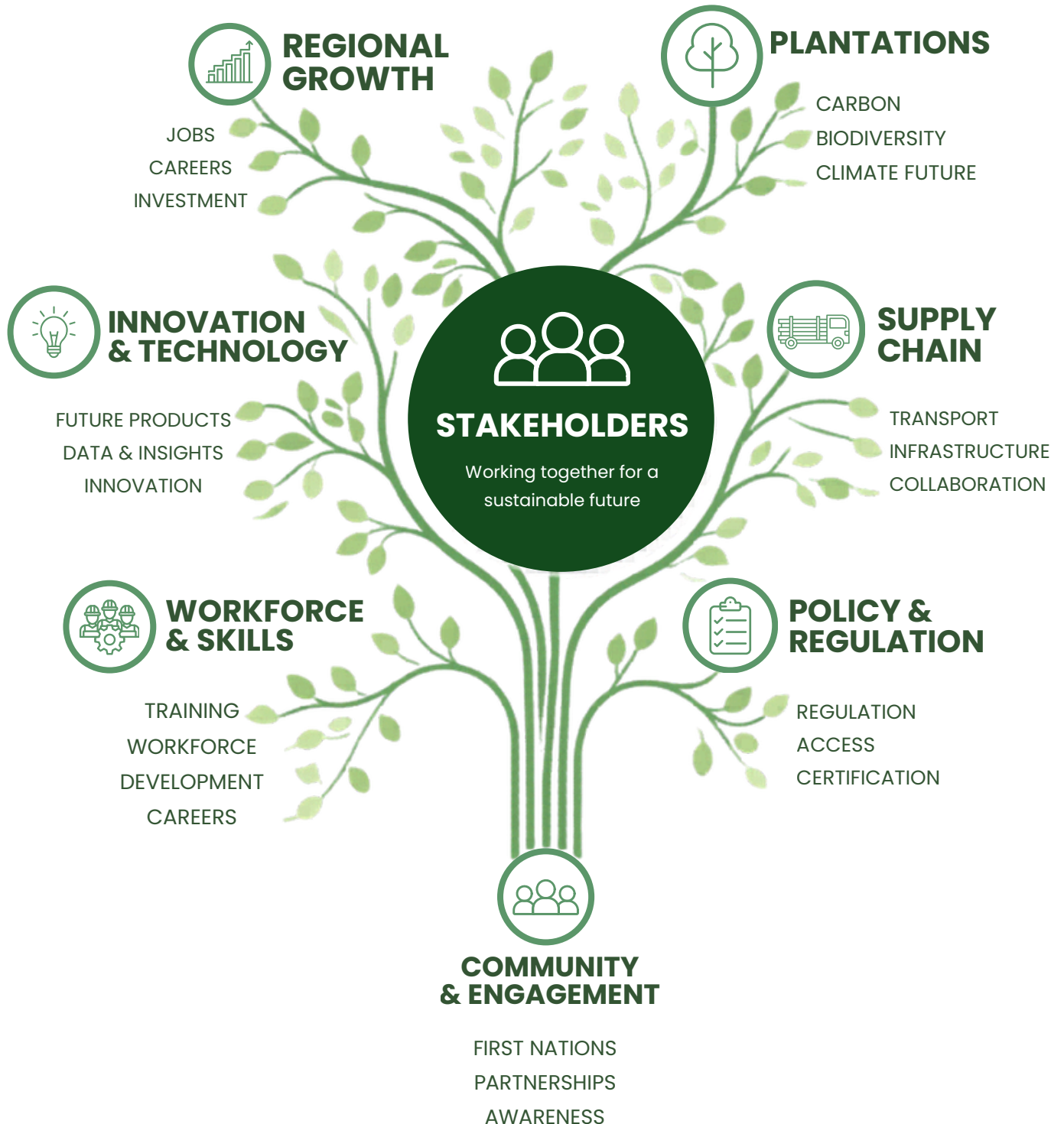


GIPPSLAND FORESTRY HUB PRIORITY ACTION & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



**GIPPSLAND
FORESTRY HUB**
Promoting the Forestry Industry

sva | consulting



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

This report was commissioned by the Gippsland Regional Forestry Hub with funding from the Australian Government, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.



Acknowledgment of Country

Social Ventures Australia acknowledges and pays respect to the past and present traditional custodians and elders of this country on which we work.

'After the Rains' by Richard Seden for Saltwater People 2024

Project acknowledgements

We extend our gratitude to the executive and steering committees of the Gippsland Forestry Hub for their expertise and valuable contributions. Special thanks to Lesia Goodwin, Hub Manager for her support and guidance through each phase of the project.

Legal disclosure statement

Social Ventures Australia (SVA) has prepared this report in good faith on the basis of the research and information available to SVA at the date of publication.

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About SVA

Social Ventures Australia (SVA) is a not-for-profit organisation that works with partners to alleviate disadvantage – towards an Australia where all people and communities thrive.

We influence systems to deliver better social outcomes for people by learning about what works in communities, helping organisations be more effective, sharing our perspectives and advocating for change.

This report has been prepared by members of SVA's consulting team, Australia's leading not-for-profit consultancy. We focus solely on social impact and work with partners to increase their capacity to create positive change. Thanks to more than 15 years of working with not-for-profits, government and funders, we have developed a deep understanding of the sector and 'what works'.

Our team is passionate about what they do and use their diverse experience to work together to solve Australia's most pressing challenges.

This report has been authored by SVA Consulting by Hanna Cihal and Adelle Main.

For more information contact us:

consulting@socialventures.org.au

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Introduction

Background and context

The role of the Gippsland Forestry Hub

The Gippsland Forestry Hub (Hub) drives sustainable growth in the forest and wood products industry. The work of the Hub helps local businesses expand, supports innovation, strengthens communities, promotes sustainable industry practice and raises awareness about jobs and career paths in Gippsland Forestry.

Since 2019, the Hub has commissioned a range of research and strategy reports which identify key challenges and opportunities facing the region. Notably, this included a 30-year strategy, which has guided the activities and focus areas of the Hub to date.

A changing strategic landscape

The landscape of forestry is changing both nationally and across the state, reflecting a deepening commitment to environmental sustainability. The Australian Government is prioritising the expansion of plantation estates across strategic regional hubs to bolster domestic timber security and drive industrial-scale carbon sequestration through national markets.¹

Simultaneously, the Victorian Government has pivoted toward a conservation-led model that treats native forests as permanent carbon sinks to meet its accelerated 2045 Net Zero target², while incentivising private plantation growth to replace native timber supplies.³ Together, these approaches underscore a dual commitment to leveraging the forestry sector as both a critical source of low-carbon building materials and a cornerstone of large-scale emissions reduction.

Project rationale and approach

The Hub is now at an important inflection point, as it faces crucial decisions about its future funding and structure. To navigate this, the Hub engaged SVA Consulting to conduct a review of work to date and build a prioritised action plan.

For this project, SVA Consulting reviewed all reports commissioned by the Hub from 2019 to 2025 to extract recommendations and undertook a structured assessment process to develop a clear, ranked action plan for the Hub to pursue or promote, starting with the most achievable and impactful steps.

