

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

Cr Rose Hodge, Mayor,

Mr Rowan Mackenzie, Manager Environment and Community Safety, and

Ms Lauren Watt, Coordinator, Environmental Sustainability, Surf Coast Shire Council.

The CHAIR: Welcome to the Geelong public hearing for the Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities. I would like to extend a welcome to any members of the public and the media present today. This is one of several public 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 action can be taken against you in relation to the evidence that you give. However, this protection does not apply to comments made outside of the hearing, even if you are restating what you have 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 the final report. Thank you for making the time to meet with the Committee today. Could each of you please state your full name and titles before beginning your presentation.

Cr HODGE: Hello. I am Rose Hodge. I am the Mayor of the Surf Coast shire.

Mr MACKENZIE: Rowan Mackenzie. I am the Manager, Environment and Community Safety, at the Surf Coast council.

Ms WATT: And I am Lauren Watt. I am Coordinator of the Environmental Sustainability team at Surf Coast.

Mr MACKENZIE: I will kick off, if that is alright, with just an intro to set the scene a little bit.

Visual presentation.

Mr MACKENZIE: We did not have a lot of time to prepare, but it is a great privilege to be here and thank you very much for the opportunity. We will do our best to provide something that is useful for you. So this is a presentation that was provided to council before council considered declaring a climate emergency. I thought this was probably good just to take you through, because what we did for our council was we tried to set the scene for them in order for them to decide whether they should declare a climate emergency or not. There is a quote there from the Premier, and I think the first thing to say is that it is really important for local government where it can, on an issue like climate change, to actually be able to work with the State Government, because we cannot solve these issues on our own. We have all got to, as far as we possibly can, find opportunities to work together. So that is something that we do try and do in this area.

There are another couple of statements. We probably do not need to go through them, but we acknowledge that the State Government understands this to be a very, very significant issue, as does our community. The Victorian climate change framework is, in our opinion, a good framework, and we are very supportive of that framework. We would probably like to see things go a little bit faster, and perhaps we can explain that, or the presentation might explain that.

Our community has been a very strong campaigner to us on the climate emergency, and the question is: why is there even a campaign? If we have all these frameworks in place and we are committed to Paris and those sorts of things, why is there even a climate emergency campaign? The simple fact is, as far as we can tell, that most likely the current policies that we are committed to project us to 3 to 3.5 degrees of global warming by 2100. That is a completely unacceptable outcome for our civilisation, and so the climate emergency campaign is asking all levels of government to acknowledge that the path we are on is not going to lead to an acceptable outcome for our society, for our civilisation, and that we must actually respond with a great deal more urgency and scale. So we talk there about the number of organisations that have made declarations, and the numbers

have gone up quite substantially, even in the last couple of months. This is a really strong, building community campaign, which I am sure you are all very well aware of.

This is a nice, simple graph, if you like, of where our current policies are taking us to 2100. That is just the science—what the science projects as most likely. No-one really can predict the future of course, but that is what the science is saying is the most likely outcome in terms of temperature. What that actually means for extreme weather, for public health, is very complex. There are lots of arguments about exactly what will happen in the future, but a 3- to 3.5-degree increase in temperature is just too risky to have as a likely outcome. That is why the community has been petitioning our council and others to declare a climate emergency.

I will come to the community in a minute, but we are very conscious in local government of doing our core business. It is not often black and white as to what that is, and to some extent council defines what its core business is. But we do reflect back to the *Local Government Bill*, and we also look at climate change adaptation plans. There are very, very clear roles for local government to get involved with its community in mitigating and adapting for a changing climate. Depending on their capabilities—as Fran and Tim mentioned earlier—and depending on what the community is like, there will be a vastly different responses from local governments across the state. I think that is probably an issue—that we are not addressing this problem in a kind of even way. I understand there will always be differences there, but it is probably pretty extreme at the moment in the responses that you would be seeing from different local governments. I would hope that Surf Coast is probably a bit more on the progressive side of that.

