One Gippsland 2025 Election Priorities



One Gippsland

One Gippsland Members

Bass Coast Shire Council

Baw Baw Shire Council

Destination Gippsland

East Gippsland Shire Council

Federation University

Food and Fibre

Gippsland Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation

Latrobe City Council

South Gippsland Shire Council

TAFE Gippsland

Wellington Shire



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One Gippsland Priority Area: Freight





About One Gippsland

Gippsland is a geographically, socially and economically diverse region. At approximately 41,000 square km, it is the largest region in Victoria. Home to over 270,000 people and six Local Governments, the region annually produces \$14 billion in Gross Regional Product (GRP).

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- Being Australia's most liveable region by 2040;
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Freight Connectivity

The future economic success of Gippsland's, Victoria's and indeed Australia's existing and new industries are dependent on strengthening supply chains between regions, urban centres, distribution points as well as air and seaports. Our increasingly interwoven domestic and international markets require better freight connections to drive reliability and costcompetitiveness for our growing industries.

Today, Australia's freight volume:

- Moves 163 tonnes of freight for every person throughout the national network;
- Is expected to grow by over 35 per cent between 2018 and 2040;
- Will reach a freight task of 1000 billion tonnes annually; and
- Increase movement through urban areas by nearly
 60 per cent by 2040 without Government action.

The overlay of a rapidly mobilising renewables industry will significantly increase the pressure on the national network. This is particularly the case as industry seeks to activate Australia's first offshore wind zone in Gippsland, which has the potential to create 10GW in renewable energy.

In addition to advancing the nation's Net Zero objectives, Gippsland's freight network must support the region's Food and Fibre producers who have a goal of increasing their gross value to \$23.2 billion by 2040.

As a supplier of materials for Victoria's big infrastructure build, the network is expected to move 24 million tonnes of extractive sand per annum by 2050 requiring almost 4000 truck movements per day (currently it is 600 truck movements per day).

The Gippsland freight network requires efficient access to Port of Melbourne, Port of Hastings, Barry Beach Marine Terminal and Port Anthony as well as Geelong and Melbourne Airports.



One Gippsland Priority Area: Freight

Priority Projects

San Remo Road Infrastructure Improvements - \$28 million

Road transport infrastructure improvements are required in the San Remo township at the Back Beach Road intersection. These works will address the lack of capacity during key peak periods that significantly impact on visitor experience and business operations.

It will also address the inadequate access along the corridor which leads to unsatisfactory travel delays for visitors and residents. The current design of Phillip Island Road cannot cope with the congestion during the busy periods and growing traffic demand has led to a high number of crashes. Works will include the following:

- Construction of traffic signals at Phillip Island Road and Back Beach Road - Marine Parade intersection;
- Intersection improvements to the nearby Phillip Island Road and Bergin Grove intersection;
- Place-making infrastructure improvements along the San Remo foreshore;
- Stability improvement works on the Western Port Bay embankment to protect the transport corridor of Phillip Island;
- Active transport improvements by linking existing facilities to the San Remo Commercial Precinct and the San Remo foreshore; and
- Public transport improvements with the introduction of new bus stop facilities.





Sale Alternate Truck Route - \$60 million

\$60 million in funding is sought to complete the Sale Alternate Truck Route.

This alternate route provides a faster and more economic route for vehicles traveling between Melbourne and East Gippsland, as it is the shorter route, and avoids traffic delays and intersections through Sale.

The alternate route would provide access for both local and interstate traffic including agriculture, dairy, timber, vegetable production, resources, manufacturing, light industry, and tourism.

The alternative route does not presently meet minimum road design requirements for modern high productivity vehicles. Larger freight vehicles are currently prevented from using this option as they exceed bridge load limits. These trucks must travel through central Sale which increases travel times while reducing freight efficiency.

Works on this project that have been committed or are under construction are:

- \$6.28 million for the strengthening of the Thomson and Stirling Bridges on Myrtlebank-Fulham Road;
- \$21.8 million for a roundabout and realignment for the Maffra-Sale Road and the Fulham-Myrtlebank Road and the Myrtlebank Road intersection.

There is a remaining **\$60 million** short fall to complete the final stages. These works relate to three key areas and include.

- Roadway Upgrades and Safety Improvements (est. \$30 million) - Upgrading the interconnecting roads of Myrtlebank Road; Myrtlebank-Fulham Road; and the Sale-Heyfield Road. Works include road widening, construction of sealed shoulders as well as improvements to the road pavement and surface to cater for the increased traffic volume and heavy vehicles.
- Sale-Heyfield Road/Fulham-Myrtlebank Road Intersection Upgrades (est. \$15 million); and
- Myrtlebank Road/Princes Highway Roundabout/Slip Lane Construction (est. \$15 million).