Key focus areas for Gippsland Forestry Hub

The Gippsland Forestry Hub envisions a sustainable, safe, productive and environmentally conscious industry that provides a sustainable future for all. It acknowledges the range of different viewpoints

¹ Clean Energy Regulator, [Plantation Forestry Method](#), Federal Government of Australia, [website], July 2025; Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, [Reducing agricultural and land sector emissions](#), Federal Government of Australia, [website], January 2026.

² Energy, Environment and Climate Action, [Victoria's Climate Change Strategy](#), Victorian State Government, [website], January 2026

³ Energy, Environment and Climate Action, [Forestry Transition Program](#), Victorian State Government, [website], October, 2025

and contributions of stakeholders across the sector and region and helps to foster collaboration towards shared objectives of sustainability and economic vitality.

In the Hub's work to date, four key focus areas can be identified⁴:

1. **Future Ready Resource & Sustainable Supply:** Resource security, farm forestry, climate adaptation, carbon management
2. **Competitive Value Adding & Industry Innovation:** Innovation and value adding
3. **Trusted Voice, Evidence, and Social License:** Community engagement, communication, transparency, coordinated advocacy
4. **Skilled Workforce & Industry Capability:** Workforce skills, education, training, leadership

Prioritising activities and next steps

A large number of recommendations and suggested actions can be identified within the various research reports commissioned by the Hub between 2019 and 2025. Each of these represent important opportunities to strengthen the local forestry industry and support the objectives of the Hub. However, it is not possible to pursue each of these recommendations at once – hence there is a need for a deliberate sequencing of actions.

Nine actions have been identified that should happen as soon as possible to build momentum, establish foundations, and create the conditions for further work. These priority actions are described in the section below, and a comprehensive list of actions and recommendations is included in Appendix A: Full List of Recommendations.

It is important to note that there are multiple interdependencies between these actions. While all nine actions should commence swiftly, the Hub Steering Committee has identified a subset that should commence first, to build crucial foundations. Specifically, establishing a coordinated industry policy and advocacy partnership (3.3.1), supported by a comprehensive external communications strategy (3.2.1), will lay the groundwork for subsequent initiatives. Furthermore, in response to the current fuel crisis, the Committee prioritises improving enabling infrastructure (2.3.1, 2.3.2) and supporting plantation expansion (1.1.1) to meet state and national climate goals while mitigating sovereign energy risk.

Other actions are equally valuable but depend on these early steps, additional coordination, or increased capacity, and are therefore planned for later stages. Focusing first on enabling actions helps ensure that subsequent initiatives can be delivered well and have lasting impact.

Ongoing Activities and Transition Planning

The Gippsland Forestry Hub is currently actively progressing a range of recommendations and activities to support the forestry sector. The Hub's ongoing activities are expected to continue for at least the next twelve months, however, there remain uncertainties beyond this timeframe. It is now critical to plan for the transition of these activities, to ensure continuity in the event the Hub closes or changes structure. To support this, completion of transition planning has been identified as a priority recommendation (4.3.1) as it will help provide clarity and ongoing support to industry stakeholders throughout this period of change.

⁴ Note, these areas build on the focus areas originally identified in the Gippsland Forestry Hub 30-Year Strategy

Summary of priority recommendations

Overview of priority recommendations

The table below provides a summary of prioritised recommendations and actions identified for the Hub to progress as soon as possible.

These actions span all four thematic areas: *Future Ready Resource and Sustainable supply* (2 actions); *Competitive Value Adding and Industry Innovation* (4 actions); *Trusted Voice, Evidence and Social Licence* (2 actions) and *Skilled Workforce and Industry Capability* (1 action).

Each recommendation listed in the table has a reference number that corresponds with the Excel register and a brief explanation. Further detailed information is presented on the following pages, outlining the specific next steps required for implementation and how the Hub will measure its success. This structured approach will support the efficient advancement of priority actions, ensuring clarity and momentum as the Hub moves forward.

Table 1: Immediate priority actions

#	Prioritised recommendations and related actions
	Support the development of a secure, climate-resilient plantation and fibre supply
1.1.1	Develop a Gippsland-wide plantation expansion strategy, drawing on previously completed farm-forestry research to develop actionable plan. The strategy will explore incentives, de-risks expansion of plantations, and ways to protect existing resources.
1.1.2	Support long term resilience by improving risk management, increasing community confidence through research and communication, and using sustainable, fire-resilient forestry practices.
	Establish Gippsland as a centre for bioeconomy and modern manufacturing
2.1.1	Support bioenergy, biomethane, biochar, biogenic carbon, and fibre-use innovation; link forestry residues into energy systems; and pursue low-emission transport and processing infrastructure.
2.1.2	Develop a feasibility study to develop an advanced manufacturing precinct, and within this support circular-economy hubs (inc. utilising 'waste').
	Improve enabling infrastructure for industry competitiveness
2.3.1	Address freight constraints by delivering priority HPFV routes, rail network improvements, bridge upgrades, and route optimisation.
2.3.2	Support toll rebates, comparative route assessments, and shared logistics solutions to improve efficiency and reduce freight costs.
	Build trust through transparent, evidence-based communication
3.2.1	Develop a coordinated external communications strategy that addresses misinformation and promotes forestry's role in climate action, housing, and regional development and addresses misinformation through fact-based messaging
	Establish coordinated industry advocacy and government engagement for policy reform
3.3.1	Formalise an industry policy/advocacy partnership to coordinate shared advocacy positions and engage State and Local Government on regulatory reform, including planning and permit processes. (This will streamline advocacy and communication channels with Government). Focus to be on improving resource security by identifying barriers to plantation establishment and expansion, crafting policy reform and supporting long-term investment certainty.
	Support industry into the future
4.1.1	Complete transition planning for the Gippsland Hub's ongoing work to ensure continuity and provide clarity and support to industry stakeholders.

Priority actions and next steps

1. Future Ready Resource and Sustainable Supply

Recommendation 1.1: Support the development of a secure, climate-resilient plantation and fibre supply

Priority action 1.1.1: Develop a Gippsland-wide plantation expansion strategy, drawing on previously completed farm-forestry research to develop an actionable plan.

A coordinated plantation expansion strategy is essential for strengthening Gippsland's long-term fibre security and positioning the region as a climate-resilient forestry leader. The strategy will draw on existing farm-forestry research and regional land assessments to identify opportunities, constraints, and optimal plantation zones.

This work will:

- Analyse land capability, soil, water, climate, and infrastructure factors using existing spatial and economic datasets.
- Engage landowners, Traditional Owners, agricultural groups, industry, and local government to build shared understanding of barriers and opportunities.
- Explore mechanisms to incentivise investment, reduce establishment risks, and protect existing plantations e.g. rotations of land set aside for plantations.
- Align with state and national carbon, agricultural, and climate-adaptation priorities.

Output: A regionally endorsed plantation expansion roadmap outlining priority areas, investment pathways, and policy recommendations.

Key next steps:

- Secure funding and commission a lead organisation to coordinate strategy development.
- Consolidate existing farm-forestry research, including *A History of Plantation Species in Gippsland*, *Value of Forestry and Timber Products to Climate Change Mitigation in Gippsland*, *Investing in Gippsland's Sustainable Forestry Future*, and *Barriers to New Plantations in Gippsland*.
- Initiate structured engagement with landholders, Traditional Owners, forestry companies, and councils.