This is our community, from research that was done a couple of years ago by Sustainability Victoria. Again, we are just trying to set the scene about what our community is like. They want to see action on climate change—much, much more action. I am sure that the stats on this will probably be even stronger now. They want to see it from local government, State Government, business—they want to see it from everybody.

We are trying to understand what climate change means for our region specifically. There is some information there that we have got from the CSIRO, but there is nothing that would surprise you there. I work in the emergency management space. I have been the municipal emergency manager at the Surf Coast for 11 years, so I am really well aware of the efforts we put in with regard to bushfire preparedness and all that sort of stuff. That is a really big issue for our council.

The CHAIR: I might just ask on that: with a hotter, drier climate, there has been evidence presented to the Committee in previous hearings that areas like the Otways are going to dry out. That is going to mean more intense fire when it burns. Out of the bushfires royal commission, I think you have something like 15 of the top 30 areas at risk—

Cr HODGE: Hot spots, they are called.

The CHAIR: Hot spots, if you like. So you have got significant communities living in and around the Otways—

Cr HODGE: They are very well aware of the problem.

The CHAIR: As a municipality, are you confident and happy with the level of support that has been provided to you from the State Parliament in how you do your planning with your communities around fire prevention, fire management and what you do when there is a significant fire event? Is there more that can be done?

Mr MACKENZIE: There is always more that can be done. We are very well supported by our state colleagues, and we have a close connection; we all know each other. We live in the same towns, a lot of us, so we tend to work together. It is not necessarily just an academic exercise for us; these are our homes. It is our communities that are at risk.

The CHAIR: During the bushfire season—I accept those that are permanent residents—obviously the Surf Coast population probably goes up threefold.

Cr HODGE: Two.

The CHAIR: Twofold. They are obviously largely people that are not familiar with the area, or if they are familiar it is spasmodic. How are you engaging with those people, from a municipality perspective, around your emergency management planning?

Cr HODGE: Well, I know at Lorne in the 2016 fires there was a real concern about the international tourists down there, and they were evacuated. I think there were about 40 of them that came in to Torquay. But the problem is how do you get all the languages out there when they do not understand it? There was even confusion when a siren went at Wye River; the Japanese thought it was a tsunami and were thinking of going up into the hills.

Mr MACKENZIE: True story.

Cr HODGE: How do we do it? It is extremely difficult. We were lucky in 2016 that we had a dry run of what to do, but of course there can always be more resources. We have road signs flickering in different languages now, in Chinese mainly, when the drivers come down. But we have got to look at controls of the tourist buses and what can actually go down Great Ocean Road, especially after Torquay, because it is one road—if anything happens on it. We do not want signs everywhere. We have got a community that does not want signs. But how can we educate those people coming in that need education? Perhaps at the airports, with the hire cars, and even getting on buses.

The CHAIR: And could that even go to, potentially, on these days of catastrophic fire risk tourism buses and the like being banned?

Cr HODGE: Absolutely. I think Cr Goldsworthy, our deputy mayor, still counted over 30 buses going through in 2016, and that is just not acceptable. It is a catastrophe waiting to happen. If there had been an accident on that road, it would have been heard about right around the world.

Ms WATT: I would just like to add, coming back to your question around resources from the State, I think we have been well supported, I guess following the royal commission around the Black Saturday fires, and that investment in our region has really strengthened the emergency management arrangements and the multi-agency participation. We have just sort of touched on the tourism buses and I guess just recognising the various tensions, I suppose, around the emergency management arrangements and tourism and the economic drivers around wanting the Great Ocean Road to remain open. I guess I just want to make the point that these risks are only going to increase. We have got a drying climate, and the fire risk in the Otways is only set to increase. So continued investment to continue those multi-agency, multisector approaches to the planning for our area is going to be really important.