One Gippsland Priority Area: Freight



Leongatha Heavy Vehicle Alternate Route Stage 2 - \$2 million (planning and design)

Leongatha is one of South Gippsland's major industrial, government, medical, retail and service centres that currently contributes \$1.5 billion to the regional economy.

With the recent closure of the Pakenham livestock exchange and the transfer of operations to the Leongatha livestock exchange, there is the potential for this to be the busiest livestock exchange in the country.

This hub has had significant traffic congestion and safety issues caused by the South Gippsland Highway and Bass Coast / Stezlecki Highway cutting through the centre of the town.

Stage 1 was completed in 2016 and has diverted heavy vehicle traffic out of the main centre of town. The declaration of Gippsland as Australia's first offshore wind zone and the preference for the ports at Barry Beach to be the key operations and maintenance port, will require the Leongatha to be bypassed.

Drouin and Warragul Arterial Road Network - \$3 million (planning)

It is expected that the development of the proposed Warragul and Drouin Bypass will address the historical road network challenges that see major arterial roads and agricultural routes run through the centre of both Warragul and Drouin's CBD area.

These challenges result in traffic congestion at peak times, inefficient agricultural routes, and limited private commercial investment in town centres, with many retail premises being vacant and prime commercial land remaining undeveloped.

The bypass would better connect the Gippsland region to intra/interstate and international markets. It will also cater for the efficient transport of goods from Gippsland's \$2.2 billion agriculture industry from north and north-eastern areas of Baw Baw Shire to key hubs across the region.

Funding required for a business case to identify solutions to reduce congestion through the townships of Drouin and Warragul, including heavy vehicle routes, improved freight connectivity and to identify the social and economic benefit.



One Gippsland Priority Area: Freight

Traralgon Bypass - Planning Support

The Traralgon Bypass aims to divert heavy vehicles and through traffic away from the increasingly busy town centre.

Investment in the Traralgon Bypass is needed to improve road safety and connectivity in the Gippsland region and mitigate future flood events.

As Traralgon is the largest town in a road freight-dependent region, a safe and efficient road link is needed to accommodate Gippsland's growing communities.

Extensive groundwork conducted by VicRoads in the 2000s included preliminary road designs and assessments covering various aspects such as flora, fauna, economics, land use, and cultural heritage. These efforts led to the formal inclusion of the bypass route in the Latrobe Planning Scheme in 2009, along with a subsequent commitment of \$1.4 million by the State Government in 2017 for bypass planning.

Further planning endeavours facilitated by Regional Roads Victoria involved community feedback on route preferences and interchange locations. The resulting study comprehensively analysed the economic, environmental, social, and traffic impacts of the proposed bypass.

However, progress has been hindered by concerns regarding the proximity of the bypass to the Loy Yang mine and potential implications for rehabilitation efforts. With the scheduled closure of the Loy Yang mine now confirmed for 2035, One Gippsland is calling on the Federal Government to prioritise this project.

The Traralgon Bypass is integral to the industry's needs and is highlighted as the highest priority in the Gippsland Freight Infrastructure Master Plan commissioned by Regional Development Australia.

The completion of the Traralgon Bypass will ensure the delivery of infrastructure that improves productivity and resilience for the region.



Image credit: https://bigbuild.vic.gov.au/projects/roads/princes-highway-east-traralgon-to-sale/project-update/image-gallery/images/march-2024





One Gippsland Priority Area: Tourism





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Tourism

It is time that Gippsland's rich landscape, Traditional Owners' culture and history are amplified to set this region on a path of economic prosperity and growth.

It has been said that Gippsland's natural beauty, connection to country, outstanding experiences and life changing moments have inspired the world to visit – in a post pandemic world the world needs new reasons to visit. It is the position of One Gippsland that the visitor economy must go beyond existing experiences and traditional visitor markets.

The tourism industry in Gippsland is an important contributor to the region's economy, worth \$2.4 billion in direct and indirect expenditure per annum. Gippsland has outperformed regional Victoria for domestic and international visitation percentage growth, with 10.8 million visitors to the region annually. The visitor economy supports over 3,000 businesses who derive most of their income from overnight and daytrip visitors.

One Gippsland seeks to grow our tourism footprint and create greater opportunities to connect to our history and first nations people creating unforgettable Australian experiences.