How will we know we are successful?

- **Strategy completion, approval and influence.** Track the completion and endorsement of the strategy, with evidence of influence on stakeholder decisions and actions within 6-12 months of completion. To be measured through internal records (meeting minutes) and external stakeholder activity (e.g., funding submissions, government briefings and investment decisions).
- **Stakeholder engagement and uptake.** Monitor the volume and coverage of engagement with key landowners, community groups, and organisations during strategy development, including the number of stakeholders who indicate support and/or willingness to act on identified priorities. To be tracked in attendance sheets, consultation logs, meeting notes.

Priority action 1.1.2: Support long term resilience by improving risk management, increasing community confidence through research and communication, and using sustainable, fire-resilient forestry practices.

Strengthening long-term resilience is essential to protect Gippsland's plantation and fibre base, reduce exposure to climate and bushfire risks, and build confidence among communities and investors. This action focuses on practical, region-wide improvements to risk management and fire-resilient practice. Alongside transparent engagement and shared understanding to support social licence.

This work will:

- Consolidate and prioritise key climate, fire, and operational risks affecting plantations, haulage, and processing, and identify practical mitigation options.
- Support consistent adoption of sustainable and fire-resilient forestry practices across land tenures, aligned with best-available guidance and local conditions. This connects to the First Nations Engagement Framework and is a potential cross-theme initiative including procurement of services from Bunurong Land Council and GLaWAC.
- Explore the role of forestry and timber products in climate change mitigation efforts (for example, species selection influencing fire-risk rating).
- Strengthen cross-tenure coordination (industry, government, land managers and communities) to improve preparedness, response planning, and recovery. This could include through the development of contact registers e.g., Road Managers in Gippsland.
- Improve community confidence through clearer public-facing information on risk management, contingency plans, responsibilities, and evidence of good practice.

Output: A Gippsland forestry resilience and risk uplift plan, including priority risks, agreed responses and practice improvements, coordination mechanisms, and a short implementation roadmap.

Key next steps:

- Establish a small resilience working group (industry, land managers, relevant agencies, community representation) with clear scope and decision rights.
- Commission a rapid risk and resilience stocktake (existing plans, incident learnings, practice standards, gaps) and identify “no regrets” actions. This work would build on existing evidence of continued sustainable management of forests.
- Identify 2–3 priority practice uplifts (e.g., fuel and access management, detection/response coordination, regeneration practices) and define minimum standards.
- Develop a simple communications package to explain the approach and provide consistent, transparent messaging to communities and stakeholders. (Links with priority actions 3.2.1 and 3.3.1).

How will we know we are successful?

- **Resilience plan completion and ensuing action.** Track the completion and endorsement of the resilience and risk plan and confirmation that priority actions are adopted or referenced by relevant partners. To be measured through internal records (meeting minutes) and partner correspondence.
- **Stakeholder engagement and influence.** Number of relevant landowners, community groups, and organisations consulted during plan development, across all priority stakeholder categories. Data to be tracked in attendance sheets, consultation logs, meeting notes.
- **Community confidence indicator.** The percentage of participants from the working group and public meetings who report increased confidence in forest risk management and fire safety. To be measured via a short survey or pulse check after launch of the plan.

2. Competitive Value Adding and Industry Innovation

Recommendation 2.1: Establish Gippsland as a centre for bioeconomy and modern manufacturing

Priority action 2.1.1: Support bioenergy, biomethane, biochar, biogenic carbon, and fibre-use innovation; link forestry residues into energy systems; and pursue low-emission transport and processing infrastructure.

Targeted bioeconomy innovation can unlock higher-value and lower-emissions uses of Gippsland's forestry residues and fibre streams, while strengthening regional energy resilience and creating new market opportunities. This action focuses on connecting feedstocks to viable technologies and partners, and shaping the enabling conditions (infrastructure, investment pathways, approvals) needed to progress priority projects.

This work will:

- Map forestry residue and fibre streams, current uses, and constraints to identify the most feasible near-term bioeconomy opportunities (this work builds off *The Value of Forestry and Timber Products to Climate Change Mitigation in Gippsland* report and *Steps Towards a Greener Future* report).
- Convene industry, energy, research and government partners to define priority project concepts (bioenergy, biomethane, biochar, biogenic carbon and fibre-use innovations) and redefine key messages for broader sharing (see priority recommendation 3.2.1)
- Draw on existing reports and further engagement to identify infrastructure and logistics requirements, and action existing ones (see priority recommendations 2.3.1 and 2.3.2) including low-emission transport options and processing upgrades that improve commercial viability.
- Support investment readiness by clarifying potential offtake pathways, regulatory considerations, and candidate funding sources supported by coordinated advocacy and government engagement (see priority recommendation 3.3.1).

Output: A prioritised bioeconomy opportunity pipeline for Gippsland, including a small set of investable project concepts and enabling actions (infrastructure, partnerships, approvals).

Key next steps:

- Commission a rapid feedstock-and-demand scan (volumes, locations, seasonality, competing uses, offtake prospects).
- Establish a bioeconomy project roundtable (industry + energy + research + local/state government) to select 2–3 priority concepts to progress (e.g., research into stored biogenic carbon, development of regulatory pathways for bioenergy and biomethane, advocating for national/state measurement framework and/or exploration of fibre availability outside Gippsland)
- Identify “pathfinder” projects suitable for early feasibility (e.g., residue-to-energy integration at a processor, biochar trials linked to land management outcomes).
- Develop a shortlist of infrastructure enablers (route optimisation, R&D for upgrades to trucks, remote harvesting equipment, storage, grid/gas connections, processing upgrades) and assign owners to progress scoping.

How will we know we are successful?

- **Stakeholder engagement reach.** Number of key industry, energy, research, community groups and local/state government representatives who participate in the bioeconomy project

roundtables and/or defining or progressing key concepts. Measured through attendance records and meeting notes.

- **Assignment of owners for infrastructure enablers.** Count the number of infrastructure enablers (e.g. route optimisation, equipment, storage etc.) being activity scoped with a named owner and agreed next steps (these could be members of the roundtables or others).
- **Innovation projects initiated.** Track the number of bioenergy, biochar or residue-use projects or partnerships that progress beyond the initial concept development (e.g. feasibility testing, pilot design, memorandums of understanding for key enabling partnerships).

Priority action 2.1.2: Develop a feasibility study to develop an advanced manufacturing precinct, and within this support circular-economy hubs (including utilising 'waste').

A dedicated feasibility study to further develop a plan for Gippsland to establish an advanced manufacturing precinct. The findings would support investment, unlock potential circular-economy opportunities, (see priority action 2.1.1) and anchor new value chains that make better use of fibre, by-products, and “waste” streams. This action focuses on clarifying the commercial proposition, potential locations, enabling infrastructure, and governance options to move from concept to delivery.

This work will:

- Define the precinct concept, target industries and capabilities (processing, engineered wood, biomaterials, circular-economy co-location), and the value proposition for investors and tenants.
- Review similar examples in Australia and internationally – focusing on Gippsland’s point of difference.
- Assess suitable locations, infrastructure needs, and planning/approvals pathways, including utilities, transport access, and land availability.
- Identify circular-economy hub opportunities that improve resource efficiency and utilise residual streams (including “waste”) across co-located businesses.
- Develop feasible governance, delivery and funding models, including partner roles and staging options working with the industry policy/advocacy partnership (see priority recommendation 3.3.1).

