The Gippsland Trades & Labour Council (GTLC) and RMIT University are working to build a future for Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley by identifying key challenges, exploring policy and developing practical approaches to sustainability and transition. Central to this is the development of a program to lay the grounds for a transition to a low carbon economy.

On 13th October 2010, together with employers, unions and local government, we established the Gippsland Community Transition Coalition. Their task will be to develop a transition strategy.

It is important that we approach these challenges drawing on experience and developing research in an informed way.

To do that we must know which jobs are at risk, what assistance is needed to enable workers to make the transition and where are the real potentials for job growth. We must find out what will be the skills demand for displaced workers, and what sort of strategies need to be put into place to stimulate job growth.

RMIT and GTLC will make an informed and positive input into the consideration of these challenges. We will utilise our resources to develop the research that is necessary. We are committed, we are funding and supporting events, and we have begun research on sustainability and transition in the Latrobe Valley.

There are two types of research that we need to take into account. There is much research into technological change and development, as well as the bio-science associated with low carbon developments. The other side of research focuses on
economic and social transition and the cognate policy developments. This type of research should be promoted more extensively. The best policy is evidence based and this is where social and economic research contributes.

The Latrobe Valley experienced mass redundancies during privatisation in the 1990s. We are determined that this will not happen again. We have the opportunity to ensure that we can move forward in a constructive way so that Gippsland stays vibrant and economically viable. We can start exploring social change in an informed way, taking into account the range of jobs and support in a community that is affected by the transition to a low carbon economy.

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