—to 2020, the orange bar. Then those two middle bars are semi-detached houses. Over on the right you have flats and apartments, which make relatively low contributions to emissions.

Mr HAMER: But the proportion of detached houses—this is just the shire of Melton is it, or is it the whole western region?

Ms MACDONALD: No, that is an average for the whole region.

Mr HAMER: But what would be the proportion of detached houses be—is this new builds or is this for the entire housing stock?

Ms MACDONALD: No, that is all—new and existing—builds. So, of course, in Melton it is particularly strong, but that is actually the average for the whole region, not just Melton.

Mr HAMER: But the proportion of detached dwellings in the whole region would still be very high?

Ms MACDONALD: Yes, very, very high. It is by far the most predominant housing type—that is right.

The CHAIR: Can I just ask: from 2012 to 2020 your emissions profile per dwelling has been going up, so does that suggest that at this stage people are not making a lot of investments in their properties or the appliances they run in their properties to get more efficient products?

Mr FOWLES: Is it going up per dwelling or just in aggregate because there are more dwellings?

Ms MACDONALD: Exactly. It is going up in aggregate because there are more dwellings and there has been a population increase. In fact we have a relatively high uptake of solar in the region, particularly in the peri-urban areas. In Moorabool and Melton about 25 per cent of houses have solar. But, yes, it is really just the fact that we have a growing population and the associated growing number of dwellings in the region.

Mr HAMER: Sorry, would that actually be falling per dwelling? Like, as a rate per dwelling would that—

Ms MACDONALD: I do not think it is, no. On average I do not think that is the case.

The CHAIR: Is it going up per dwelling?

Ms MACDONALD: I am sorry, I am not sure exactly what the figure is, but, no, on the whole I think it is about the same. It is certainly not decreasing.

The population is relatively disadvantaged in the region, as I am sure you also know, and we have a high proportion of culturally and linguistically diverse communities; over 130 nationalities are represented in the region. It is also one of the industrial hubs in Australia, but we suffered from industrial downturn of course, particularly in the automotive industry. That said, manufacturing continues to be strong in the west, and we also have our share of sustainability champions in the business community. That photo actually is of the 500-kilowatt solar array installed at Toyota's site in Altona, which still powers their operations since they stopped manufacturing internal combustion cars at that site.

I might go onto the next slide. I wanted to talk about climate change impacts in our region. This is detailed in the submission. In general the impacts in our region are: heatwaves, consistently shown to be the most serious impact right across all our municipalities; water shortage and low rainfall, which are particularly noted by the community; extreme weather—floods, storms and grassfires; biodiversity loss; sea-level rise, obviously in the coastal areas, bearing in mind that our coastal areas at Hobsons Bay, Geelong and Wyndham are particularly built-up; and worsening air pollution, particularly from transport in a hotter climate. Just some of these pictures: over the top left-hand corner there you see the SES cleaning up after a severe storm in Geelong. Next to that you see an endangered Sunshine orchid in Brimbank, which has actually been in the news lately. Over on the top right there is thermal imagery compared to aerial photos of housing, showing the extreme heat of average housing in Wyndham. Heavy traffic and trucks in Footscray are in the one down on the right there. The next one along is a storm surge at Altona Beach, with water over the road, and on that day the Esplanade there was actually blocked off. Then finally I wanted to just point out this graph, and again apologies that it is a bit hard to read but I just wanted to show you the broad outlines. This is from the department of environment's—DELWP's—urban cooling and greening project, in 2018, and it shows the percentage of tree canopy cover for 31 metropolitan Melbourne councils. The WAGA councils are highlighted in red there, and you see Moonee

Valley, Maribyrnong, Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Melton and, right down the bottom, Wyndham, which had the least canopy cover.

Mr FOWLES: Is that in part because clearly the topography did not historically sustain a great number of trees? Are the soils kind of unsuited to it or is it actually just a lack of investment from council as all of these housing estates have been rolled out?