Mr MACKENZIE: If you are asking me whether I am comfortable about it, I am not. We all lose a lot of sleep over it. We are in a very high-risk area. We have, I think, getting close to 3 million individual people visiting the Surf Coast shire every year now. We have 30 000 people living there.

Mr FOWLES: So 3 million new people—so 3 million who have not been there before?

Cr HODGE: Visitors, yes.

Mr MACKENZIE: Three million individual, unique people visiting the Surf Coast shire every year. It is not 1 million people going three times; it is 3 million people. So our community extends beyond our 30 000 to 3 million people, and the risks are really, really high in our area. I think in addition to everything that Lauren is saying—how we adapt to that risk as it increases—we are going to have to try some new and creative things. We are trying some different things with our colleagues in different State Government agencies. We also collaborate with Corangamite and Colac Otway shire, very formally, in our emergency management preparations. But I think we are still carrying a very high risk that is probably unacceptable, I would say.

That whole adaption to emergency management is a big factor. Just setting the scene and coming back to council, we have been running an environmental leadership program since 2016. We refer to this One Planet Living framework as a way to try and not just focus in on environmental issues but broaden it to social and economic issues as well. Council has recently reaffirmed its commitment to that framework, and it is a pretty

good framework for other councils and other organisations to use. We would be an advocate for that framework.

Some of the things we have been doing at council and how they link to our community—we have a 25 per cent by 2020 renewable energy task force. Adrian is a member of that. He will be speaking to you—

Mr FOWLES: So there is 25 per cent in the community or for council's own use?

Mr MACKENZIE: It is for the community. What council did is it acknowledged the State Government's targets on that, and then we have got a program to see what is logical for a local government to do to support that with our community, so that is what we have been doing for the past couple of years. We have trialled the food organics collection. Food waste is a big emitter of emissions, and we have just had a really successful trial completed in Anglesea about the food waste collection, and we are going to now roll that out across the whole shire. We are just going through the preparations for that.

Cr HODGE: It lowered by over 22 per cent in just a small trial, so if we can roll that over and educate the community, who are already wanting it, we are hoping to make that percentage a lot higher in the next year.

Mr MACKENZIE: We have recently committed to 100 per cent renewable energy for the next 10 years, and that is through a power purchase agreement, which I think Fran mentioned. By the way, everything that Fran and Tim said, we would support. They have obviously got a lot of experience. It was really interesting listening to what they said, because I felt like saying 'I think I should say that as well'.

The CHAIR: Are you able to join their alliance?

Mr MACKENZIE: We are getting our own alliance.

The CHAIR: Oh, you are forming your own?

Ms WATT: We are in the process of establishing one for Barwon South West.

Cr HODGE: So we will go to the other side.

Mr FOWLES: Which is what? Surf Coast, Glenelg—

Cr HODGE: It would be Corangamite, Colac, Otway—all down that way.

Ms WATT: Through to the border.

The CHAIR: Warrnambool, Portland.

Mr MACKENZIE: That is really, really good news for us. We would really be very grateful for that. There is so much more we can do in this space—so much more.

The CHAIR: Is that being supported by the State Government or is that local government's initiative?

Mr FOWLES: I think DELWP is giving some seed funding at the moment.

The CHAIR: Seed funding? Okay.

Cr HODGE: We have all got the same problems along the coast, and what will be really interesting, and what is coming up next, is the Great Ocean Road authority taking over from all the foreshore committees. They can show absolute leadership along this road because of the surges that are coming into our coastline. We are hoping that committee can have some oomph behind it and really help out the local councils in improving that.

