

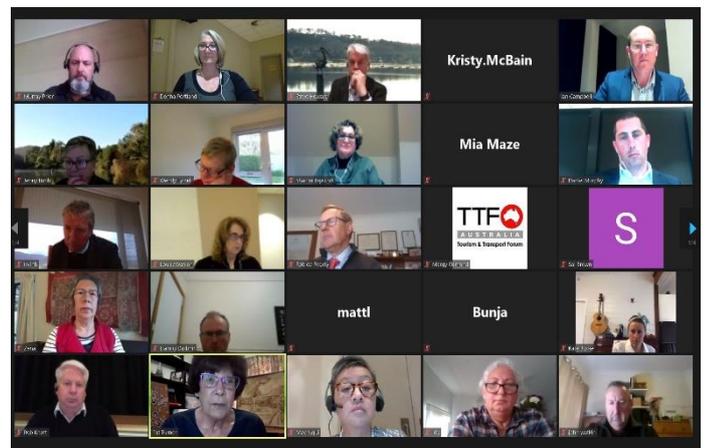
The Bega Valley Roundtable *Monday 10 August 2020*

Summary Report

Building back better after trauma, from the ground up. Lessons and connections from Bega Valley, a remarkable corner of regional Australia, to the rest of Australia and the world.



Participants at the Bega Civic Centre



Sample of Zoom participants

Background:

The Global Foundation convened a special regional meeting in our ongoing *Australian Roundtable* series on 10 August 2020 which was hosted by the Bega Valley Shire Council at its Civic Centre.

More than 100 online participants joined 15 dignitaries from the Bega Valley and the Global Foundation for an extensive discussion over nearly four hours. They were welcomed to 'the beautiful lands of the Djiringanj people' by Yuin nation elder, Ms Colleen Dixon.

The roundtable program featured a combination of national, local and global speakers, including the current and previous Governors General of Australia, indigenous elders, senior figures from the three tiers of government, along with leaders from the worlds of business, academia, the arts and community.

Participants joined the roundtable meeting from the local region, also from all parts of Australia, from Fremantle to Gundaroo to Mackay, as well as from many parts of the world, including Hong Kong and Singapore, Paris, Luxembourg and Rome, the UK and Wales and the United States. As MC Ian Campbell said at the outset, technology now means we can all be connected wherever we are in the globe.

The exceptional musical talent of the region, including Australian folk/country stars, 'The New Graces' and the Bega Valley Youth Choir and Youth Orchestra, enlivened proceedings and reflected the thriving local artistic culture.

The twin purposes of the Bega Valley Roundtable were as follows:

To bring to bear the talents of figures of national and global influence to understand, support and, where possible, enable Bega Valley to fulfil its future potential;

To ensure that the experience of trauma, resilience and recovery in the Bega Valley is able to influence wider thinking about a forward national strategy for Australia, in a global context.

Five themes were identified for discussion. They were:

What are the lessons about resilience and recovery in the face of trauma that Bega Valley can teach those from outside the region?

Knowing who we are as a people is vital to knowing what Australia can become. Fully engaging with First Australians is a pivotal step.

Australia's national potential requires more empowered local communities. Can future Australia be driven from the ground up, not just from the top down?

A green recovery is a universal opportunity and a necessity.

What opportunities could be mobilised for sustainable economic growth and future jobs, particularly those that link Bega Valley with Australia and the world? Adequate physical and digital connectivity are surely basic requirements.



Cr. Sharon Tapscott, Mayor of Bega Valley



His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (RETD), Governor General of Australia

Summary of key outcomes:

The Bega Valley, on Australia's far South-Eastern coast, vividly illustrates the critical importance of strong social bonds in a local community as the basis for resilience and for a sustainable recovery, after trauma.



The solidarity and positive leadership shown by the leaders and citizens of Bega Valley at the roundtable was remarkable. As Mayor Sharon Tapscott said in her welcome to the meeting, the Bega Valley Shire is in the business of 'turning words into outcomes'. Or, as newly elected Federal Member of Parliament, Kristy McBain added, there is 'a sense of goodness and deep commitment to each other in the Bega Valley'. Global Foundation Chairman, Louise Watson echoed the sentiment of all visitors to the meeting: 'your voices deserve to be heard'.