Output: A feasibility study and business case outlining the preferred precinct model, candidate sites, required enablers, staging plan, and investment pathway.

Key next steps:

- Appoint a lead sponsor/host (or steering group) to oversee the feasibility and align key partners early.
- Commission a market sounding (industry/tenant demand, investor appetite, anchor tenants, required services and constraints) – this could leverage the external communications strategy (see priority action 3.2.1).
- Undertake site and infrastructure options assessment (including planning considerations and indicative capital and/or operating expenditure ranges).
- Produce a staged implementation roadmap with a short list of “early mover” circular-economy hub opportunities that can proceed in parallel (see priority action 2.1.1).

How will we know we are successful?

- **Feasibility study delivery.** Confirm completion of the study and approval by executive committee, with evidence of use in investment discussions, market engagement or funding pathways. Evidenced by internal records and stakeholder correspondence.
- **Stakeholder participation.** Count the number of industry, investor and government stakeholders, engaged and providing input during study development.

- **Further work progressed.** Track the development of a detailed business case and other 'early mover' opportunities that are progressed within 12 months following completion of the study.

Recommendation 2.3: Improve enabling infrastructure for industry competitiveness

Priority action 2.3.1: Address freight constraints by delivering priority HPFV routes, rail network improvements, bridge upgrades, and route optimisation.

Freight infrastructure constraints are a major driver of cost, inefficiency and safety risk for Gippsland's forestry supply chains. This action focuses on the infrastructure planning, prioritisation and delivery (capital works, network access) building from findings from the *Transport Infrastructure Barriers and Opportunities* report.

This work will:

- Identify and prioritise the most critical infrastructure constraints affecting forestry freight, including HPFV access gaps, bridge load limits, rail pinch points and last-mile connections (e.g., HPFV from Gippsland to Melbourne Docks, Western Victoria, Southern NSW, or EV charging stations, hydrogen refuelling hubs etc).
- Strengthen the evidence base for investment by quantifying the economic, safety and productivity impacts of key constraints – this could be in the form of engaging a rail network expert to assist or working with Track Managers on bridge inspections. This work should be shared broadly with Road Managers and industry partners more broadly.
- Align industry priorities with State, Local Government and rail authorities' asset management and capital works programs (connects to priority action 3.3.1).
- Support the progression of priority projects through concept development, business cases and inclusion in funding and delivery pipelines. This includes working with Latrobe City Council personnel to understand permit rejections.

Output: A prioritised forestry freight infrastructure upgrade package for Gippsland, including agreed priority HPFV routes, bridge and rail upgrades, and a clear pathway for delivery.

Key next steps:

- Establish an industry–government freight infrastructure working group to confirm priority corridors and specifications.
- Commission a targeted infrastructure constraints assessment focused on HPFV access, bridges and rail.
- Prepare concise investment cases for the highest-priority upgrades to support agency planning and funding submissions.
- Engage early with government bodies, industry and delivery agencies to align scope, sequencing and responsibilities.

How will we know we are successful?

- **Aligned priorities for upgrade.** Track the number of working group engagements, agreed infrastructure upgrades for Gippsland and confirmation they are raised and acknowledged by relevant agencies. Internal records indicate progress (meeting minutes and correspondence).
- **Completion of assessment.** Track the completion of a targeted assessment of constraints focused on bridges and rail, with circulation to relevant industry and government stakeholders. Internal records to be used to indicate progress (hiring of consultant, engagements, and completion /submission of final documents).

- **Further work.** Count the key infrastructure enablers (e.g. route optimisation, equipment, storage etc.) being scoped by individuals or organisations (could be members of the working group or others) with a defined pathway to business case and/or advocacy.

Priority action 2.3.2: Support toll rebates, comparative route assessments, and shared logistics solutions to improve efficiency and reduce freight costs.

This action focuses on operational, policy and commercial levers to reduce costs and improve efficiency (non-capital) building from findings of the *Transport Infrastructure Barriers and Opportunities* report and *Steps Towards a Greener Future* report.

In parallel with longer-term infrastructure upgrades (see priority action 2.3.1) there are immediate opportunities to reduce freight costs and improve efficiency through policy, operational and commercial measures. This action focuses on non-capital interventions that can deliver near-term relief for industry and better utilisation of existing networks.

This work will:

- Assess current freight cost drivers, including tolls (particularly through Melbourne), regulatory settings and operational inefficiencies, and identify priority cost-reduction opportunities. Findings should be used to inform targeted advocacy initiatives (see priority action 3.3.1).
- Undertake comparative route assessments to clarify the most efficient, safe and cost-effective options under existing infrastructure conditions.
- Support shared and cooperative logistics solutions (e.g., backhauling, shared transfer points, coordinated scheduling) to reduce empty running and improve utilisation.
- Build an evidence base to support targeted advocacy for toll relief or policy adjustments (links to priority action 3.3.1).

Output: A freight efficiency and cost-reduction action plan, including toll relief options, route comparison findings, and a small number of shared logistics initiatives ready for piloting.

Key next steps:

- Commission a rapid freight cost and route comparison study for key forestry corridors.
- Identify and scope 1–2 priority toll rebate or policy relief opportunities and develop supporting evidence.
- Convene operators and major shippers to design shared logistics pilots.
- Define simple metrics to track cost savings and efficiency gains and support scale-up or advocacy.

How will we know we are successful?

- **Completion of comparison study.** Track the completion of a comparison study for forestry corridors and use to inform advocacy, operator decisions or pilot initiatives. Internal records and stakeholder correspondence to indicate progress.
- **Stakeholder participation.** Count the number of industry and government stakeholders, engaged during study development, including those who contribute data and/or take part in shaping options.

3. Trusted Voice, Evidence and Social Licence

Recommendation 3.2: Build trust through transparent, evidence-based communication

Priority action 3.2.1: Develop a coordinated external communications strategy that addresses misinformation and promotes forestry's role in climate action, housing, and regional development and addresses misinformation through fact-based messaging

A sector-wide communications strategy will help address misinformation, improve public understanding of forestry's environmental and economic contributions, and strengthen social licence.

This work will:

- Identify key narratives and misconceptions currently shaping public discourse around forestry (such as deforestation, carbon emissions, or conservation concerns) and to map the audiences most influenced by or contributing to these narratives (e.g., urban communities, policymakers, media, educators). Links to the following priority actions: 1.1.2, 2.1.2 and 4.1.1.
- Be grounded in evidence-based messaging and co-designed with industry, government, Traditional Owners, and community stakeholders to ensure credibility and alignment with broader sustainability and regional development goals.
- Draw on Hub to lead, with support from a cross-sectoral working group to oversee the implementation and ensure consistency across partners

Output: A communication strategy with clear objectives, target audiences, key messages, and a mix of communication channels (e.g. social media, schools, regional media, industry events). It should also feature a proactive media engagement plan, a library of accessible resources (e.g. infographics, videos, case studies), and a mechanism for rapid response to misinformation.