Mr MACKENZIE: Fran mentioned the power purchase agreement. We have been able to commit to 100 per cent renewable over the next 10 years at a lower rate than we would have otherwise been able to achieve through the normal market. We were pretty unsure about it and we were very cautious about it. But that would be something that I think all councils, if they are not doing it already, should be investigating because that is actually creating new renewable energy in the market, so it is really great. We are doing a lot of other

things in methane collection and flaring at our landfill, but waste is a big residual source of emissions for us. We do run a landfill, so we are probably going to have to offset those emissions somehow, and that is a space we have not worked in a lot. So I think that is also a very big opportunity. We have to be getting involved in that space of planting trees, sequestering carbon, hopefully in our own region rather than doing that offshore.

So some of those adaptation things there we have talked about as well, and maybe advocacy is worth mentioning there. Our community is very interested in fighting for the Bight and opposing drilling in the Bight, and we had a paddle out at Torquay with the surfers—I think there were 3000.

Cr HODGE: Three thousand. And there is another one this Saturday.

Mr MACKENZIE: We were probably a state leader in the frack-free movement and the moratorium on unconventional gas, and I know those things are controversial. But to some extent we are all part of the problem as well, because we are using gas and we are using oil—but we have got to move away from those sources of energy.

A couple of other really important projects we are currently advocating for include the Eden Project in Anglesea. You know about the Eden Project, I am sure. If you do not know about the Eden Project, it is probably worth getting your head around that one. It will be a nationally significant environmental sustainability—

Cr HODGE: It is the rehabilitation of the old Alcoa mine. It is from the Eden Project in England, and they have got eight projects around the world. If we can get this over the line with water, with the help of Barwon Water and the Government, this will fill up the old mine hole with water. If it was left to its natural things, it would be 40 or 50 years of an acidic-type hole. But if we can get this water through for the Eden Project, it will not only be an international tourist event; it will also rejuvenate the land right around there.

Mr FOWLES: So where is the water going to come from?

Cr HODGE: Hopefully from Barwon Water. We are in talks now with Eden, Alcoa and the State Government about getting a pipeline—I think it is up to about \$58 million. If we can get that—instead of putting all the megalitres out into the ocean, put it through valleys and then to Eden Project—it will be absolutely fabulous.

Mr FOWLES: Right. So this is recapturing stormwater.

Cr HODGE: Yes, absolutely. Not fresh potable. It will be recycled.

Cr HODGE: It actually will come through Thompson Valley, hopefully, near Torquay. Actually we have only been able to have type C recycled water, too salty for industries. But if we can get this water through and it is of a higher, good content, we could have vines growing, wineries and hydroponic things, so there would be an actual food bowl around Torquay in the farmland that would make it much more useful than the sheep and things that are on it now. So we are really looking for that water—as one of our natural resources—to be used a lot better.

The CHAIR: Can I just ask, from an infrastructure perspective: you have obviously got significant communities that live on the coastline. We know that there is going to be sea-level rise, there are going to be storm surges and we are going to see more intense rainfall events. That ultimately will mean that your drainage infrastructure will need to carry greater capacity. At the moment what are your internal processes when you are replacing your existing asset base? Are you investing in additional capacity—even if it is a landlocked town, it is not growing, its population is stable—to recognise some of those challenges, or are your engineers at this stage simply just replacing like with like?

Cr HODGE: Look, no, we are trying. A great example of that is at Winchelsea. There is a new estate opening up which is a smaller inland area, and all of the new run-off of water is going into the golf course—now that golf course has never been greener; its dams are full—rather than that going down the drain. So we are really looking at innovative ways to use water, especially with all the new growth that we have got. There are more wetlands being put in by the developers and things like that, and a lot of the water will go into that. With

drainage it is always a problem in the older parts, but if we are replacing it, we are trying to do it better with Transition Streets as well. Did you want to talk quickly just on that one?

Mr MACKENZIE: Well, the whole integrated water management that Tim mentioned before has been terrific. We are just starting the process, and it is really great. There are some challenges with it, but to answer your question directly, the engineers probably—I am an engineer myself, actually, originally—

The CHAIR: We will not hold it against you.

