



**DAVID MORRIS MP**  
Member for Mornington

# Tackling Climate Change – Committee Report

*Posted on 25 November 2020*

**Mr MORRIS** (Mornington) (10:39): I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise to make a few comments on the Inquiry into Tackling Climate Change in Victorian Communities report, a report of the Environment and Planning Committee that was tabled this morning.

In many ways for me I guess this was a return to what I thought was committee normalcy.

When I came into the Parliament I was on the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee, and it was a collaborative committee that came up with some interesting recommendations. Of course my committee service after that has largely been confined to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee (PAEC), which is a very different beast.

Probably if I had chosen a topic to return to committee normalcy, it may not have been climate change, but in the end it worked out pretty well. It was also my first experience of a committee drawn from one house on policy issues, as distinct from the Privileges Committee, and frankly I was a little bit sceptical about whether that would work or not, but in the end I think it worked pretty well.

I do want to acknowledge the other members of the committee: my coalition colleagues, the members for Ovens Valley and Kew; from the government side, the members for Burwood, Yan Yean and Box Hill; and of course the chair of the committee, the member for South Barwon.

In acknowledging him I also want to acknowledge the kind remarks he made in the chair's foreword, which I have only just read.

I think it was an opportunity to do some useful work on a difficult topic.

Committees, as I mentioned, tend to be partisan in their nature—PAEC is the classic example of that. Policy committees in many instances can be partisan—we can all be partisan—but frankly it is a waste of time. It is a waste of time from a political point of view as well as from a policy point of view because no-one cares.

You can argue the toss all you like, you can produce a dissenting report, but unless it is a clear point-of-principle difference, no-one cares. And even if it is an important matter, almost always no-one notices.

So the approach I tend to take with these committees is that it is an opportunity to engage, to learn from the experience and hopefully do some good and add some value along the

way.

I do want to acknowledge the secretariat of the committee: Nathan Bunt, the executive officer, and Dr Ben Beccari, who both obviously had significant input into the report—we all know how that works—and we had a very, very good document when we started deliberations; Helen Ross-Soden, who runs the administration side; and Christianne Andonovski, who I think was with us for six or eight weeks during the middle of the year.

We were fortunate that the hearings had largely been concluded by the time the pandemic really got running in the middle of March. It would have been impossible to do the sorts of public hearings, site visits and all the necessary things that were done had COVID started earlier.

I think it is also interesting though that while the videoconferencing process saved all of us, I am sure, and certainly the chair, the member for Ovens Valley and me, a lot of time in not having to travel in—it saved 2½ hours to 3 hours time for me in a day, which is a big deal—to some extent it did facilitate the deliberative process and perhaps enabled us to resolve some issues that we might not have been able to resolve around the committee table by taking it online, I guess, rather than taking it off line, but having the opportunity to have those discussions. I think it is an interesting model.

Climate change has certainly taken a back seat in recent months, but I think as the pandemic recedes it will come back into the spotlight inevitably.

Five minutes does not permit me to get into the detail of the recommendations except to acknowledge that there are 72 recommendations, and I think they are all worthwhile.

I think the important thing, though, is to note that change is occurring. Clearly just from talking to people outside Melbourne and inside Melbourne, change is occurring, and it has been occurring, as we know, for a very long time.

So the question really around this change that is happening is whether we manage it or whether we allow it to manage us. If we manage it, I think there are some very genuine opportunities to be had from an inevitable change, but if we do not manage it, it could be very, very costly, particularly to the social fabric of the state of Victoria.