Ms MACDONALD: It is really because of the original geographical features—of course that is the main reason. In the south-east of Melbourne you see a lot more tree canopy for that reason. In fact our councils are actually investing in tree canopy cover—Greening the West is one of our pretty prominent alliances, which has a goal of doubling tree canopy cover.

The CHAIR: Can I just ask: in the leafy inner-eastern suburbs, really, the majority of that tree stock is not indigenous to the area, so we can as a society, if we choose, green our communities, can't we? I mean, that is clearly what has happened in some of those inner-eastern suburbs over the decades.

Ms MACDONALD: Yes, exactly—over the whole development of Melbourne. And of course what you have in the west generally speaking are the inner industrial areas, which traditionally have not been leafy and green, and a lot of new suburbs and a lot of new towns out in the west which do need a lot more greening—that is right—and which could have a lot more greening. On top of that, we have grasslands, as opposed to forested areas, naturally. So, yes, that really does explain that.

That is what I wanted to really show you about our impacts. I want to go on to our emissions now.

Mr HAMER: Can I just ask on the greening: obviously in the west there are still a lot of subdivisions that are occurring—new subdivisions. From, I suppose, a regional point of view, do you see that there is sufficient land reserved or road widths to actually accommodate that tree canopy if it is either done at a later date or as part of the development? If you look at that picture, say, on your the top right there, there would not be a lot of opportunities to go back and retrofit trees into that environment.

Ms MACDONALD: That is exactly right. I am not a planner, so I can just take the feedback from planners. We are actually involved in a project at the moment where we are doing just that. One of the strong comments from planners is that at the precinct structure planning stage, that is where you really need to take it into account. While there is limited opportunity to allow for more trees and allow greater area for them as well as actually put them in, then that is great, but you really do need to actually have it at precinct structure planning stage, at the earlier stage.

The CHAIR: Can I just ask on that: on your precinct structure plans, are there any guidelines, or something more enforceable than guidelines, that requires these precinct structure plans to have urban forestry as a part of that—streetscape planning, all of those sorts of things?

Ms MACDONALD: Again, I am not a planner so I cannot tell you the ins and outs of the system, but individual councils certainly do have guidelines and they have planning scheme amendments to allow for this. But I think it is fair to say that the planning system as a whole does need to have an overall reform. One of the things that we are actually advocating—and it is in our submission—is for addressing climate change to be an objective in the *Planning and Environment Act*, and also for the *Planning and Environment Act* to be referenced in the *Climate Change Act*—to be included in schedule 1 of the *Climate Change Act*—so that there is a clear overall mandate to include all climate-change considerations in the planning system, and of course greening is a really important part of that.

Just to really give you a snapshot of the emissions in the region, as I said, that is a very dense graph there, so I want to break it down for you. It shows emissions per municipality and also per sector in 2012 and projected out to 2020. What can we see? Well, the first thing there is that the orange sections of those bars represent the contribution of non-residential buildings to overall emissions. That is business premises, manufacturers and facilities in our region, and they generate about 50 per cent of the total emissions in the region. The light blue down the bottom, and then the kind of teal-coloured, bluey green sections of the bars above them, represent residential buildings and residential transport, and combined those sectors do contribute a great deal of emissions to the region—about 35 per cent. What you can also see is that Greater Geelong—over there on the

left—Wyndham and then Brimbank contribute the most emissions in the region, and as we have already said, that emissions across the region are rising, particularly in those areas where you see a population increase, in Wyndham and Geelong.

I guess that is the bad news, looking at the emissions and at the impacts, but there is a lot of action going on to address climate change too. Again, you have got most of the details there in the submission, so I do not want to go over that in too much detail but just highlight some actions. Actually in our submission I said that two of our councils had declared or announced a climate emergency. Since that submission was made, two more have declared a climate emergency, so now four of our councils have done so—that is, Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley. The WAGA councils do have strong projects to install solar and make their own buildings and facilities energy efficient. A couple of highlights: one is that in Moonee Valley and Wyndham there is solar on all council-owned and managed buildings. That is a real leadership in Victoria. I want to say something about Geelong here. Since 2017 six new buildings have been built or are currently being designed to meet a 5-star Green Star rating in Geelong, and even in much smaller Melton, Melton has built two 5-star Green Star buildings as well.

