

Heyfield Nov 2025 Dialogue Summary

Gippsland conducts its dialogues consistent with the international model detailed in this diagram, this is a snapshot of findings contained in the dialogue report. on our webpage



Engage

40 people from wide and diverse backgrounds gathered at the Heyfield Wetland Centre to explore how we enjoy our forests, and can benefit from visitation whilst caring for and protecting other values.

Across two days of field visits, shared meals, presentations and small group conversations, people engaged, shared ideas and looked for opportunities to collaborate.



Engage • Explore • Change



Explore:

Key issues raised included:

- People want to see local experience, lived knowledge and community voices meaningfully included in decisions about forest access, recreation and management.
- Participants expressed frustration that community input does not always influence outcomes.
- With more visitors, including those new to the bush, there is a growing need for practical, accessible education about safety, behaviour, cultural values and environmental care. Education is also needed for land managers to better understand the needs of these new users.



Explore:

Key issues raised included:

- The costs of maintenance of recreational sites and user pays principles
- Innovative ways to engage volunteers and locals in recreation management
- The increasing role of Traditional Owners in land management and balancing cultural sensitivity with access and telling TO stories in site interpretation

Fracture lines (issues discussed without resolution)

- People connect with forests in many ways. These connections sometimes align and sometimes conflict, and managing this diversity requires care and collaboration.
- Recreational pursuits can challenge other forest values requiring consideration of impacts.
- Behaviour of visitors can impact the forest and the experience of others. The dialogue explored ideas of behavioural standards and codes of conduct.

In summary

The dialogue showed that, whilst there are many opinions, Gippslanders care deeply about the forests, not only as a place to visit, but of intrinsic value that must be protected. They want to be involved, they want to be heard and help shape a future where recreation, environment, culture and community all thrive



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Change:

So what can we do? The dialogue explored opportunities for collaborative action.

- Empowering local people through involvement in maintenance, education, mentoring and decision making.
- Developing shared behaviour standards across all forest users.
- Strengthening education especially for new visitors, families and schools.
- Finding innovative ways to activate volunteerism in forest management.
- Improving transparency in policy and recreational investment.
- Creating spaces for cross recreational collaboration
- Building stronger partnerships with Traditional Owners

Exploring sustainable funding models