One Gippsland Priority Area: Tourism

Priority Projects

Nanjet Gunaikurnai Cultural Tourism Project

In 2021 the The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) purchased a 103ha property located adjacent to the entry to Wilsons Promontory National Park. The property also adjoins the western edge of the Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park that is RAMSAR listed.

The former property owner undertook significant rehabilitation of the lower section of the property adjoining this wetland area to improve the habitat and attract wildlife and received approval for an extensive tourism development on the site – to exploit a longstanding shortage of visitor accommodation in the Wilsons Prom area.

After extended stakeholder consultation since the land purchase, GLaWAC is currently completing a business case for a phased development of Victoria's largest Aboriginal cultural

tourism visitor experience. This tourism project will provide a unique Indigenous cultural experience for visitors, environmental benefits through re vegetation and habitat management, and importantly provide employment opportunities for local Aboriginal mob and the broader South Gippsland regional community.

This vision is currently being converted to a detailed plan in a business case which is well advanced and features:

- Gunaikurnai mob camping with facilities to support caring for country initiatives to revitalise the natural appeal of the site;
- Interpretive and educational cultural experiences for visitors; and
- Gunaikurnai inspired guest accommodation.

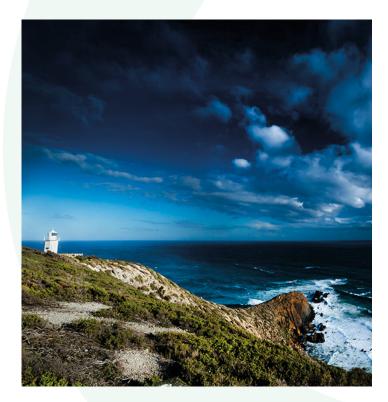
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Bass Coast Dinosaur Trail - \$18 million

The Bass Coast is one of the few places on earth where polar dinosaur fossils can be found. This leading tourism experience will entice local, interstate, national and international visitors and encourage extended visitation within the region.

The Trail will educate residents and visitors about the embedded value and diversity found within fossils and prehistoric fauna in the region. Works include:

- Traverse 40kms from San Remo to Inverloch, featuring six creative art sites that link polar dinosaur fossils;
- Museum/cultural centre to be developed in Inverloch; and
- Sound and light installation (alongside museum/ cultural centre) linking science, Aboriginal cultural history and the environment.





One Gippsland

One Gippsland Fact Sheets Digital Connectivity





Digital Connectivity: Mobile and Broadband Networks

In 2019, a Gippsland Digital Plan was developed to articulate the region's current gaps in digital infrastructure and where future demands may lie.

The development of the plan was a collaborative process that sought the views of the regional leaders, the business sector, community groups and local government. Market experts were also engaged and existing strategies and technical papers were reviewed to formulate the plan.

Gippsland's shortfall in numbers:

The findings of the consultation revealed the key regional digital connectivity issues:

- Place-based Mobile Blackspots: 496 registered mobile blackspots throughout the region;
- Place-based Fixed Line Broadband: 72% of the regions cities and towns identified an "intermediate" supply shortfall in access to fixed line broadband;
- Tourism Fixed Line Broadband: 68% of key tourism locations identified a "major" supply shortfall and 32% have an "intermediate" supply in access to fixed line broadband;
- Tourism Mobile: 12% of key tourism locations identified had "major" supply shortfall and 24% had an "intermediate" supply shortfall for mobile coverage;
- Agriculture Fixed line Broadband: 100% have a "major" supply shortfall in fixed access broadband services for business users across the five key primary production regions;
- Agriculture LP-WAN: 60% have an "intermediate" supply shortfall for LP-WAN IoT supported services were identified across the five key primary production regions;

- Freight Mobile: Two class A roads and two key class B roads had "major" supply shortfalls mobile coverage; and
- Road Mobile: all 113 C classified roads within the region had "major" supply shortfalls in mobile coverage.

Further to the lack of access to this integral enabling infrastructure, this plan further revealed that digital skills shortages are a persistent issue across Gippsland, both in terms of basic digital literacy as well as specialist technical skills to support business growth and competitiveness across the region.

Regionally Specific Digital Challenges

Mobile Blackspots/ Mobile Network Operator (MNO) Mobile Coverage Maps

The region's city and towns (as well as significant road and rail routes within Gippsland) are categorised as having good mobile coverage according to publicly available mobile network operator (MNO) coverage maps.

However, consistent community feedback and anecdotal evidence suggests that coverage quality is significantly less than what is stipulated in these maps. Investment in improving the accuracy of MNO maps and the obligation of reasonable standards of service being delivered to lowly populated areas should be a priority.

Emergency Management

Since 2018, the Gippsland region has experienced 39 different natural disasters, many of which have significantly impacted connectivity infrastructure and communities.

