

Knob Reserve Dialogue Fire in the forest (Aug 2026)

Gippsland Forest Dialogues use the international Forest Dialogue model (see diagram). This pamphlet is a snapshot of findings from a dialogue on fire held at the Knob Reserve Stratford, on 22nd August 2026. The full report is on our webpage.



Engage • Explore • Change



Engage

Over 80 people, from across Gippsland and different walks of life, participated in aspects of our fire program, some at multiple events. 65 attended field days at Noojee and Bairnsdale, 15 came to our Sale dinner and 30 participated at the Knob Reserve dialogue.

Explore

At the dialogue we explored, the past 25 years of fire in Gippsland:

- 4.9 million hectares burnt including 3 megafires
- 190 fatalities including 10 firefighters.
- 2800 homes destroyed
- 8.7 Billion dollars in economic impact
- Significant environmental impact

Towards a vision...

We then looked at what we want the next 25 years to look like

- Less impact on life and property
- Resilient communities and healthy forests
- Learning and adapting to changed fire circumstances
- longer term planning and more local input
- more emphasis on at risk ecological and human communities

If we can say "this is what we want",
then we can ask "what is stopping us"



Gippsland Forest Dialogue
www.gippslandforestdialogue.org.au

Explore

Creating a vision

If we can articulate what we want fire in our forests to look like, we can move forward at future dialogues to consider what is stopping us achieving this vision and how can we make this happen. Identified fracture lines may also help frame our continued conversation. This dialogue is the first step, we want to continue this over the next few years, and we hope you can come along for the journey.

We explored this vision in reference to 4 propositions:

- Fire is natural, and has a role in our forests health.
- Fire is dangerous, and increasing risk means we need to improve our response and protection.
- Fire is useful, we need to use the right fire in the right place at the right time. We need to promote cultural fire and learn from Traditional owners
- Fire is changing, risk is increasing, meaning past experience may not be the best basis for future actions.

We also looked back on past inquiries and the lessons learned, and the efficacy of this mechanism for learning and the role of local communities.

Fracture lines (issues discussed without resolution):

- Are large scale bushfires in our forests inevitable?
- What role should managed and cultural fire play in healthy forests
- Do the benefits of planned burning outweigh the costs
- Who is responsible for creating safe communities, individuals or government
- Who decides what happens in our forests

Change

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

- Empowering local people through involvement in fire planning.
- Strengthening education - especially for new residents, visitors and schools.
- Finding ways to adapt and make communities more resilient.
- Promoting an evidence based approach to fire decision making.
- Plan for weather extremes and worst case scenarios. Plan for the consequences of large fires (eg housing)
- Supporting Traditional Owners in the practice of cultural burning
- Exploring sustainable funding models

What next?

- We want to progress our thinking on the next 25 years by developing a formal vision
- Then use that to identify themes for follow up dialogues