Mr FOWLES: Is five-star good enough, in your view?

Ms MACDONALD: Five-star was certainly best practice at the time, but six-star I think is what people are aiming for now. From now on I think you will see six-star, and that is what we want to see.

The CHAIR: We are talking about the municipalities having built—

Ms MACDONALD: That is right, their own buildings. That is right. The councils also have strong alliances. There is WAGA, and as I mentioned there is Greening the West, which is an alliance that actually goes beyond the WAGA councils and includes state agencies and community organisations. We also have strong regional strategies and projects. We have Low Carbon West—and I have given you a written summary of that—which is a comprehensive sectoral plan for transition to a low-carbon economy. We have a regional adaptation strategy which is based on a comprehensive regional risk assessment for climate change.

WAGA is involved in two very large projects at the moment—which you might have heard about in other hearings actually—which we are undertaken with other greenhouse alliances. One is a joint power purchase agreement to help 48 Victorian councils make the switch to renewable energy for their corporate electricity needs, and what I would say about the WAGA region is that seven of our councils are involved in that project—seven of the eight—and six of them, including Geelong, are actually putting in 100 per cent of their electricity needs.

Mr FOWLES: Who is the rebel council?

Ms MACDONALD: Moorabool. They are very under-resourced, and they are our small one.

How Well Are We Adapting? is another project which actually was started by WAGA but now has 20 councils involved and participating. It is a tool to measure and guide climate change responses by councils right across their services, operations and assets, and that has been developed on the ground with council officers who need that data.

That is a snapshot of what is going on in our councils, and we have a lot more detail in our written submission. Obviously there is a lot going on in the community. As we have said, there is a strong uptake of renewable energy in the community, and as I am sure you know, the greatest uptake of the Solar Homes package is in the growth suburbs of Melbourne. Actually the busiest municipality is Wyndham. There is also strong interest in uptake of solar and energy efficiency in the industrial sector, and I just wanted to highlight—I mention it in the written submission—that in 2009 WAGA conducted a study with Victoria University which showed that there is 14 square kilometres of industrial roof space in our region which is suitable for solar and water storage. We are undertaking environmental upgrade agreements with local businesses and already have about \$2 million worth of solar installed as a result of those, which is starting to take advantage of that roof space.

The CHAIR: Can I just ask on that: how is the network placed across your region to support that sort of almost commercial-scale generation of solar power? Is the grid at this stage capable in the majority of those

locations of supporting that, or does the grid need further investment, or are some of these sites big enough consumers of electricity that they might consume what they generate on their own site so that they do not have to be connected per se to the grid?

Ms MACDONALD: Mostly for this large commercial rooftop solar, they are using that power themselves, and what we have heard from Powercor, which is the largest distributor—well, it covers most of our region; Jemena covers some of it as well—is that there really are not substantial grid problems in our region. Of course there are really serious grid problems further west, so in the north-west of Victoria we know that is a really serious problem, and also there are demand management programs that the distributors are starting to undertake with those large businesses as well. I would say that grid connection is not a particular problem in our region. That said, of course it is really important to include the distributors, include energy planning with this kind of planning, yes.

The CHAIR: Are there any regulatory hurdles at this stage that are preventing this uptake?

Ms MACDONALD: In the energy market itself?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Ms MACDONALD: Or at the energy market operator level—the distribution level. It is a good question. I think what we would like to see on the whole is more cooperation with the distributors, rather than there being a particular hurdle. They have a demand management incentive scheme, which I think is 1 per cent, or even more, of their income to be put to demand management. We are yet to see a whole lot of action in that area from the distributors. A couple of years ago now, when that rule change came in, we spoke to Powercor and Jemena and said, ‘We want to actually work with you more closely on community and business programs and take advantage of that’. But, yes, probably I think there is still a way to go with our relationship with the energy distributors.