In the face of the challenges presented by climate change, telecommunications and digital connectivity has become a key component of disaster management with mobile and internet services critical to community safety.



One Gippsland Fact Sheets: Digital Connectivity

The 2019/20 bushfires are instructive about the extent of damage and the critical role of digital connectivity. These fires saw the loss of 1 million hectares of forest, agricultural land, livestock and private homes in a number of communities were destroyed and approximately 1,700 people were evacuated from Mallacoota alone.

Already known mobile blackspots caused issues in receiving and disseminating information, and impacts on the telecommunication networks during these fires exacerbated this issue over large pockets of the region.

More recently, in February 2024, a devastating storm event resulted in almost all townships in South Gippsland experiencing a loss of mobile phone coverage, including Triple Zero (000) services. In Mirboo North many residents were without access to 000 services for around seven days until adjacent communications towers came back online, providing intermittent coverage.

A report into the 2019-2020 fires, conducted by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) shows that the majority of mobile service outages experienced during the bushfires was due to power outages at base stations, not direct fire damage (80% of outages were due to power outages while only 1% was due to fire damage). This underscores the need for resilience in telecommunication networks.

It is imperative, telecommunications be recognised as an essential service, and providers are required to meet service continuity standards to prevent significant, prolonged and widespread outages during natural disasters.

With communities now receiving most of their information digitally, including disaster warnings and advice, there is a pressing need for the Universal Service Obligation to apply to the provision of digital services, in addition to traditional telecommunications. **One Gippsland calls for the Federal Government to recognise data and digital services** within the Universal Service Obligation provisions for telecommunications providers.

To ensure telecommunications, digital and other essential services remain operational in times of crisis, it is recommended that associated infrastructure must have at **least 72 hours of auxiliary back-up power as well as safeguard the provision of digital services** to avoid outages during emergencies.

Fixed Line Broadband

Fixed line broadband has two key issues in Gippsland:

Access: This disparity outlined above between connectivity in metropolitan and regional areas is also present between regional hubs and the smaller rural and remote towns that surround them. As users move from higher density regional town centres to more remote areas, there is not only a reduction in the availability and quality of digital coverage, but also in the number of network providers who offer services.

Affordability: The Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) also shows that affordability remains a key challenge and has almost certainly been exacerbated by the COVID-19 economic slowdown. The ADII shows that the proportion of household income spent on internet access by those living in the lowest household income quintile has increased every year since 2014 and underpinning this is a widening gap in affordability between Q5 low-income and Q1 high-income households. Three of the six LGAs in the Gippsland Region are Q4 low-income.



Business Support

One Gippsland notes that the NBN Business Fibre Zones program (that includes the towns of Morwell, Cowes, Sale and Wonthaggi) seeks to address the availability and affordability of adequate business-grade services across all NBN technology types.

It is recommended that this program is expanded to include all major regional centres in Gippsland.



One Gippsland Fact Sheets: Digital Connectivity

Tourism

In 2019, Gippsland visitor expenditure reached \$1.3 billion and had 3,000 small tourism businesses employing over 13,000 people.

This is a key industry for Gippsland, and fostering its continued growth is essential for building the region's economy. Tourism in Gippsland has also been identified as having low digital connections. Some of the locations that were identified as having major shortfalls in supply are internationally acclaimed attractions such as the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix and Phillip Island Penguin Parade.

It is important that mobile roaming is available in remote locations for international visitors as currently this is not the case.

Likewise, poor in-carriage reception is experienced on trains operating east of Traralgon, both in peak and non-peak times. Free passenger Wi-Fi on public transport would add to the liveability and visitor satisfaction within Gippsland.



Food and Fibre

An analysis of digital intensity requirements reveals that food and fibre will rely heavily on digital services over the next 3–5 years to be able to retain competitiveness in the Australian and international market .11 Of the 5 key primary production regions in Gippsland analysed:

- 100% have a major supply shortfall in fixed access broadband services for business users; and
- 60% have an intermediate supply shortfall for LP- WAN IoT supported services.
- For these reasons, One Gippsland is calling for Gippsland to be prioritised in the next rounds of the Mobile Blackspot Program, the Regional Connectivity Program and the Connecting Victoria Program.

Recommendations

Mobile Black Spots: Prioritise Gippsland in the rollout of the Regional Connectivity Program and the On Farm Connectivity Program.

Business Grade NBN: Expand the Business Fibre Zone Program to include all major regional centres in Gippsland.

Mobile Connectivity: **Rail**: Enhancements for mobile services on V/Line trains east of Traralgon to Bairnsdale.