Key next steps:

- Conduct a communications audit to identify current narratives, gaps, and misinformation.
- Establish a cross-sectoral working group to co-design the strategy and align messaging.
- Secure funding and engage a communications specialist or agency to lead strategy development and content creation.

How will we know we are successful?

- **Strategy completion and dissemination.** Development and endorsement of communications strategy with adoption of key messages by key partner organisations. Internal records and stakeholder communications can be used to indicate progress.
- **Communications outputs.** Factsheets, videos, social media posts and articles produced and distributed under the strategy each quarter. Measure of both pieces of unique content created and extent of distribution via various channels.
- **Audience engagement.** Measure of website visits and/or social media engagement related to forestry messaging - measured through basic web analytics to indicate uptake and reach.

Recommendation 3.3: Establish coordinated industry advocacy and government engagement for policy reform

Priority action 3.3.1: Formalise an industry policy/advocacy partnership to coordinate shared advocacy positions and engage State, Local and Commonwealth governments on regulatory reform, including planning and permit processes.

This initiative is critical to enabling more coordinated, strategic and effective advocacy across the sector. A formalised policy and advocacy partnership will strengthen the industry's ability to engage consistently with government at all levels, improve regulatory outcomes, and support growth, innovation and long-term investment certainty. The partnership should focus on improving resource security by identifying and addressing barriers to plantation establishment and expansion, including regulatory and approval processes at State, Local and Commonwealth levels, and by advancing agreed reform priorities.

This work will:

- Establish a representative, cross-sectoral policy and advocacy alliance or partnership that can coordinate shared positions and engage effectively with State and Local Government. (Could be headed by Hub).
- Bring together key stakeholders across the forestry value chain, industry associations, plantation managers, processors, landowners, Traditional Owners, and training providers, to agree on common policy priorities, such as streamlining planning and permit processes, improving land access, and incentivising plantation expansion. Links to priority actions 1.1.2, 2.3.1 and 2.3.2.
- Provide a coordinated industry–government engagement mechanism, enabling structured, proactive engagement with Commonwealth agencies and Ministers, as well as State and Local Government, on regulatory reform, policy alignment and implementation challenges
- Serve as a unified and credible voice for the sector, supporting more strategic, consistent and evidence-based advocacy through joint submissions, policy briefs, briefings and stakeholder forums. The partnership may also commission targeted research or policy analysis to underpin advocacy positions and support reform proposals.

Output: Policy and advocacy partnership (could be a working group auspiced within the Hub initially).

Key next steps:

- Convene a roundtable of key industry and stakeholder representatives to scope the purpose, structure, and priorities of the network.
- Develop a term of reference and governance model for the partnership, including roles, membership, and decision-making processes.
- Develop a work plan focused on identifying regulatory barriers, developing evidence-based policy proposals, and advocating for reforms that support long-term investment certainty and resource security.
- Secure seed funding or in-kind support to establish a secretariat or coordination function and begin policy mapping and engagement planning.

How will we know we are successful?

- **Partnership establishment.** Verify that the partnership is formed with agreed terms of reference and a meeting schedule. Evidenced by documented membership agreements and supporting materials (e.g. terms of reference).

- **Joint advocacy activities.** Count the number of submission papers, briefings or meetings with government delivered by the partnership annually, noting the number that result in follow-up requests, ongoing engagement or evidence of consideration by government. Evidenced by internal records (meeting minutes, submission registers), government correspondence and external media if relevant.

4. Skilled workforce and industry capability

Recommendation 4.1: Support industry into the future

Priority action 4.1.1: Complete transition planning for the Gippsland Hub's ongoing work to ensure continuity and provide clarity and support to industry stakeholders.

Transition planning is critical to ensure continuity of the Hub's priority activities, maintain momentum across partnerships, and provide clear guidance to industry stakeholders during a period of uncertainty and change. This action focuses on clarifying what continues, what changes, and who holds responsibility for key functions, relationships, and projects so the region retains capability and coordination regardless of future structures.

This work will:

- Document the Hub's core functions, active initiatives, partnerships and commitments that require continuity planning.
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and governance arrangements for priority activities during and after transition (including decision-making and coordination).
- Develop an engagement and communications approach that provides stakeholders with clear, consistent information and support pathways.
- Establish practical mechanisms for handover, knowledge retention, and continuity of key relationships, evidence and work programs.

Output: A transition plan documenting continuity arrangement, governance/options, stakeholder communications, and an implementation schedule for the next 12 months.

Key next steps:

- Document current workstreams, commitments, key partners and dependencies (what needs to continue; what can pause; what needs to be handed over). This plan should include the priority actions from this document.
- Agree a transition governance structure (steering group, decision rights, escalation pathways) and define owner(s) for each priority action area.
- Develop a stakeholder-facing transition narrative and FAQ (what's changing, what isn't, where to go for support, how to stay involved) – linked to priority action 3.2.1.
- Create a handover pack for each workstream (status, contacts, critical documents, funding, risks, next decisions) and a timeline for transfer.

How will we know we are successful?

- **Transition plan identified and progressed.** A comprehensive transition plan (outlining future governance, funding and work program) completed and approved by the executive committee, with clear ownership for priority actions post-transition.
- **Stakeholders are kept informed about key changes.** Briefings and updates provided to staff, industry and community stakeholders about the transition process, with stakeholders reporting clarity on who to engage going forward (measured qualitatively). Internal records

can be used to track progress (number of meetings, newsletters/email coms, meeting minutes and correspondence).

- **Continuity of operations.** Ongoing and priority Hub activities continue without interruption during and after transition. The transition plan should include a comprehensive list which can be tracked to indicate success in maintaining operations.

Appendix A – Full list of recommendations

Methodology

To develop the implementation plan, we started with the original themes from the 30-year strategy and implementation plan and revised these into four updated thematic areas which reflect current priorities of the Gippsland Forestry Hub and forestry sector. These four thematic areas are:

1. **Future Ready Resource & Sustainable Supply:** Resource security, farm forestry, climate adaptation, carbon management
2. **Competitive Value Adding & Industry Innovation:** Innovation and value adding
3. **Trusted Voice, Evidence, and Social License:** Community engagement, communication, transparency, coordinated advocacy
4. **Skilled Workforce & Industry Capability:** Workforce skills, education, training, leadership

The process began with a review of 15 reports produced by the Gippsland Forestry Hub between 2019 and 2025. From these documents, the team identified 156 distinct recommendations or suggested actions. Where possible, project leads, key stakeholders, and proposed timing were also noted.

Each recommendation was classified by focus area and type, then grouped into broader thematic categories. After duplicates were removed and similar items consolidated, the recommendations were organised into 13 clear recommendations for the Hub to consider.

Within these recommendations, specific actions were outlined across the 13 recommendations there are 24 actions. Each action was evaluated against established criteria: cost, timeframe, the degree of control the Hub has or required collaboration, other potential barriers or enablers, the level of impact. This resulted in a total score, which was used to differentiate between different actions. We then applied a further check, 'risk of not doing' to highlight any actions which should be prioritised (even if their initial scores ranked lower). A final sense check with the Hub Manager provided determined the alignment of recommendations and actions against the Hub's strategic priorities.

