

Women's Climate Conversations online (April 2021)

From Jo Dodds re Bega Cheese example (in chat)

Thank you and the team for the opportunity to take part in the discussion last night. It's always heartening to spend time in the company of women with such leadership skills!

I only have a very broad brush understanding of this proposal from Bega Cheese (BC) but it's very exciting!

CEO Barry Irvin gave a short presentation to Bega Valley Shire Council last month - (I'm a local government councillor). He described BC's commitment to Bega as its home base in terms of the brand having a very strong identity as Bega-based, which he and the company were determined to honour. As one of the biggest employers in the region their continued presence and investment in the Shire is vitally important as we have a high unemployment level, housing crisis, exodus of young people.

Barry suggested that talking about climate damage becomes political and divisive so he is focussing on the circular economy (CE) as a model for reducing climate and other environmental harm. The CE, he says, offers a tide that will float all boats - by assisting other related and un-related businesses and industries to prosper Bega Cheese will also see a better bottom line and a happier, healthier workforce. He described utilising the reach and connections and skills of his business to bring other businesses along. It seems very much a 'leave no one behind' model, inclusive, creative, disruptive, and not reliant on government.

One example he cited was KPMG's talks with local Indigenous groups to create a local carbon trading desk/co-operative. It would become an opportunity for Indigenous landowners to 'harvest' carbon trading and also assist other local substantial landholders to carbon trade..

Karin van Selm, Group Executive, Wholesale Banking at Rabo Bank Australia is also taking a great interest in the region and the BC plan to the extent that Rabo Bank is funding 50% of the costs of a 'scan' that will identify opportunities for the CE - and reduce emissions. It's anticipated that 3-4 high level jobs with Rabo Bank will come to the Valley.

<https://www.rabobank.com.au/media-releases/2018/180730-rabobank-australia-and-new-zealand-announces-new-group-executive-wholesale-banking/>

An example of changed farming practices is the concept of increased on-farm water storage. Instead of the traditional small number of large dams the CE model is for numerous smaller dams with extensive vegetation planting. Monitoring of improvements to biodiversity, such as insect numbers, would follow. These dams could better be described as lakes as they become inherent to the landscape they are built in and act to passively increase the hydration and health of the landscape. When Barry raised this idea with local farmers 68 of them said they were on board!

As the home of Clean Energy for Eternity, Bega Cheese, a Council that declared the Climate Emergency and is actively planning for further climate impacts, home of bushfire Survivors for Climate Action, producers of the finest, cleanest oysters in Australia, and location of some of the most beautiful beaches, forests and waterways in the world, the Bega Valley is very well placed to increase our self-reliance and resilience while reducing our carbon footprints. Our communities are diverse and creative and with just a little assistance I think we can become a pilot for better

agricultural practices, product stewardship, renewable energy and better employment opportunities.

<https://cleanenergyforeternity.net.au>

Sorry for the spruiking - I am frustrated that we have communities so ready to move forward, with or without governments being on-board - but too little is happening, too slowly, for us to address the growing climate crisis.

Cheers,

Jo

Jo Dodds

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