Emergency Management:

- Telecommunications are recognised as an essential service, and providers must be required to meet service continuity standards to prevent significant, prolonged and widespread outages during natural disasters; and
- Emergency roaming is mandated for all carriers with infrastructure to have at least 72 hours of auxiliary back-up power to avoid outages during emergencies; and
- Provision of Data to be recognised within the Universal Service Obligation provisions for telecommunications providers.



One Gippsland Priority Area: Renewables and New Energy





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Renewables and New Energy

Gippsland is rapidly establishing itself as the 'centre of excellence' in renewable energy. With our abundant natural resources and highly skilled energy sector workforce, we are ready to deliver a diverse range of renewable projects, including wind, solar, and emerging technologies. Gippsland is a leader in Australia's transition to a new energy future. The future of Gippsland as one of Australia's key energy producing regions was secured, when Bass Strait was declared Australia's first offshore wind zone. The 15,000 sq km area from Lakes Entrance to south of Wilsons Promontory has potential to support more than 10GW of year-round wind energy generation.

One Gippsland supports moves that ensure our region continues to use our natural resources to power our country and to move towards a net zero future. We recognise the enormous economic opportunities from offshore wind, the activation of our local ports, industrial, commercial and residential land, and potential for regional diversification and potential for regional diversification.

Our organisation also recognises the potential for the creation of:

- More than 3,000 jobs over 15 years during development and construction;
- 3,000 ongoing operational jobs
- A key mechanism to utilise latency in skills and infrastructure; and
- Potential to create new industries and new infrastructure, attract and retain workforce and expand business supply chains.

The Victorian Government has also created the State's first Renewable Energy Zone in Gippsland which is anticipated to unlock 3-4GW of renewable energy by 2029 – enough to power two million homes. The project is anticipated to create 2100 construction and 140 long term jobs and reduce up to 3.6 million tonnes of CO₂ annually.

However, it is important that investment in development of these renewable projects have a positive and intergenerational impact on the Gippsland communities who will support the progress and ultimate success of these nationally significant initiatives.



One Gippsland Priority Area – Renewables and New Energy

Priority Projects

Gippsland Offshore Wind Community Benefit Fund

Funded by all off-shore renewable energy and transmission projects: 100 percent of funds to be returned to the Gippsland region; Applications for funding must demonstrate community benefit, including legacy benefits; Fund to support regional and local community initiatives including:

- First Nations initiatives and projects;
- Education and training;
- Event sponsorship;
- Environmental projects;
- Community housing projects; and
- Locally significant projects.

Gippsland Offshore Wind Enabling Local Government Infrastructure Fund

A fund to ensure local communities and local governments are not burdened with the cost of the physical and social infrastructure required for development of the industry. The fund will enable local governments to provide infrastructure and support including:

- Roads, Rail and Ports infrastructure and maintenance;
- Community facilities and services;
- Community infrastructure projects;
- Strategic and infrastructure planning/civil works; and
- Economic development and Investment attraction.



Strategic and infrastructure Planning Support

A program to ensure Gippsland local governments are "land and infrastructure ready" to support the new energy transition including:

- Proactively planning for increased housing, commercial and industrial land and local infrastructure needs (physical and social) well in advance of new energy transition and establishment, to support investment and avoid adverse economic and social impact; and
- Leveraging and maximising local social and economic benefits from planned renewable energy investment, including during the construction, operation and maintenance phases of development.

Investment to include:

- Funding and resources to support the development of a 'land and infrastructure plan' for diverse housing, commercial land and local infrastructure needs; and
- Developing the South Gippsland ports, Barry Beach Marine Terminal and Port Anthony for these facilities to play a crucial role in development of offshore wind in Gippsland.

Gippsland Energy Price Reductions

Specialised energy plans to benefit local business. Power price reductions to incentivise establishment of new businesses and job creation associated with the new energy transition in Gippsland, including:

- Electricity cost reduction via the State Electricity Commission (SEC); and
- Cost reduction incentive based on job creation thresholds.





One Gippsland Priority Area: Skills and Education





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Skills and Training

Gippsland is rapidly establishing itself as a leader in Australia's transition to a new energy future. With our abundant natural resources and highly skilled energy sector workforce, we are poised to deliver a diverse range of renewable projects, including wind, solar, and emerging technologies. TAFE Gippsland and Federation University Australia are collaborating on the Gippsland Renewable Energy Precinct Project (GREPP) to transition from coal to new and emerging sustainable industries. This initiative aims to:

- Position Gippsland as a leader in energy transition.
- Partner with industry to develop industry capabilities in the region.
- Equip future renewable energy workers with essential skills.
- Ensure a skilled workforce for Victoria's net zero targets, including upskilling current coal workers.

