



REECE PROUDFOOT

OBJECT

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*My role Regen Labs involves working and walking alongside regional communities and businesses around the country - to build resilience and economic vitality along with social and environmental wellbeing. Prior to this I spent 10 years at WWF-Australia as Head of Innovation and Impact Investment working on business model innovation that would protect and build resilience in regional communities - especially after the black summer bushfires.*

*Regional Communities just like ours are a hotbed of innovation. And what we™re seeing proliferate across the country are new, innovative businesses that are building economic vitality for communities in response to the needs of that place - while also often resulting in positive social and environmental impact. These types of businesses are part of a new economic model referred to by economists, academics, communist and businesses as the regenerative economy.*

*Australia™s economy is already transitioning to a regenerative economy, or an economy that heals the future, rather than steals from the future, like more extractive models.*

*Only 2 months ago, the Minister for Science and Innovation, The Hon Ed Husic, released the Federal Government National Science Statement: priorities vital for our future economy covering the period 2024 - 2034. This is a ten year road map for the growth of our economy.*

*The priorities are: transitioning to a net zero future, supporting healthy and thriving communities, elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders knowledge systems, protecting and restoring Australia™s environment, building a secure and resilient nation. Plasrefine either has no positive impact or goes against all of these Fed Govt priorities.*

*Regional communities are on the front line of impacts - like increasing natural disasters due to climate change, economic challenges and - case in point - being a dumping ground for the nation™s plastic waste. A problem that we did not create - but are being made to deal with. We shouldn't have to settle for businesses that solve one problem but as a result negatively impact the communities they are in.*

*We™ve heard this morning, and no doubt for the next two days the myriad of negative social and environmental impacts to our community and our region. For the sake of time I™m not going to repeat them all now. But it™s clear that the model and location that Plasrefine is proposing will result in a significant burden on this community. Health impacts through PFAS, microplastics, airborne pollution and traffic. Damage to our precious local and regional ecosystems, habitats and riparian zones and a complete disregard for any community feedback or participation.*

*This is sometimes referred to as an extractive business model. It is extracting value from our community and region, resulting in negative impacts to people, communities and the environment.*

*This is going against the grain in terms of economic trends. Businesses like these are losing social license to operate, and are being replaced by businesses that deliver positive impact to people and the environment.*

*The good news is that the space where these two economic models intersect is ripe for innovation. And the Southern Highlands community is responding with the Southern Highlands Innovation Hub or SHIP. This presents our community and our region with an opportunity to be leaders in regenerative business models, and*



*business model innovation. Attracting businesses that want to work with our community to deliver local economic, social and environmental benefits. These are the types of models that the community will get behind, because the community has been involved as participants and beneficiaries. An example of this in practice is the Bega Regional Circularity Cooperative - where the community has collaborated with business and govt on a nation-leading circularity hub that is delivering social, environmental and economic benefits to the region.*

*As we can see from the turn out today - our community cares deeply about our collective futures, and we want to participate. This business is not the right model nor is it in the right place.*

*With our State MPs offering to collaborate with the community and with business to find better places and better models, surely we should have an opportunity to do this - to go with the grain, to move with the times and for the Southern Highlands to be a leader in regenerative economic development, not a laggard.*

*Federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers recently attended the Social Impact in the Regions Conferences where he said that æHealthy Economies rely on healthy people and communities<sup>2</sup>. Please give us a chance for our community, our economy and our region to stay healthy.*

*Thank you.*

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