Ms. Kristy McBain MP, Federal Member for Eden Monaro



Ms Louise Watson, Chairman, the Global Foundation



The Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK AC(Mil) CVO MC (RETD)

The Governor General reminded us in his opening remarks that the framing of the roundtable discussion was based on the Global Foundation's desire to make a continuing contribution to Australia's wider national strategy in a global context and, at the same time, to ensure that such a plan encourages bottom-up, empowered local communities.

With Australia and the world struggling to come to terms with life during and after the Covid pandemic, the Bega Valley experience of community unity and forward-looking vision after the recent horrific bushfires and related natural disasters was shown to be a model of resilience and readiness to pursue a sustainable recovery, a 'new normal', built from the ground up. National Bushfire Recovery Agency Coordinator, Mr Andrew Colvin, complemented the 'strength of leadership in the Bega Valley', as he spoke about the importance of inculcating resilience into planning before, not just after, disasters occur.

BizRebuild extended its offer of support and connections from big business, including further volunteers to assist with linkages to various programs of possible support for the region in the wake of the summer bushfires. It's Chairman, Sir Peter Cosgrove, said: 'we have not forgotten you'.

A combination of local and national voices interacted in the session about the future economy, led by Marc Eames from Bain & Co, who added a third 'R', the need for 'Retooling'. He suggested people need to be better equipped to embrace an uncertain jobs future. Bega Cheese Chairman, Barry Irvin, echoed this with his call for dreaming big and embracing change whether in ag-tech and mixed farming or for a return of extension specialists to guide new ways of doing things.



Ms Pat Turner, AM, Convenor of the Coalition of the Peaks, & Co-Chair of Joint Council on Closing the Gap



Hon Andrew Constance MP, NSW Minister for Transport, Member for Bega

Other speakers, on forestry, tourism, IT, indigenous employment, leadership development, all amplified the central notion of thinking outside the box about what might work for the future. Volunteering and eco-tourism, collective IT investment, embracing aquaculture, were just some of the ideas put forward for further consideration.

Many practical connections were made during the course of the event between those taking part, including offers from speakers and also as evidenced on the Zoom chat, which ran to 29 pages and is available to [read here](#).

Bega Valley displayed its readiness and willingness to lead, in piloting a number of innovative local and regional ideas that could in turn be scaled up elsewhere in Australia and globally.

As an example, Bega Valley Shire immediately embraced the generous offer made at the roundtable by Ms Pat Turner, Joint Chair of the Australian Government's Closing the Gap Council, to be a first mover in implementing a regional 'closing the gap' action plan.

Pat outlined the historic agreement reached with the Prime Minister just one week prior, to enable co-leadership by indigenous Australians in achieving practical outcomes towards Closing the Gap. The potential exists in Bega Valley for an alignment between local, State and Federal ambitions, as a first pilot in the new strategy.

Other speakers illuminated the importance of arts and culture - including rich indigenous culture – as central in understanding who we are as Australians and in realising the region's and the nation's full potential.

A greener recovery was also seen as a central dimension for a sustainable future for Bega Valley, Australia and the world. It was observed that after the 'biblical year' they had just experienced, the people of the Bega Valley needed no further convincing that climate change is real and requires urgent and concerted action.



Mr. Tegwen Le Berthe, Head of Environmental, Social & Corporate Governance, Amundi (France)



The New Graces

As Tegwen Le Berthe from global asset management giant, Amundi in Paris, expressed: 'It is no good jumping out of the frying pan of Covid into the fire of climate change'. Or as another speaker added, 'we cannot waste this crisis!'. Europe is now insisting that climate change has to be fully integrated into all post-Covid recovery plans. This is a model that Bega Valley and Australia in general could choose to adopt.

Just as with all new and rebuilt infrastructure, the meeting heard from Murray Prior of global law firm, King & Wood Mallesons, that landscape must be designed and managed with a greener future in mind. This was not just an aspiration; citizens are now demanding to be closer to the source of their food. Bega Valley is well-placed to respond, as it is with indigenous employment in landscape management and enjoyment.

The roundtable concluding session refreshed some of the earlier themes. As Rob Knott, Chairman of global advisory firm GHD remarked, 'every community in the world is having the same conversation'. Bega Valley has an unusual opportunity to combine the strength and ingenuity of its people with the nexus of three fundamentals to life: water, energy and food.

A challenge to all, at the close of the meeting, was to focus on those things than we can change and change them – fast!



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