The Hon. John Brumby

Chair

External Advisory Board

Dear Mr Brumby

# Independent Review of Regional Development

I take the opportunity on behalf of GV Community Energy (GVCE) to provide information of two initiatives for consideration by the External Advisory Board.

## Introduction to GV Community Energy

GV Community Energy is a not for profit social enterprise assisting households, businesses and community organisations to reduce their carbon footprint through the introduction of renewable and/or low emission energy technologies. In its short history, GVCE has gone from strength to strength, to achieve a 2013-14 annual turnover of $1,000,000 with an equivalent of nine full time employees and nearly 3500 solar PV and hot water units installed.

GVCE’s mission is to promote community action that reduces greenhouse emissions and stimulates sustainable living. Its stated purpose is to provide a community service to reduce the region’s greenhouse gas emissions. To assist residents, businesses, community organisations and government authorities to embrace lower carbon activities, GVCE undertakes activities such as:

* Research and promotional programs
* Community engagement and educational programs
* Encouraging government policies that lower carbon emissions and reduce reliance on fossil fuels
* Facilitating the adoption of energy conservation through efficient building design and energy efficient appliances
* Fostering the introduction of renewable and/or low emission energy technologies
* Fostering behaviour changes that lead to reduced energy consumption and improved community resilience.

The following initiatives will have a substantial positive impact on our region; facilitate sustainable regional development, create real long term career opportunities, optimise the regions natural and produced resources while refining a suite of climate change adaptation and mitigation opportunities.

## The initiatives are:

## Tatura’s Energy Future

A Study funded by the Victorian government (through RDV) and local partners has just been completed in response to Tatura’s energy supply being at capacity, and limiting expansion of industry in the town. The key aspect of the Study was to assess ways of increasing energy supply to Tatura using renewable energy sources. One of the key findings of the Study is that there is a projected combined additional substantial demand for electricity of between 30-35 MW over the next five years. This project involves residents (3500) and industry, including substantial dairy and food processing companies, combining to implement sustainable energy solutions.

It is intended to create opportunities for our industries, businesses and residents to work together in addressing the current energy constraints in Tatura due to infrastructure and supply issues, by undertaking studies into the following four key program areas:

* Energy Management - detail new opportunities, including ownership of electricity infrastructure and retailing options to reduce power bills
* Energy Efficiency – identify new technologies and practises to use less energy, and supporting residents and businesses to adopt energy-efficient practices
* Alternative Energy – evaluate alternative energy sources such as bio, two 30MW solar farms and hydro energy to supply our future energy needs
* Sustainable Future – evaluate the potential of improving supply chain networks to convert waste from agriculture, industry and households into energy, thereby diverting this waste from landfill and optimising the value of the waste and reducing pressure on other energy and water supplies.

At this stage it is envisaged that full implementation of the project could involve $100m over a 10 year period and could provide electricity to Melbourne as well as meeting all Tatura’s future industrial electricity demand from renewable sources

The successful implementation of this project will enable similar projects to be established in regional Victoria.

##  GV21 – Collective Opportunities

The GV21 vision is to bring together key industry sectors, commerce, service industries and the community to form a ‘regional cluster’, that would see the Goulburn Valley recognised globally as a centre of innovation and the implementation of leading edge technologies that would enhance existing strengths and attract new emerging industries.

A key facet of this vision will be close working relationships with a selection of the world’s leading research Universities, chemical companies, and industry to achieve a “Living Laboratory” regional precinct, trialling, demonstrating and validating technologies and processes, under a contemporary regional sustainability brand recognised worldwide.

This would reinforce agricultural, industries and communities by linking all stakeholders to cooperatively fully utilize the strengths and infrastructure of existing landscapes, industry and services and attract new developing industries and technology and further enhance our resilience.

The aim is to create a ‘regional cluster.’

As the first step it is intended to hold an invite only symposium for the region’s business and community leaders and appropriate government departments heads and relevant Government Ministers to gain an understanding of other international examples and explore the local support for further work on this project.

It is proposed that Prof Ross Garnaut, Prof James Clark York University UK and Michael Butler (R&D Director Unilever) who are internationally renowned in economics, resource valorisation and international industry/consumer expectations will be key note speakers.

I also wish to advise you that letters from my co-directors Terry Court and John Pettigrew have been sent outlining the above initiatives to Ministers Jaala Pulford, Lily D’Ambrosia, and Lisa Neville.

A copy of letter to Minister Jaala Pulford and additional information on the initiatives has been provided to the local RDV office.

GVCE directors including Terry Court, John Pettigrew and myself would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to provide further detail on the above initiatives.

Yours Sincerely,

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Geoff Lodge

**CEO**

**GV Community Energy**