The CHAIR: I am assuming they would see it as competition, wouldn’t they?

Ms MACDONALD: They are in competition?

The CHAIR: Yes. They earn their income by distributing, so if a large consumer puts panels on their roof and effectively in many ways no longer is as locked into the grid as what they have been in the past, they are competing, then, against that provider, aren’t they?

Ms MACDONALD: I do not think that is a big issue for the distributors.

The CHAIR: They do not see it like that?

Ms MACDONALD: Obviously I cannot speak on their behalf, but in our engagement with them I really do not see that as an issue. As long as their business model is not particularly effective, they are actually willing to help large energy users and really do want to do that. It is a case for them of avoiding augmentation of the grid, those expenses, if they can. So demand management and helping businesses and the community with solar installation is something which they will, to that extent, do. What we have seen is that they are really only willing to look at that where they do see future problems with grid connections, where they do want to avoid augmentation of the grid and where they do want to even out the peaks. So they are interested in management of the peaks and not particularly interested in reducing energy use overall.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms MACDONALD: Okay, so now I am on to some pictures just to really illustrate some of the great things that are happening. That picture there is of the Western BACE, Business Accelerator and Centre for Excellence. That is one of those buildings in Melton that I mentioned. The City of Melton created this hub of, as I call it, enterprise, community activity and business development for Melbourne’s west. As I said, it had a five-star as-built rating. It actually had a Green Star six-star design rating.

This is a picture of the hydrogen fuel cell electric vehicle developed by Toyota and trialled by Hobsons Bay last year.

This one is a new path along Skeleton Creek in Hobsons Bay. A product called Emesh has been used as a replacement for steel to reinforce the concrete in that path. Emesh is a 100 per cent recycled plastic fibre, which obviously reduces plastic waste and reduces the emissions associated with steel. Just in that section of that path about 2500 kilograms of emissions have been avoided.

Certainly if there are any questions, we might go to Tim here from Geelong. This is an offshore shellfish reef installed along the Ramblers Road foreshore in Portarlington by the City of Greater Geelong. It is a soft engineering solution to sand loss due to sea level rise. It is designed to reduce wave energy and erosion, and possibly even help reclaim some of that foreshore. It is actually a series of steel cages filled with rock and shell, and some of those cages are seeded with young mussels because it is a research project, so they want to see what happens to some of them. It is expected that a range of algae, shellfish and other fish will colonise that structure and require minimal maintenance. It is pretty new, and it is a project conducted with the University of Melbourne, so the council built the structure and Uni Melbourne is monitoring it.

The CHAIR: Can I just ask: one of the consequences of climate change is obviously sea level rise, and that will change our coastline. We are going to see more coastal erosion and the like. I know anecdotally that the construction of seawalls is exceptionally expensive. What is the cost of something like this, which—

Mr MORDAUNT: A colleague of mine has been right behind this push. They are basically sourcing all the shellfish that would be rubbish from the restaurant industry locally. The rocks have all come from development in the area. It is just a by-product of development, so they are actually being used there. The cost—the State is assisting with the funding of this, but I could not give you a firm figure.

The CHAIR: I am assuming a lot less than a formal seawall.

Mr MORDAUNT: Absolutely. Yes, it is, but I am happy to provide those details at a later stage.

The CHAIR: You might just state your name for the record.

Mr MORDAUNT: Tim Mordaunt, City of Greater Geelong.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms MACDONALD: That is really just some illustrations of what is going on in our councils and what our councils are doing. Obviously too, yes, as I said, there is a lot happening in the community. This is just really to illustrate the active climate change community groups in our region. Geelong Sustainability is one, and I understand you will be hearing from them later in the day so I will not too much more about them, except that we are proud of Geelong Sustainability and we think they do some really great work and have close partnership with councils, including the City of Greater Geelong. That one on the left is the Westside Climate Action Community, which is really quite a new community group based in the inner west, which is responsible for petitioning some of our councils to declare climate emergency and is really a coming together of a number of much smaller groups that have not been very organised. This group is getting very organised, so I think you are going to hear a lot more from them in the future. I know you are also going to hear from the BRACE later on, so I will not say anything about them either, except of course they are not actually officially in the WAGA region; they are further west than that.