Mr MACKENZIE: No. The rainfall intensity charts that they probably use I imagine would be being updated. It is a matter of whether they actually are keeping up to date with the changes we are seeing. Because what we are seeing around the world is we are seeing the environment changing at the very, very high and extreme end of change. Whilst we were thinking, ‘Yeah, the storms are going to get more intense’, they are getting more intense, so what we thought might be happening maybe some years down the track is all happening now. Whether or not the engineers are actually up to date I am not sure.

The CHAIR: So a 20-inch pipe may have serviced a community and it may have been fine for the last 30 years. Now it is the same community, there is no population growth and nothing else has changed and we might need to go to a 25 inch?

Mr MACKENZIE: Yes.

Ms WATT: Yes, and I would just add too that this is part of the council’s climate emergency response. We are in the process now of reviewing all of the council’s service areas to understand what the impacts of climate change will be and what are the changes that we need to make. Tied up with that as well is looking at the introduction of the SEPP waters earlier this year and raising those standards that we need to make sure that we are complying with the standards around stormwater management as well. That work is underway.

The CHAIR: Obviously parts of the municipality are designated as growth areas, so you have got significant new communities being built. What planning controls are you putting in place on your developers around stormwater infrastructure, around urban forests, you know, all those things to make those communities as resilient as possible, as new communities, for dealing with climate change?

Mr MACKENZIE: Well, Rose mentioned the Winchelsea one, which is a good example. I think the stormwater is okay; we are generally managing the stormwater much better now. You will see if you come to Torquay, for example, a lot of new retention basins, and they are great because they end up becoming little nature reserves in their own right. So you will see a bit of that around, which is great. One of the big problems we have got with new development is—and I think all the issues that Fran mentioned earlier we would echo—you are seeing very, very large houses getting built on very, very small blocks, so there is not a lot of space left for any vegetation, and we are going to see big heat island impacts from that—big heat effects.

We are seeing very little renewable energy—solar systems being put on new houses. Of the 500 or 600 homes getting built, new homes, the volume homes that are being built in and around Torquay each year, some in Winchelsea, hardly any will have solar on them, some but much smaller than the actual state background levels. That is because the properties are so expensive and it is so hard, especially for first or second home buyers, to get into that market. It is a pretty desirable market where generally the prices are pushed up to the upper limit that the market can bear and then people cannot afford to put solar on the rooftops.

Mr FOWLES: And the Solar Homes program that the Government rolled out, has that not had an impact?

Mr MACKENZIE: It has, yes. It has been terrific. We have got lots of stats and we are doing a lot of work on this. That has really helped, but the new developments need a greater incentive because I think it is just so expensive now to get into the market that people are just putting off whatever costs they can until a later date. What we think people are doing is they are getting their house and they are thinking, ‘Well, we’ll do that solar in another few years when we can afford it’.

Cr HODGE: If there was an incentive from the Government to put solar on as you build, that would be really helpful.

Mr MACKENZIE: It is a lot simpler and easier to put solar on when it is being built, because you already have your electricians there and you have already got your roofers there.

Mr FOWLES: But it is impossible to do the household income test until you know who is going to be living there in the case of spec housing and stuff.

Mr MACKENZIE: There are some complications with that, yes, but that is an opportunity, I think.

Ms WATT: We recently discussed that with our renewable energy task force as well to identify what are the opportunities for improved ESD in our shire. We mentioned that we have got a 25 per cent by 2020 municipality-wide target. We are seeing great growth in solar, but our percentage has remained—well, it has grown very slowly because of that overall growth. I guess, in summary, the discussion of that task force was that our capacity to implement local planning policies was limited in the Surf Coast, recognising the opportunity and wanting to advocate to the State Government around improved ESD across the state planning framework and the building code as well, which I know is on the cards, but increasing those things as much as possible.