This systematic assessment helped determine which actions should be prioritised for the Hub's future work. The assessment criteria and specific weightings are outlined on the following page.

Assessment criteria

Table 2: Assessment criteria

Criteria	Guiding question	Brackets	Weighting
Cost¹	How expensive is it?	Low: up to \$250,000 (e.g. a grant program or community led project) Medium: \$250,000 – up to \$1,000,000 (e.g. a large-scale industry project) High: \$1,000,000+ (e.g. major scale project triggering notification to parliament or ministerial approval)	Low: +3 Med: +2 High: +1
Timeframe²	How long will it take?	Short term: 5 years Medium term: 10 years Long term: 30 years	Short: +3 Med: +2 Long: +1
Controllability/dependency	Can the hub independently deliver?	Low dependency: Can deliver independently Medium dependency: Requires 1–2 partners some other buy-in required possibly government or another org High dependency: Needs multiple partners including government	Low: +3 Med: +2 High: +1
Other barriers/enablers³	What external factors could help or hinder?	Low: Requires change to industry practice Medium: Requires change to industry and/or policy and regulation High: Requires changes to industry and policy, and is likely to face public or political opposition	Low barriers: +3 Med barriers: +2 High barriers: +1
Level of impact	How significantly will this strengthen the local industry?	Low: Uncertain or indirect impact on a single focus area Medium: Direct impact on one or more focus area High: Long term impact or critical enabler for multiple focus areas	Low: +1 Med: +2 High: +3
Risk of not doing	If this is not actioned, what is the potential impact?	Low: Missed opportunity, but no direct impact on current industry Medium: May create challenges or undermine viability of some parts of industry High: Undermines viability of entire local industry	Low: +1 Med: +2 High: +3
Alignment	To what extent is the recommendation aligned with strategic priorities of the Gippsland Forestry Hub?	Determined based on qualitative input from Hub manager	NA

Notes: ¹Costs have been informed by desktop research and are based on understanding of the Responsible Wood Community Grants, Victoria Timber Innovation Grants; ²Timeframe brackets match those used in the 30-Year Strategy; ³ This criterion considers political, policy or structural issues that may create significant barriers or provide strong support for the action

Table 3: Consolidated recommendations and sub actions related to Theme 1: Future ready resource and sustainable supply

Future Ready Resource and Sustainable Supply		Priority
1.1	Build a secure, climate-resilient plantation and fibre supply	
1.1.1	Develop a Gippsland-wide plantation expansion strategy, drawing on previously completed farm-forestry research to develop an actionable plan that incentivises and de-risks expansion of plantations, and protects existing resource.	Action now
1.1.2	Support long term resilience by improving risk management, increasing community confidence through research and communication, and using sustainable, fire-resilient forestry practices.	Action now
1.1.3	Ensure trials and demonstration sites are professionally managed with transparent data release.	Note for the future
1.2	Integrate forestry into climate and carbon goals	
1.2.1	Establish regional carbon baselines, support embodied-carbon measurement standards, promote the climate benefits of timber, and expand carbon-smart forestry practices across the sector.	Action next – when capacity allows
1.2.2	Develop industry wide decarbonisation plan and roadmap and incentives.	Action next – when capacity allows

Table 4: Consolidated recommendations and sub actions related to Theme 2: Competitive Value Adding and Industry Innovation

Competitive Value Adding and Industry Innovation		Priority
2.1	Establish Gippsland as a centre for bioeconomy and modern manufacturing	
2.1.1	Support bioenergy, biomethane, biochar, biogenic carbon, and fibre-use innovation; link forestry residues into energy systems; and pursue low-emission transport and processing infrastructure.	Action now
2.1.2	Develop a feasibility study to develop an advanced manufacturing precinct, and within this support circular-economy hubs (inc. utilising 'waste').	Action now
2.2	Accelerate value-adding and next-generation processing	
2.2.1	Support new or retooled mills, increase solid-wood recovery, grow engineered-timber capability, incentivise uptake of low-emissions materials, and maximise fibre use while minimising supply chain costs. (Linked to Innovation Centre (above)).	Action next – when capacity allows
2.3	Improve enabling infrastructure for industry competitiveness	
2.3.1	Address freight constraints by delivering priority HPFV routes, rail network improvements, bridge upgrades, and route optimisation.	Action now
2.3.2	Support toll rebates, comparative route assessments, and shared logistics solutions to improve efficiency and reduce freight costs.	Action now

Table 5: Consolidated recommendations and sub actions related to Theme 3: Trusted Voice, Evidence and Social Licence

Trusted Voice, Evidence and Social Licence		Priority
3.1	Strengthen First Nations partnerships and cultural responsibility	
3.1.1	Increase engagement with Bunurong and GLaWAC to support cultural awareness, ongoing consultation, and joint decision-making. Merge with this Embed the First Nations Engagement Framework into sector practice.	Ongoing work
3.1.2	Support industry compliance with Native Title, cultural heritage obligations, and culturally appropriate land management.	Ongoing work
3.2	Build trust through transparent, evidence-based communication	
3.2.1	<u>Develop a coordinated external communications strategy</u> that addresses misinformation and promotes forestry's role in climate action, housing, and regional development and addresses misinformation through fact-based messaging.	Action now
3.2.2	<u>Establish an industry-wide communications network</u> to share accessible, public-facing information (e.g., sector codes of practice, industry updates, and explanatory materials such as certification pathways).	Ongoing work
3.3	Establish coordinated industry advocacy and government engagement for policy reform	
3.3.1	<u>Formalise an industry policy/advocacy partnership</u> to coordinate shared advocacy positions and engage State and Local Government on regulatory reform, including planning and permit processes. (this will streamline advocacy and communication channels with Government). Focus to be on improving resource security by identifying barriers to plantation establishment and expansion, crafting policy reform and supporting long-term investment certainty.	Action now
3.3.2	Expand and diversify funding pathways by promoting industry-led investment models and reducing reliance on government funding.	Ongoing work
3.4	Improve data, analysis and shared understanding	
3.4.1	Strengthen fibre supply intelligence and sector data capability; conduct fibre supply analyses; strengthen economic datasets; enhance environmental datasets (see theme 1) and improve knowledge-sharing mechanisms	Action next – when capacity allows
3.4.2	Improve transparency by developing public-facing data (datasets, reporting tools); and support consistent evidence use across the forestry industry (links to 4.2 - possibly as a sub project).	Action next – when capacity allows

Table 6: Consolidated recommendations and sub actions related to Theme 4: Skilled Workforce and Industry Capacity

Skilled Workforce and Industry Capacity		Priority
4.1	Develop an inclusive, end-to-end workforce pipeline	
4.1.1	Develop a coordinated pipeline from school engagement through to employment, including expanding school-based programs (Cert II and Gippsland Tech options).	Ongoing work

4.1.2	Deliver targeted attraction initiatives for key groups (young people, women, First Nations people and people changing career) - Promote diverse employment pathways, including Pacific Island worker or other appropriate labour mobility programs.	Ongoing work
4.1.3	Strengthen First Nations employment and procurement opportunities.	Ongoing work
4.2	Strengthen training, capability and professional development	
4.2.1	Support TAFE training for industry experts and grow continuous professional development opportunities.	Ongoing work
4.3	Strengthen workforce resilience and regional enablers	
4.3.1	Promote housing and enabling infrastructure close to work sites to support regional workforce attraction and retention.	Ongoing work
4.4	Supporting industry into the future	
4.4.1	Complete transition planning for the Gippsland Hub's ongoing work to ensure continuity and provide clarity and support to industry stakeholders.	Action now

Appendix B – Summary of advocacy priorities

This section provides an overview of advocacy priorities, highlighting both actions that have been clearly identified as ‘action-now’ and those considered high-impact but less feasible at present due to the need for substantial government involvement, complex stakeholder engagement, or extended timelines and resourcing. Further detail is provided in the table below.