The Clean Energy Centre of Excellence, Asia Pacific Renewable Energy Training Centre (APRETC), Morwell Trade Skills Uplift and Baw Baw Skills Demand Response projects listed below have been developed by TAFE Gippsland and Federation University in collaboration with industry to support the skills our region needs to thrive.





One Gippsland Priority Area: Skills and Education

Priority Projects

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Gippsland Renewable Energy Precinct Project (GREPP) planning - \$2.28 million

An application has been made to the RPPP for \$2.28 million plus GST to plan the Gippsland Renewable Energy Precinct Project (GREPP), which incorporates the Clean Energy Centre of Excellence, Energy Education Centre and APRETC.

Clean Energy Centre of Excellence

The first stage of a Centre for New Energy is committed by the Victorian Government (\$5 million). This was a key recommendation from the New Energy Skills Mapping Report commissioned by the Latrobe Valley Authority and undertaken by Federation University and TAFE Gippsland.

With the establishment of the SEC and Gippsland at the epicentre of the energy transition it is critical that enabling facilities and infrastructure are available to provide the skills and training critical to meet workforce requirements.

A proposed new Centre of Excellence would build on TAFE Gippsland's Morwell Site and Federation University's Morwell Innovation Centre (the Morwell Innovation Precinct) leveraging existing capabilities and build on these strengths to meet the current and emerging skills needs.

This would support lifelong learning and transition through world-leading laboratories and teaching spaces and pathways between secondary school, VET and higher education, all co-located in the precinct. Collaborative industry partnerships integrated into the centre will support student placement and on-the-job skill-based learning.





The Asia Pacific Renewable Energy Training Centre (APRETC) – Gippsland Campus – \$3.9 million for stage 2

Federation University is leading the way in providing skills and training to meet Australia's renewable energy needs.

The Asia Pacific Renewable Energy Training Centre (APRETC) in Ballarat was established by Federation University in November 2021 with support from the Victorian Government's TAFE Clean Energy Fund and direct funding from industry. It supports the rapidly growing wind energy sector by training skilled workers, including those preparing to work in offshore wind.

APRETC has been established at the Gippsland campus in response to the forecast demand for a skilled workforce to support extensive growth of the renewable energy industry across the region, and forms part of the GREPP.

APRETC Stage 1 commenced in late 2024, with the support of industry partners. It builds on existing assets and capabilities, with space to host industry partners, workshops and events and focuses on programs delivered through the Institute of Innovation, Science and Sustainability, such as engineering and information technology, as well as research on energy transition needs, including mine rehabilitation, social planning, data and information technologies and renewable engineering. It is being developed with industry and with regional needs as a focus, to meet current and future energy workforce demands. This stage is supported by \$2.6 million in industry funding.

Stage 2 includes planning for a state-of-the-art facility encompassing teaching spaces for higher education, an offshore wind industry portal and a research centre to be co-located with industry partners to support clean energy technologies such as hydrogen, solar, onshore wind, geothermal, energy storage and distribution is a key part of the RPPP bid.

It encompasses the development of a hydrogen fuel cell training facility, which will include high-tech training systems supporting laboratory activities for specialised higher education programs in electrical, mechanical, and chemical engineering aspects of hydrogen fuel cell technologies.

Demonstration sites, to include a community energy hub and refuge during extreme weather events, will be established to showcase renewable technologies, hydrogen and fuel cell research, generation and storage research. Provision of strategic advice and innovation in the renewables sector will be a key aspect of the hub.



One Gippsland Priority Area: Skills and Education



Baw Baw Skills Demand Response - \$41.5 million

Melbourne's outer metropolitan growth corridor, served by TAFE Gippsland's Warragul campus, is experiencing population growth amongst the highest in the country.

TAFE Gippsland is the only TAFE facility in this region. Five of the top ten fields of education sought locally, including booming construction trades, are not offered by TAFE Gippsland in the catchment.

This investment will see the purchase of land and building of world-class purpose-built facilities to meet the surging demand for VET education and training in the region.



Morwell Trade Skills Uplift - Stage 2 \$61.4 million

Communities in the Latrobe Valley need VET training, but the remote location of TAFE Gippsland's Yallourn campus and its need for car access due to lack of public transport stops disadvantaged young people enrolling.

This investment will see further building expansion at TAFE Gippsland's Morwell campus, enabling the relocation and expansion of construction industry training offerings and key corporate functions from the Yallourn campus and providing students with a contemporary training environment which keeps up with the construction industry's evolving technologies.

