



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOOD & FIBRE GIPPSLAND OFFICIALLY AMALGAMATED

Agribusiness Gippsland and the East Gippsland Food Cluster are now officially united to form Food & Fibre Gippsland, a single entity to support the region's important \$7 billion food and fibre industry.

The amalgamation follows extensive consultations with members and other stakeholders across industry, government, research, education, and community around the benefits of joining forces.

Officially endorsed by Consumer Affairs Victoria in early March, the new incorporated entity of Food & Fibre Gippsland signals the beginning of an exciting new era for sector and the region, with a determined focus on collaboration, innovation and engagement.

Support for the amalgamation has been provided by the Victorian Government.

Both organisations bring a diverse and active member and stakeholder base, and it is anticipated that more and more Gippsland businesses and other organisations will join to access the benefits and be part of positive change initiatives that will naturally come from being a part of this new powerhouse.

The first board to take Food & Fibre Gippsland forward includes four representatives of the boards of Agribusiness Gippsland and East Gippsland Food Cluster.

These are Stuart Quigley, Nicola Pero, Kate Wallis, Brian Davey, Damien Gannon, Andrew Bulmer Sallie Jones and Barry Rogers.

East Gippsland Food Cluster chairman, Andrew Bulmer, said the existing ethos of both organisations will flow into Food & Fibre Gippsland, which will continue to be a member-based not-for-profit network striving to support the best outcomes for the food and fibre sector and the Gippsland community.

"The principles of collaboration and innovation are vitally important, as well as being able to effectively respond to and embrace very diverse needs and aspirations across the sector," Mr. Bulmer said.

"Whilst the amalgamation has been going through its approval processes, everyone has been forging ahead with some brilliant initiatives and projects – so it's great to now bring them under one banner, as we continue to source and respond to more opportunities" he said.

Mr Bulmer will be a co-deputy chair of the first Food & Fibre Gippsland board.

Agribusiness Gippsland Chairman, Stuart Quigley is another proud Gippslander with extensive industry experience, and will also be co-chair of the first Food & Fibre Gippsland board.

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Mr Quigley anticipates that the key focus areas of collaboration, innovation and engagement will lead to a reinvigorated energy across a wide cross section of Gippsland food and fibre businesses.

“When producers, processors and other stakeholders can connect, network and share via their membership with Food & Fibre Gippsland, they may then view each other as collaborators, with the potential to leverage each other’s strengths and resources to support better outcomes for their own businesses as well as the sector as a whole” he said.

Dr Nicola Watts, who has been CEO of the East Gippsland Food Cluster since 2011, will continue as interim CEO of Food & Fibre Gippsland, and she is delighted about the ongoing and future prospects for the sector to become the economic engine for the region.

“With the collaborative force of this amalgamation, we really have a golden opportunity to work together right across Gippsland to proactively shape sustainable future development of the food and fibre production and processing sector” she said.

Recruitment processes will be initiated for an independent Chair and CEO.

Peter Schutz, Executive Chairman of Food Innovation Australia Limited’s (FIAL) – Australia’s Growth Centre for food and agribusiness – is filling the independent chair role in an advisory capacity until a recruitment process is concluded.

Dr Watts will be Interim CEO until June 30th, 2019.

For more information or any additional interviews please contact:

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Images attached

1. Food & Fibre Gippsland – full colour logo
2. Generic library images – livestock, aerial farm view and tractor ploughing in field

Food & Fibre Gippsland
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