Table 7: Advocacy priorities by action

Advocacy priority	Clear advocacy ask (what we want them to do)	Primary audiences	Relevant actions
Policy and planning regulations that enable plantations	Approve and implement planning and policy changes that: (1) allow new plantations in suitable zones, (2) reduce permit complexity and timeframes, and (3) protect existing plantations to give investors long-term certainty.	Vic Government (planning, forestry, climate); local government	Action 1.1.1,
Shared approach to fire-resilience and risk reduction	Formally participate in and endorse a Gippsland-wide, cross-tenure fire and risk resilience framework, including agreed minimum standards for fire-resilient forestry and shared communication with communities.	Emergency management agencies; state land and fire agencies; local government; forestry companies; Traditional Owners; community reps	Action 1.1.2
Support for bioeconomy and low-emissions value-adding	Enable priority bioeconomy projects to proceed by clarifying regulatory pathways, supporting enabling infrastructure, and signalling government and investment support for early projects.	Vic Government (industry, energy, innovation); investment agencies; processors; bioeconomy proponents; researchers; investors	Action 2.1.1
Support for advanced manufacturing and circular-economy precincts	Provide funding and support to confirm locations, address infrastructure needs and secure investment models for an advanced manufacturing and circular-economy precinct.	Vic Government (industry, planning, investment); local government; industry; investors; research organisations	Action 2.1.2

Advocacy priority	Clear advocacy ask (what we want them to do)	Primary audiences	Relevant actions
Freight and transport reform	Prioritise forestry freight in transport programs by: (1) approving HPFV access and bridge upgrades, (2) progressing rail improvements, and (3) implementing interim cost-reduction measures such as toll relief and route optimisation.	Transport and infrastructure agencies; road and rail authorities; Treasury; local government	Action 2.3.1 , Action 2.3.2
Support for modern processing and engineered timber	Recognise that modern processing can unlock value from existing fibre, engineered timber and low-emissions products that are critical to housing and climate goals – and take steps to ensure the relevant policy signals encourage investor action	Vic Government (industry, climate, economic development; infrastructure); investment agencies	Action 2.2.1
Shared data and intelligence	Fund and enable shared sector data platforms for fibre supply, economic and environmental data to support planning decisions, investment confidence and policy reform.	Vic Government; local government; industry bodies; researchers	Action 3.4.1

Table 8: Priority action key performance indicators to Theme 1: Future ready resource and sustainable supply

#	Prioritised recommendations and related actions	Key performance indicator (KPI)
Support the development of a secure, climate-resilient plantation and fibre supply		
1.1.1	Develop a Gippsland-wide plantation expansion strategy, drawing on previously completed farm-forestry research to develop actionable plan. The strategy will explore incentives, de-risks expansion of plantations, and ways to protect existing resources.	<p>Strategy completion, approval and influence. Track the completion and endorsement of the strategy, with evidence of influence on stakeholder decisions and actions within 6-12 months of completion. To be measured through internal records (meeting minutes) and external stakeholder activity (e.g. funding submissions, government briefings and investment decisions).</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement and uptake. Monitor the volume and coverage of engagement with key landowners, community groups, and organisations during strategy development, including the number of stakeholders who indicate support and/or willingness to act on identified priorities. To be tracked in attendance sheets, consultation logs, meeting notes.</p>
1.1.2	Support long term resilience by improving risk management, increasing community confidence through research and communication, and using sustainable, fire-resilient forestry practices.	<p>Resilience plan completion and ensuing action. Track the completion and endorsement of the resilience and risk plan and confirmation that priority actions are adopted or referenced by relevant partners. To be measured through internal records (meeting minutes) and partner correspondence.</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement and influence. Number of relevant landowners, community groups, and organisations consulted during plan development, across all priority stakeholder categories. Data to be tracked in attendance sheets, consultation logs, meeting notes.</p> <p>Community confidence indicator. The percentage of participants from the working group and public meetings who report increased confidence in forest risk management and fire safety. To be measured via a short survey or pulse check after launch of the plan.</p>

Table 9: Priority action key performance indicators to Theme 2: Competitive Value Adding and Industry Innovation

#	Prioritised recommendations and related actions	Key performance indicator (KPI)
Establish Gippsland as a centre for bioeconomy and modern manufacturing		
2.1.1	Support bioenergy, biomethane, biochar, biogenic carbon, and fibre-use innovation; link forestry residues into energy systems; and pursue low-emission transport and processing infrastructure.	Stakeholder engagement reach. Number of key industry, energy, research, community groups and local/state government representatives who participate in the bioeconomy

		<p>project roundtables and/or defining or progressing key concepts. Measured through attendance records and meeting notes.</p> <p>Assignment of owners for infrastructure enablers. Count the number of infrastructure enablers (e.g. route optimisation, equipment, storage etc.) being activity scoped with a named owner and agreed next steps (these could be members of the roundtables or others).</p> <p>Innovation projects initiated. Track the number of bioenergy, biochar or residue-use projects or partnerships that progress beyond the initial concept development (e.g. feasibility testing, pilot design, memorandums of understanding for key enabling partnerships).</p>
2.1.2	Develop a feasibility study to develop an advanced manufacturing precinct, and within this support circular-economy hubs (inc. utilising 'waste').	<p>Feasibility study delivery. Confirm completion of the study and approval by executive committee, with evidence of use in investment discussions, market engagement or funding pathways. Evidenced by internal records and stakeholder correspondence.</p> <p>Stakeholder participation. Count the number of industry, investor and government stakeholders, engaged and providing input during study development.</p> <p>Further work. Track the development of a detailed business case and other 'early mover' opportunities that are progressed within 12 months following completion of the study.</p>
Improve enabling infrastructure for industry competitiveness		
2.3.1	Address freight constraints by delivering priority HPFV routes, rail network improvements, bridge upgrades, and route optimisation.	<p>Aligned priorities for upgrade. Track the number of working group engagements, agreed infrastructure upgrades for Gippsland and confirmation they are raised and acknowledged by relevant agencies. Internal records indicate progress (meeting minutes and correspondence).</p> <p>Completion of assessment. Track the completion of a targeted assessment of constraints focused on bridges and rail, with circulation to relevant industry and government stakeholders. Internal records to be used to indicate progress (hiring of consultant, engagements, and completion /submission of final documents).</p> <p>Further work. Count the key infrastructure enablers (e.g. route optimisation, equipment, storage etc.) being scoped by individuals or organisations (could be members of the working group or others) with a defined pathway to business case and/or advocacy.</p>