Could I go onto the final thing now, which is really to talk about what I think—well, it is not me, it is what WAGA thinks that we need, our own advocacy on this. Obviously we need to reduce emissions. We need to reverse those trajectories which I have showed you in our region. We need to address the market failures in the solar industry which see renters and disadvantaged communities miss out on renewable energy. That is a particular problem for us in our region. We do need to engage businesses, particularly small businesses—those SMEs—in switching to renewables and becoming energy efficient, somehow getting over that ‘Not enough time, not enough money’ hub that small businesses experience, and we certainly have not cracked that yet.

We need to improve our planning and building systems. I want to just really summarise some of the feedback that I have had from planners in the WAGA region. Some of you will be very, very familiar with this. The planning system is reactive rather than proactive. Also, obviously councils do not necessarily have control in the planning space anyway. You do not need a planning permit for many new buildings, particularly in the growth areas where planning is a particular problem for emissions and where we are not seeing enough planning for renewables, energy efficiency and greening. There is also fairly haphazard application of principles and standards to deal with climate change. We do not have consistent adaptation standards, apart from sea level rise, and relevant overlays have not been updated in most of our councils.

In the councils with ESD—environmentally sustainable design—planning scheme amendments and guidelines, what there is is a chronic lack of compliance by developers, even for the regulated standards. I imagine that is something you have probably heard in other hearings as well.

Mr FOWLES: Are there specific areas of non-compliance that are of particular concern? Are you talking about it in terms of the star rating sorts of things?

Ms MACDONALD: Yes. Compliance with the mandatory star rating—that is really chronic. That is right across the region.

Mr FOWLES: When you say it is chronic, is that as evidenced by councils or have there been formal research pieces done?

Ms MACDONALD: As evidenced by councils. I am not actually sure if there has been a research project that actually provides authoritative advice on that, but that is certainly the anecdotal advice from planners in the region.

Mr FOWLES: Is there anything that can be shared, perhaps by those councils with this Committee to support that, because it is certainly an important area, and I think ‘just anecdotal’ is probably not quite strong enough for us to go to the Minister and say, ‘We would like to see a bit more enforcement here’.

Ms MACDONALD: Yes. Okay.

The CHAIR: I am just wondering where that failure is coming from as well. Is it failing at the building surveyor part of the process?

Ms MACDONALD: Not just, but yes, building surveyors, as well as planners, have said that they see it as a problem at that level, but it is actually at the planning level as well. I certainly can provide some evidence of that and will do so.

The CHAIR: Fantastic.

Mr FOWLES: Just on this list of headings, I notice that some of these are about mitigating impacts and some are about contributing to the general effort about limiting global warming. I am interested to know—we heard some evidence around just how dramatic, for example, the changes needed for drainage infrastructure are going to be and how in the short term some of those upgrades are going to need to be implemented. Have you done any work in quantifying or assessing that risk for your members?

Ms MACDONALD: Yes. Drainage problems and stormwater problems absolutely came out of our 2011 risk assessment for the region. That identified nearly 100 risks, but that was actually one of the priority risks.

Mr FOWLES: And have councils been building to a warmed-globe standard, if you like, in relation to drainage infrastructure, or have they just gone, ‘Well, yes, that’s a risk, but we don’t have the money to be doubling the width of the curbs and doubling the width of the pipes and all that sort of stuff’?

Ms MACDONALD: I think it is fair to say that they are only just starting to deal with that problem. Did you want to say anything in particular about Geelong?

Mr MORDAUNT: Again, I am not really from a strong planning background at all, but there is a strong push in the City of Greater Geelong for water-sensitive urban designs. I think it still may be seen as a bit of a luxury item in some ways.

