

ANNUAL REPORT

GIPPSLAND FOREST DIALOGUE



2024-25



Engage • Explore • Change

OUR STORY SO FAR

SETTING THE SCENE

The Gippsland Forest Dialogue is all about creating a safe and respectful place where everyone can come to the table, listen and learn from others and share their views on the future of Gippsland's forests.

We may not all agree on all things, but we all love our forests and want to see a healthy forest passed on to the next generation.

A dialogue can't solve all the problems, but it can build trust amongst stakeholders and connect people so they can take knowledge and different perspectives back to their normal daily work or interests and help create change in our forest management.

ABOUT US

Established in 2022, Gippsland Forest Dialogue is the first Australian trial of an approach developed by Yale University (US) to bring stakeholders together to talk about the future of our forests.

Initiated by Gippslanders for Gippsland, six dialogues have been conducted so far on a range of themes relevant to Gippsland and Victoria.

Reports from previous dialogues are available on our web page.

OUR MISSION

We aim to build trust, shared understanding and collaborative solutions to forest management; to give people in Gippsland a chance to talk, learn, influence and create a better future for our forests.

Our purpose is to contribute to sustainable land and resource use by helping people engage and explore issues and find ways to collaborate.

Our mission is to conduct dialogues to build relationships and spur collaborative solutions to forest management.

Our approach is to use the international forest dialogue approach, initiated at Yale University, and draw on best international practice and experience.

OUR VISION

A future for our forests that includes and considers the views of all Gippslanders and ensures a legacy for our children of a healthy and sustainable forest.

OUR PEOPLE

MEMBERS

Gippsland Forest Dialogue is an organisation with 64 registered members and an executive committee of seven.

Our membership is gender balanced, but our age demographic and vocational background are skewed to an older membership and academic and forestry background.

Our ambition is to grow the membership to 150 and introduce more diversity in our group, targeting youth, vulnerable groups and voices not often heard in discussions about the future of our forests. Of particular interest is growing the involvement of, and connection to, Traditional Owner groups.

GOVERNANCE

The Gippsland Forest Dialogue is an incorporated body with a 'Rules of Association' that govern its operation. The group annually elect a steering committee to make decisions on behalf of and for the general membership.

The committee consists of seven elected representatives who fill key roles, including: President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary.

Two sub-committees have been formed to provide expert advice to the Steering committee on finance and communications.

The committee is also supported by a paid part-time executive officer.

COMMITTEE

Our current executive committee, elected in September 2025, includes:

- Chris McEvoy (President and timber mill owner from Yarram)
- Tom Fairman (Melbourne University researcher)
- Ewan Waller (former Chief Fire Officer of public land in Victoria and East Gippsland farmer)
- Rod Keenan (retired associate professor from Melbourne University)
- David Bennett (Private plantation forest manager)
- Wally Notman (Silvicultural expert and agroforest officer)
- Dr Wendy Wright (Associate Professor, Environmental Management Federation University)
- Dr Jess Reeves (Ecology Federation University)

All our committee have strong ties and connections to the forests and people of Gippsland.

OUR AMBITION

150

MEMBERS FROM ALL AGE GROUPS

YEAR IN REVIEW

Message from the President

I would like to thank all the hard-working volunteers on the steering committee for their ongoing commitment to keeping this important association going.

We are now into our fourth year. Reflecting on the past 12 months, we had a successful mini dialogue on recreation in Gippsland forests at Jindivick in November 2024, with 27 people in attendance.

What was discussed at that dialogue was presented to the Victorian Great Outdoors taskforce, and it was decided to have a larger dialogue in 2025.

We held a Special General Meeting in January to enable our registration as a Deductible Gift Recipient. This has been approved by the ATO, which makes it more attractive for companies, as well as public and private ancillary funds, to donate.

In April 2025, our new Executive Officer, Peter West, started. He is being supported by funds donated by the Rendere Environmental Trust and Touchwood Australia Private Ancillary Fund.

Peter has hit the ground running and will be a valuable asset to GFD. He is working on memberships and improving communication, and we are putting together a promotional video based on our first three dialogues.

In June, we held a planning session at Churchill to refine our direction and plans for the next 12 months. Finally, a major dialogue is planned for November 2025 in Heyfield.

Impact

The Gippsland Forest Dialogue has been in operation for three years and in that time has run six dialogues in Rawson, Orbost, Yarram, Kalimna and Jindivick. Each dialogue based around a theme pertinent to forest management and relevant to the circumstances of Gippsland.

Average attendance at these events has been 25, and a report has been compiled from each documenting relevant issues and opportunities for collaboration and improved forest management

Summary of activity 2024/25

In the past year, GFD has focused on establishing a sustainable organisational model. A strategic plan was developed outlining key challenges, including:

- Growing and diversifying the membership base.
- Establishing a secure financial base.
- Increasing the organisation's profile and influence.
- Running regular dialogues – average 2 per year.

Key actions aligned to these challenges are:

- Grow the membership from its current 60 members to 150 and target specific demographics and interest groups
- Establish a financial plan to allow longer-term planning and security.
- Develop promotional material across media to tell the organisation's story and highlight its findings at dialogues.
- Run a minimum of 2 dialogues per year.

FINANCES

Each year a financial statement is prepared and tabled at the GFD Annual General Meeting, and all financial requirements relevant to its incorporated and charity status are met including appropriate reporting

Income and Expenditure Statement

GIPPSLAND FOREST DIALOGUE INCORPORATED

For the year ended 30 June 2024

	NOTES	2024	2023
Income			
Donations in Kind	2	30,679	107,993
Dialogue Meeting Member Contributions		9,052	10,212
Donations (Public Collections)		4,485	-
Interest Income		-	-
Total Income		44,216	118,206
Expenditure			
Advertising & Marketing		2,450	-
Dialogue Meeting Costs		10,875	18,096
Insurance		2,231	1,365
Management Fees		-	50,600
Wages	3	26,121	45,385
Total Expenditure		41,677	115,445
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year		2,539	2,760

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Gippsland Forest Dialogue is conducted across the Traditional Lands of the Gunaikurnai, Bunurong, Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung, Taungurung peoples and into the lands of the First Nations of far East Gippsland, the Bidawel/Bidwell and Monero peoples.

We pay our respects to the Elders, past and present, and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. We acknowledge Traditional Owners on whose land we tread as the original custodians of Country, their enduring rights and that many of the issues we will discuss are the product of settlement. We open the door to hear and respond, to listen and learn, to understand and acknowledge their individual and collective voice. We aspire to strengthen partnerships and acknowledge that increasing agency for Traditional Owners comes through ongoing conversations and working together.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR PRINCIPAL DONORS – RENDERE ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST AND RADIAL TIMBERS

OTHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Partners: The EcoLands Collective, which provides critical technical and administrative support to GFD, especially in the transition to establishing our own independent status as an incorporated body and registered charity

Volunteers: Many people help and support our activities.

Gippsland community: The committee wishes to acknowledge the support of their fellow Gippslanders

Members: Our 64 members, who help organise and support our events

How can you help?

- Become a member: visit our website and either join as a member or sign up for our newsletter.
- Make a donation: GFD is a registered charity
- Come to one of our dialogues: All our dialogues are open events
- Tell your friends about us!

Gippsland Forest Dialogue

Postal Address:

Phone: 0477 728705

Website: gfd.org.au

Email: eo@gippslandforestdialogue.org.au

Social media: Facebook Gippsland Forest Dialogue

Gippsland Forest Dialogue is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC)



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