The CHAIR: Okay. Obviously at this stage the shire is a significant manager of public land along the foreshore. Now, that might change with the formation of the Great Ocean Road authority. What work will that authority need to do in terms of recognising the challenges of managing the coastline and the amenity of the coastline and where public toilets might go and park benches and all of those things given obviously the challenges of sea level rise? What work have you done, and what work do you think might need to be further done in that sort of space?

Cr HODGE: What they will need to do is actually talk to the communities where they are, and they are already doing that—they have already staged briefings right throughout the area. But because that has been the foreshore committee and not us, it is a new space for them. I thought it would be more that they would do the planning and the shire would actually take over that area, but that is not going to happen. This is where they can show their leadership and listen to the community and what they want. They know the problems where tourist buses stop and there are not enough toilets—they know that already with the discussions. So I am hoping when they do get legislated and start that they will be able to get right into it. But they will have to work out if they are there to manage Bells Beach or leave it with us for a while. I think they will do that. I think they will leave it in staged events of their takeover. But they will be managing three big caravan parks, and that is just in our shire—Anglesea, Lorne and Torquay—so they will have to get into it very quickly if they are there. Further down the road we know at Apollo Bay and Colac Otway they have got a lot of problems with surging, especially on the Great Ocean Road.

Mr MACKENZIE: So it is a new overarching view of climate change, or of the Great Ocean Road in the context of a changing climate, and I think that overarching look at it has not been done well before. I think it is a big opportunity for the new authority—

Cr HODGE: Absolutely.

Mr MACKENZIE: to look at all this and have that emergency management lens as well.

The CHAIR: I am certainly aware that on the sea side of the Great Ocean Road there are power poles, there are water pipes, there are telephone lines.

Cr HODGE: All the essential services, yes.

The CHAIR: All sorts of essential services and public assets that clearly at some point are in harm's way. There is going to be a real cost either to council or to the State Government or to power providers or water authorities or whatever to relocate that infrastructure to a different location, let alone obviously the threats to the road itself. I suspect parts of the Great Ocean Road are less than a metre above sea level, and we have seen flooding along Apollo Bay and places like that.

Mr MACKENZIE: And Anglesea.

Cr HODGE: And Anglesea, yes.

The CHAIR: And Anglesea and areas. So these are challenges that will need to be managed—

Cr HODGE: Yes, absolutely.

The CHAIR: over the next 20 or 30 years. We need to start thinking about that. I am sure the shire has been thinking about it. I am just wondering what your thoughts are. We are going to legislate something else but—

Mr MACKENZIE: I feel like we are probably at the same place you are. Councils are busy. We have already got a pretty full job just keeping our heads above water, pardon the pun, with all the other work we do. A lot of climate change is new threats and I would doubt many councils—

Perhaps maybe Moyne or Queenscliff might be a little further ahead of us because they have been impacted more directly—but most of us are still trying to understand what that means, to be fair, I think.

Mr HAMER: I just had a quick question. So your growth plan: what is your projected population increase over the next, say, 10 or 20 years?

Cr HODGE: It will be interesting to see, because at the moment there is a distinctive landscape overlay being looked at, and that will tighten up the boundaries of Torquay. That is our main growth. We are a shire of about 26 000. Torquay is about 16 000, 17 000. So if Torquay actually has a lot stronger boundary, the numbers will not grow so much on the coastal side. Winchelsea is a smaller inland, but I do not think that will grow at a rate of huge numbers. We would be looking at probably 30 000 to 40 000 people within the next 10 years.

Mr MACKENZIE: Ten years.

Mr HAMER: So those growth boundaries have not been set as yet.

Cr HODGE: No, not yet. They are still under review. I think Darren is leading the charge on that one, so that will be interesting to hear. They have had a lot of community feedback. Torquay people—they want the boundaries on it because they do not want to keep growing. They feel that they are being loved to death by tourism and things like that, so if the community is happy. Down the coast, as in Lorne, Anglesea, their communities are staying the same because they have got the boundaries of the Otway Ranges around them. So Torquay is sort of feeling that they need a stronger boundary. We have got a boundary on it, but they want it stronger so that development can just stay in the one area.