2.3.2	Support toll rebates, comparative route assessments, and shared logistics solutions to improve efficiency and reduce freight costs.	<p>Completion of comparison study. Track the completion of a comparison study for forestry corridors and use to inform advocacy, operator decisions or pilot initiatives. Internal records and stakeholder correspondence to indicate progress.</p> <p>Stakeholder participation. Count the number of industry and government stakeholders, engaged during study development, including those who contribute data and/or take part in shaping options.</p>
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Table 10: Priority action key performance indicators to Theme 3: Trusted Voice, Evidence and Social Licence

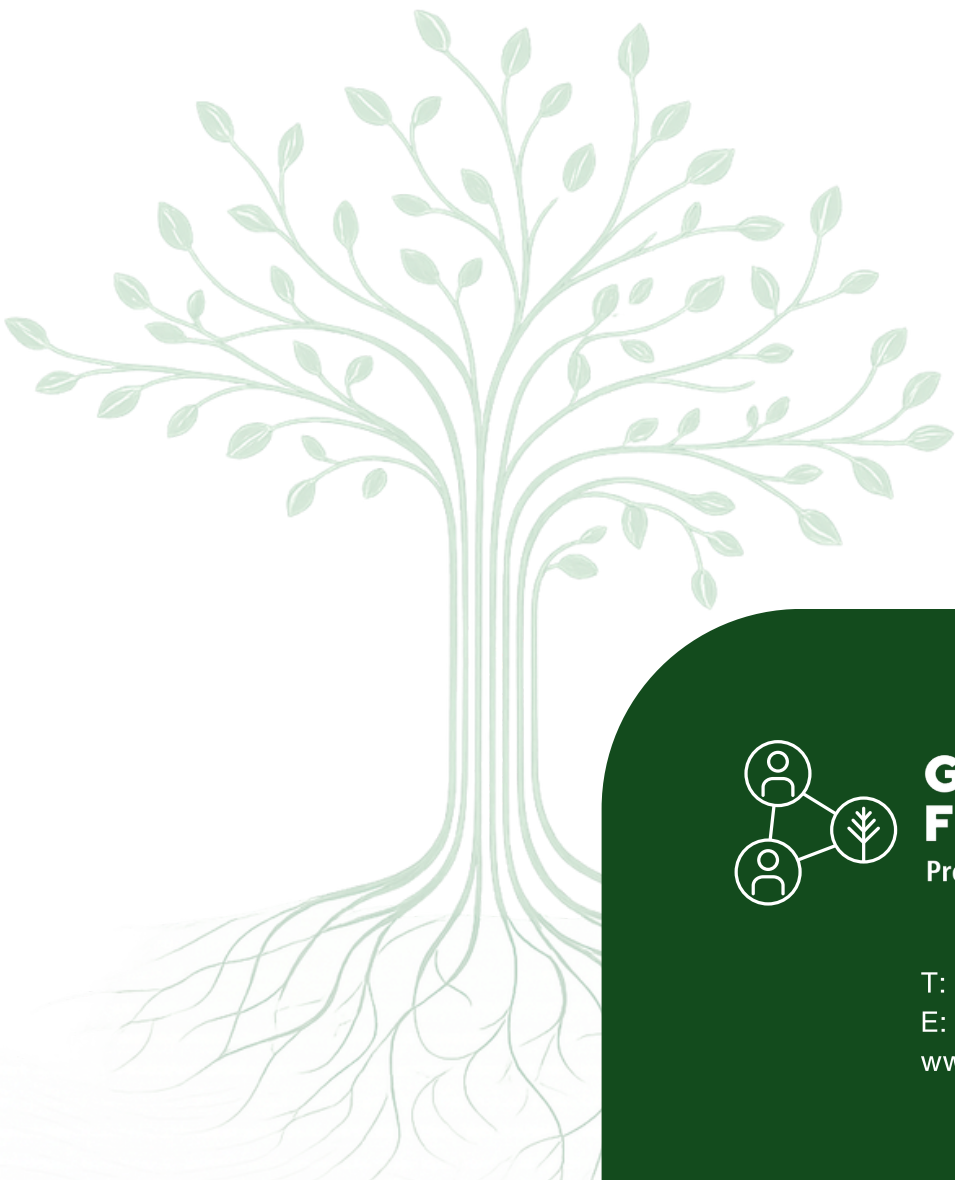
#	Prioritised recommendations and related actions	Key performance indicator (KPI)
Build trust through transparent, evidence-based communication		
3.2.1	Develop a coordinated external communications strategy that addresses misinformation and promotes forestry’s role in climate action, housing, and regional development and addresses misinformation through fact-based messaging	<p>Strategy completion and dissemination. Development and endorsement of communications strategy with adoption of key messages by key partner organisations. Internal records and stakeholder communications can be used to indicate progress.</p> <p>Communications outputs. Factsheets, videos, social media posts and articles produced and distributed under the strategy each quarter. Measure of both pieces of unique content created and extent of distribution via various channels.</p> <p>Audience engagement. Measure of website visits and/or social media engagement related to forestry messaging - measured through basic web analytics to indicate uptake and reach.</p>
Establish coordinated industry advocacy and government engagement for policy reform		
3.3.1	Formalise an industry policy/advocacy partnership to coordinate shared advocacy positions and engage State and Local Government on regulatory reform, including planning and permit processes. (This will streamline advocacy and communication channels with Government). Focus to be on improving resource security by identifying barriers to plantation establishment and expansion, crafting policy reform and supporting long-term investment certainty.	<p>Partnership establishment. Verify that the partnership is formed with agreed terms of reference and a meeting schedule. Evidenced by documented membership agreements and supporting materials (e.g. terms of reference).</p> <p>Joint advocacy activities. Count the number of submission papers, briefings or meetings with government delivered by the partnership annually, noting the number that result in follow-up requests, ongoing engagement or evidence of consideration by government. Evidenced by internal records (meeting minutes, submission registers), government correspondence and external media if relevant.</p>

Table 11: Priority action key performance indicators to Theme 4: Skilled Workforce and Industry Capacity

#	Prioritised recommendations and related actions	Key performance indicator (KPI)
	Support industry into the future	
4.1.1	Complete transition planning for the Gippsland Hub’s ongoing work to ensure continuity and provide clarity and support to industry stakeholders.	<p>Transition plan identified and progressed. A comprehensive transition plan (outlining future governance, funding and work program) completed and approved by the executive committee, with clear ownership for priority actions post-transition.</p> <p>Stakeholder are kept informed about key changes. Briefings and updates provided to staff, industry and community stakeholders about the transition process, with stakeholders reporting clarity on who to engage going forward (measured qualitatively). Internal records can be used to track progress (number of meetings, newsletters/email coms, meeting minutes and correspondence).</p> <p>Continuity of operations. Ongoing and priority Hub activities continue without interruption during and after transition. The transition plan should include a comprehensive list which can be tracked to indicate success in maintaining operations.</p>

Appendix C – Excel register

Recommendations register excel document (separate attachment to this plan): FINAL GFHub recommendations register_2026April



**GIPPSLAND
FORESTRY HUB**

Promoting the Forestry Industry

T: 0429 300 716

E: lesia@gippslandforestryhub.com.au

www.gippslandforestryhub.com.au