It will also incorporate a hospitality training facility upgrade and new higher education teaching spaces. It represents a further stage of TAFE Gippsland's progressively exit from the aging, not fit-for-purpose Yallourn campus.





One Gippsland Priority Area: Disaster Resilience





About One Gippsland

Gippsland is a geographically, socially and economically diverse region. At approximately 41,000 square km, it is the largest region in Victoria. Home to over 270,000 people and six Local Governments, the region annually produces \$14 billion in Gross Regional Product (GRP).

One Gippsland is a peak regional advocacy body representing this diverse region.

We aim to connect the dots between government, business and community, while also collectively working together to champion the interests of our region and our people. It is our mission to create a thriving and dynamic region that harnesses the social, environmental and economic capabilities and assets. Gippsland has remarkable diversity so that we can offer our community opportunities for a great lifestyle and access to services at all stages of life.

One Gippsland has the following ambitions for our region:

- Being Australia's most liveable region by 2040;
- Raising the Digital Inclusion Index Score to be in parity with Melbourne;
- Attracting an additional 75,000 residents by 2040; and
- Increasing the annual Gross Regional Product to \$23.2 billion by 2040.

Gippsland's Prevalence to Disasters

As climate change continues to see greater instances of unpredictable and more destructive weather impacts, Gippsland has become a region that is prone to disasters. There have been 74 disaster events in the Gippsland region since 2007, including storms, floods, bushfires and an earthquake. In the four years from 2019 to August 2024, Gippsland experienced 37 disasters including the catastrophic 2019 bushfires and more recently the February 2024 and August 2024 thunderstorm events. The magnitude of these events and subsequent disaster support provided by the State and Federal Government varies widely. Low scale incidents may bring some damage to public assets, while catastrophic events can result in loss of life, evacuations, destruction and damage to assets as well as ongoing Aboriginal cultural healing and community trauma and hardship.

Gippsland's most recent catastrophic natural disaster event occurred on 13 February 2024, which was Victoria State Emergency Services' (VICSES) fourth busiest event in history. An event of similar magnitude followed in August. Severe thunderstorms produced widespread damage across Gippsland which resulted in electricity and telecommunication infrastructure being severely impacted with significant household and community effects, including the loss of 000 emergency service access, an inability to provide emergency messaging and widespread loss of perishable food in fridges and freezers.

Impacted residents across Gippsland waited for power and telecommunications to be restored for up to nine days after the event. Similarly in recent bushfires some communities were isolated for up to six weeks, without basic utility or connectivity.

In managing preparation and response to these disasters, One Gippsland members seek a new approach in working with Government to enable faster and more targeted disaster preparedness; adequate supporting infrastructure and utilities and timely access to funding assistance, funding assistance to build back with appropriate infrastructure capable of supporting the community through future events.



One Gippsland Priority Area: Disaster Resilience

Disaster Funding - Adopting a Betterment Based Funding Model

A policy of rapid support and 'Betterment' infrastructure replacement is needed in disaster recovery funding. The current model that simply replaces infrastructure like for like means a similar impacts on the same infrastructure during future disasters. Recognising that climate change will mean more frequent and severe disasters requires resilient and sustainable infrastructure, especially in high-risk areas.

Issues associated with disaster relief and recovery funding have been considered at State and National levels as follows:

- Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.
- Inspector General for Emergency Management's (IGEM)
 Inquiry into the 2019-20 Victorian fire season, Phase 2 report –
 Progress and effectiveness of Victoria's immediate relief and recovery arrangements.

The IGEM report found:

The current funding system makes it difficult for government and organisations to build back better as there is a higher level of scrutiny for Category D applications under the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

The recent Disaster Ready Fund is an excellent albeit under-funded example of this type of betterment funding initiative. Additionally the New South Wales and Queensland Governments have established programs to "Build Back Better".

New South Wales notes international disaster data research has found that for every dollar invested in risk mitigation, up to ten dollars is saved in recovery. New South Wales provides betterment funding for Transport, Tourism, Water and Sewerage.



Queensland believes there are many intangible benefits beyond cost savings, including:

- More connected communities;
- Continuity of telecommunications, road networks and other essential services;
- Increased consumer confidence and business activity; and
- Reduced impacts on the environment by avoiding erosion and runoff into creek beds and other waterways.

One Gippsland endorses betterment models to disaster recovery funding arrangements which place a premium on cost saving in the longer term. Given that the funding comes from the Commonwealth via the States, it should be provided to local government in a consistent way rather than relying on the State to manage and apply their own standards to its distribution.