Mr HAMER: You would have a fairly large rural component, which is primarily agricultural. You mentioned that there are opportunities to potentially change the agricultural mix if there is water availability. Are the protections—

Cr HODGE: On our hinterlands?

Mr HAMER: in the hinterland—is that sufficient to allow that to be viable?

Cr HODGE: We just did a hinterland strategy that had feed-in from all our community groups out in the hinterland, and they seemed quite happy with that, so we will be following that strategy that allowed certain diversities in Landcare in different areas. So the hinterland strategy is quite strong.

Mr MACKENZIE: And water is a big opportunity. Right now we are doing the planning with Barwon Water, and we have a strategic partnership with them because their challenges are our challenges. The Eden Project I mentioned. The Eden Project will not go ahead, and all the benefits of that, without the filling of the lake. It seems to me that probably the only way to fill the lake is with recycled water. But if we can get the recycled water through the shire, there are all the potential agricultural benefits of that: growing food and a huge opportunity, and potentially even one day recycling the water into—heaven forbid—the water supply, which probably, when we look at the drying climate, is something we are going to have to face up to. So there are huge opportunities with water that climate change is presenting to us—risks and opportunities.

Mr HAMER: You might not know the answer to this question off the top of your head, but how much water is actually being pushed out to sea?

Mr MACKENZIE: It is about 20 gigalitres—

Mr HAMER: In what?

Mr MACKENZIE: Per annum.

Cr HODGE: If you talk to Colac Otway shire—and we had their councillors over last night—they want that pipeline, if it gets to Eden, to continue through to Colac, because they have got farmlands too that would absolutely need, if it stays as dry as it is, that water too. So they will be advocating if the pipeline gets to Eden to actually go further in the future.

Mr MACKENZIE: I am just wondering—Rose, is there anything that you would like to emphasise? There is a lot of information we did provide in the submission. We have covered off some of the highlights, but I am just wondering whether Lauren or Rose—I have been doing a lot of talking—

Cr HODGE: I would just like to say the Surf Coast shire community is wanting to move ahead with this. We had over 1000 signatures for the crisis of climate change. We all say in local government, ‘How can we get the young people involved?’. Well, this was led by a 19-year-old girl, and it was fantastic when they all came into the chamber with their petitions and the most respectful questions I have ever been asked. As an older person that has been around in local government quite a few years, it was fabulous to hear these new voices and it was very proud moment when Surf Coast did say we are in a crisis. We will be working with that, and our officers are working really hard behind the scenes to bring us a program that we can then give to the community, and they will take that up and they are going to feed into submissions and things like that. So I think, in my 15 years on council, that has been one of the most impactful times, with the community of all ages coming in and seeing us. I will never forget it because it was really quite emotional for them. Finally someone was listening to these young people, and it is hopefully rippling out. Strategically, they have gone to Geelong and missed out there, but they are going to a lot of others. I think Frankston was a unanimous decision two nights ago, so the rippling effect is starting. I think we need to bring in the young people and the people that want this done, and it has been great.

Ms WATT: I just want to make the point, and I am kind of echoing your sentiments there, that I see this time as quite an exciting opportunity. There are lots of things coming together. There are a lot of local governments are in the space of really critically analysing their service delivery and the work that they do in the context of climate change. I guess I just wanted to make the point that the outcomes of this, certainly for us—I mean there are a few examples up there around some of the things that we will need to be looking at. Stormwater infrastructure has been spoken about—local offset schemes and how we link those with our agricultural areas, what the benefits are with water and soil health and how we can bring all these things together. But it requires funding and investment, I suppose, to support upgrades to infrastructure, research into new technologies and new local solutions for drawdown, mitigation and adaptation.

The CHAIR: Fantastic. I am out of questions. Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.