

Orbost Dialogue Forest Health (Nov 2023)



Engage • Explore • Change

Gippsland Forest Dialogues are conducted using the International Forest Dialogue model (see diagram). This pamphlet is a snapshot of findings from a dialogue on forest health conducted in Orbost in Nov 2023. The full report is on our webpage.



Engage

Forty people, representing a wide and diverse range of backgrounds, gathered at the Heyfield Wetland Centre to explore how we enjoy our forests and can benefit from visitation while caring for and protecting other values.

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

Explore

The concept of forest health was discussed at a range of sites using a forest health score card, key themes explored included:

- Fire, its frequency, intensity and human application
- Biodiversity, impact on rainforest and landscape level actions to protect species
- Water, the relationship between fire and water quality and yield
- Traditional Owner cultural landscapes, the importance of respecting the land and preserving it for future generations
- Community governance, ensuring a place for local knowledge in decision making and policy implementation



Gippsland Forest Dialogue
www.gippslandforestdialogue.org.au

Explore

Key themes were discussed to identify insights, concerns and knowledge gaps:

- Fire. Concern as to capacity of forests to return to pre-existing states after recent fires. Knowledge gaps as to what constitutes best fire management practice to secure all values.
- Biodiversity. Fire, pests and lack of funding were major concerns. How best to apply fire for biodiversity outcomes is a key knowledge gap..
- Water Need more research on impacts of large scale fires on catchments and micro aquatic habitats
- Traditional owner cultural landscapes. Concern to involve TOs in dialogues
- Community governance models. Need communities to unite and claim agency to take back power in forest management

Fracture lines (points of disagreement or uncertainty between stakeholders):

- Fire, and particularly its application by humans to forests. Different views emerged around prescribed fire strategies and their effects on forest health and values.

Healthy forest structure. Whether we can achieve high scores for all values in every forest, or if a mosaic of forests can serve different purposes.

Change

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

- Promote use of the Healthy Forest Scorecard
- Support new ways of thinking about and managing Gippsland's forests, centred on local perspectives
- Promote formation of a Forest Board, with diverse representation,
- Continue the dialogue process with a focus on giving voice to under represented people and communities
- Commission, undertake or partner in studies focused on novel forest restoration



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Scan the QR code to see a short video of the Dialogue and what participants thought



Summary

The co chairs reflected on the importance of diverse voices sharing knowledge in the dialogue process, the need to rethink what we've been doing and focus on health and resilience of the forests, They also noted a desire to explore decentralised community based forest management models. "Forests are a reflection of us, we need to reimagine forests for the future