Effective Funding Arrangements

Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) is an obstacle to community disaster recovery due to its narrow focus and complexity. DRFA is intended to provide a mechanism for local governments to be supported in the costs associated with responding to a disaster. This includes the provision of relief, and in the restoration of essential infrastructure.

What's needed is a more streamlined evidence and claims process that better reflects the emergency context in which work is undertaken.

Victoria's approach also needs change to enable the reconstruction of public assets to a higher disaster resilient standard and reduce spend on asset restoration. There is also a need for the DRFA arrangements to more effectively provide for the compounding impacts of multiple disaster events in quick succession. Reforms also need to allow for critical safety measures to occur over time, such as hazardous debris clean up after natural disasters.

These issues have led to betterment not being funded, delays in receiving funding, and refusal to reimburse some claims. In disaster prone areas like East Gippsland the council has two permanent staff members dedicated to managing the NDRF claim process because of its complexity and exhaustive data and evidence demands.

The benefits of reform to the NDRF include assets that are more resilient to future disaster events; faster recovery and clean up processes that will support communities to move to the next stage of recovery works more quickly. Importantly this will meet community expectations on public agency responses to disaster events.



One Gippsland Priority Area: Disaster Resilience

We are therefore seeking:

- A fit-for-purpose disaster relief and recovery funding program which acknowledges the effects of consecutive and compounding disasters in a changing climate.
- Expanding the scope of funding allocations to better support the costs incurred by local government authorities associated with disaster response and relief work, and the rebuilding of assets
- Ensuring funds, and claims processes, are aimed at ensuring community resilience outcomes.
- Outcomes of funding will support lead agencies to undertake response activities, reconstruct assets for sustainable development, etc.
- A reasonable, evidence-based claims process.

Telecommunications Upgrade Support – including Universal Data Service Obligations.

In a modern society where communities receive most of their information digitally, there is a need for fit-for-purpose services from digital providers to meet service continuity to prevent significant, prolonged and widespread outages during natural disasters.

Although not the most recent bushfires in Gippsland, the 2019/20 bushfires are instructive about the extent of damage and the critical need of digital connectivity. Over 1 million hectares of forest, agricultural land, livestock and private homes in a number of communities were destroyed and approximately 1,700 people were evacuated from Mallacoota alone.

A report into the 2019-2020 fires, conducted by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) highlighted that the majority of mobile service outages experienced during the bushfires was due to power outages at base stations, not direct fire damage (80% of outages were due to power outages while only 1% was due to fire damage). This underscores the need for resilience in telecommunication networks.

The 13 February 2024 thunderstorm event further highlighted this issue once again, in which our need for basic standards of digital infrastructure services during significant natural disaster events remained un-addressed.

This need was recognised in the August 2024 Victorian Government Network Outage Review, which made 19 recommendations regarding the widespread outages experienced during the 13 February event. One Gippsland strongly supports Recommendation 9 of the Report, which calls for "the Victorian Government to work with the Commonwealth Government and telecommunications carriers to ensure that there are appropriate arrangements, via existing services or alternatives, for communities to stay connected for 72 hours without network power supply". We call for this Recommendation to be immediately adopted as we head into the 2024 bushfire season.

With communities now receiving most of their information digitally (including disaster warnings and advice) there is a need for the Universal Service Obligation to apply to the provision of digital services, not just voice telephony. This requires a policy change at the Federal level to legislate this level of service from telecommunications companies.

Recommendations

One Gippsland seeks all levels of Government to collaborate and agree to reform and simplify the disaster recovery funding model to:

- Expanding the scope of funding allocations to better support the costs incurred by local government authorities associated with disaster response and relief work, and the rebuilding of assets
- Ensuring funds, and claims processes, are aimed at ensuring community resilience outcomes.
- Support lead agencies to undertake response activities, reconstruct assets for sustainable development; and.
- Introduce a reasonable, evidence-based claims process that is standardised nationally.

One Gippsland seeks a disaster focused betterment funding model to support recovery from natural disaster events, which commits to repairing infrastructure to better withstand future disaster events rather than a like-for-like infrastructure replacement model currently in operation in Victoria.

One Gippsland calls for telecommunications to be recognised as an essential service that includes:

- Telecommunication providers be required to meet service continuity standards to prevent significant, prolonged and widespread outages during natural disasters;
- Providers be required to provide reasonable standards of service to areas with low population;
- At least 72 hours of guaranteed auxiliary back-up power to avoid outages during emergencies; and
- Provision of Data to be recognised within the Universal Service Obligation provisions for telecommunications providers.





Further Information

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