Mr FOWLES: Water-sensitive urban design goes part of the way. I am more interested in those storm scenarios where—whether you are filtering it through tanbark or not does not matter so much—it is getting the water out to sea and if the actual core infrastructure can cope with what will be more significant rainfall over shorter periods of time more often.

Ms MACDONALD: Studies have been done by the councils that certainly show that that is a very serious problem. But, yes, as far as what has actually been done to address it, and the serious infrastructure changes, I think that is only just beginning. I can certainly provide some particular evidence if you would like.

Mr FOWLES: Yes, thank you.

The CHAIR: We have got two scenarios around stormwater. You have got existing communities that have existing infrastructure, and so the question then is: when that infrastructure is getting replaced is it replaced with greater capacity to drain the landscape effectively? Then you have got obviously new developments, and new developments are a different matter. They are often controlled by developers as opposed to local government, and, you know, developers are trying to make a quid. Are they investing for a hotter future which might see more intense storm surges and the like? Are they doing that, or are they building to the existing engineering specifications?

Mr MORDAUNT: I think on your second point—just anecdotally again, not hard evidence—it has been the path of least resistance in many ways. What is going to be the cheaper outcome is traditionally what has happened. We have recently implemented, or it has recently been gazetted, environmental sustainable development in our planning scheme for the City of Greater Geelong. So that is going to take in that element, and hopefully from now on it is going to potentially take in those projected scenarios of better coping with what the projections are from a drainage perspective. But that just makes up one element of, I guess, how we are dealing with development as well. Tree canopy issues came up before. We are trying to push developers to have greater coverage of trees within new areas. All those climate change impacts, definitely more so in the last 18 months, are really being pushed a fair bit more from the council's perspective.

Ms MACDONALD: I think the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council and others too report that there really is a difference between developers. So volume builders tend to just go for the lowest common denominator, whereas you do have some developers that are really doing a lot more. ClimateWorks has recently—actually literally just now—produced a report on the development industry and their response, and I can certainly get you some more evidence from our councils.

The CHAIR: Should the State Government or the State Parliament provide greater clarity to councils around some of these types of questions?

Ms MACDONALD: Yes.

The CHAIR: It is clear to me that even within your own catchment area there are some councils that have the capacity and are implementing sensible reform, whereas others—and I think Moorabool is an example—are a bit smaller and perhaps need more assistance to achieve it.

Ms MACDONALD: They have very little resources to do this, yes.

The CHAIR: Should there be some level of blanket support provided to support local government and what they are doing?

Ms MACDONALD: Yes. We would absolutely advocate for that and would like to see that in the climate change strategy that is going to be developed by the Government next year, as a real way of building on current Victorian adaptation strategy, which does talk about relative roles and responsibilities and support for local government but has been implemented in a patchy way. Also we have not seen the outcomes of some reviews. So DELWP has undertaken a couple of very important reviews, one on the planning and building systems for

natural hazards and climate change—and we have not seen a report from that. We would like to see the outcome of that, and that was a 2017 review. There is also a local government roles and responsibilities project, also for DELWP, which we would like to see the outcomes of and which I think would clarify a lot of that.

The CHAIR: Terrific. Did you want to make any concluding comments?

Ms MACDONALD: Just one more thing—I mean there is a lot more I could say of course. I just wanted to highlight minimum energy efficiency standards for rental properties. At the moment draft regulations are out, released in November under the *Residential Tenancies Act*, and those draft regulations do not address energy efficiency at all. I see that as a missed opportunity, so we would like to see that—that is particularly urgent.

The CHAIR: Sorry, is that for new builds or existing dwellings or both?

Ms MACDONALD: That is for both, yes; that is right. And finally, I would like to recommend the greenhouse alliance model to you as a particularly efficient way of dealing with local government and climate change.

Mr FOWLES: Well, it has certainly been efficient for us.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Fran. That was a very detailed presentation. I certainly got a lot out of it, so I appreciate it.

Ms MACDONALD: Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: And thanks to your sidekick there.

Witnesses withdrew.