



Food & Fibre Gippsland

ANNUAL REPORT
2020



CONTENTS

Chair & CEO Foreword	1-3
Communications, Membership & Marketing	4-7
Project Reports	
VegNet & EGVID	8-9
GRAEP	10
Gippsland Connect	12
Implementing Sustainable Workplace Solutions in the Greater Gippsland Agri-food	14
Smart Specialisation	16-18
GippyAg	19
Gippsland ADAPT	20
What's Your Challenge ?	22
Board Member Profiles	24-25
Cooperative Research Centres	26
Gippsland PASE Project	27
Excellence in Agribusiness Awards	28-31
Sponsor Acknowledgment And Thanks	32

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Land we meet on.
We pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend
that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people.



CHAIR AND CEO REPORT



Nicola Pero
CEO

2020 Annual General Meeting of Food & Fibre Gippsland Inc.

Welcome to the first Annual Report of Food & Fibre Gippsland! Creating a new organisation can sound easy but doing so is much harder and later in the report we will thank many of the people who contributed to our creation. Because it is a great summary, we've taken this quote from the homepage of our website – www.foodandfibregippsland.com.au



Barry Rogers
Chair



Food & Fibre Gippsland was formed in March 2019, a result of the amalgamation of Agribusiness Gippsland and the East Gippsland Food Cluster which created a united, collaborative powerhouse.

Our mission is to lead capacity building, innovation and knowledge sharing for the greater good of the sector across the whole of Gippsland.

Our members, industry partners and stakeholders are at the core of everything we do – their success and prosperity are what drives us every day.

We are listening and we are engaging. We want to understand and respond to the challenges and ideas across the region.



Food & Fibre Gippsland was established by the amalgamation of Agribusiness Gippsland Inc and East Gippsland Food Cluster Inc. At our respective Annual General Meetings in December 2018 our members voted to amalgamate and become a single, Gippsland wide body. The amalgamation, controlled by Consumer Affairs Victoria, was approved and F&FG Inc came into being in February 2019. Our aim was to become the entity that represents the entire Food and Fibre value chain in Gippsland, and in nearby regional areas.

The first Board of F&FG was composed of 3 members from each of the preceding bodies, with an independent chair to be appointed. The previous Chairs of AGI and EGFCI became the Co-Deputy Chairs and alternated as meeting Chairs. Very early in our new life the Board decided that it would co-opt formal observers from significant stakeholders to join our meetings.

We invited Regional Development Victoria, Latrobe Valley Authority, Federation University, and the Gippsland Local Government Network (now renamed One Gippsland) to nominate observers. Tim McAuliffe and then Graham Scott from RDV, Karen Cain from LVA, Joseph Lawrence from Federation University and Mikaela Power and Brett Tessari from One Gippsland joined the board as Observers.

The Board also invited Peter Schutz, the Chair at that time of Food Innovation Australia Limited (FIAL), a federal body with which we have a major partnership arrangement, to become our interim Independent Chair.

An enormous amount of work and the delivery of a range of projects is at the core of what we do. Our CEO Nicola Pero represents us at many forums and meetings.



In mid-2020 F&FG agreed to become a member of One Gippsland, the new entity created by the Gippsland Local Government Network to represent the whole of Gippsland to governments both State and Federal. Other members of One Gippsland include TAFE Gippsland and Federation University. The Chair and CEO of F&FG are full members, and the Mayors and CEOs of the 6 Gippsland LGAs complete the membership of One Gippsland.

Information about the various projects F&FG delivers are in other parts of this report, so we will not duplicate it here. Here, however is a list of our current pool of projects and I think you will agree it is extensive:

- (i) Cluster Growth & Development – Food Innovation Australia Ltd [FIAL]
- (ii) Grower Engagement, VegNET – Horticulture Innovation Australia Ltd [HIAL]
- (iii) Gippsland Connect Export Hub Development – Dept Industry, Science, Energy & Resources [DISER], and Regional Development Victoria [RDV]
- (iv) Package Assisting Small Exporters – Dept of Agriculture, Water & Environment [DAWE]
- (v) Smart Specialisation Development (Craft Malting; Hi Tech Vegetable Waste Processing; Regional Waste Trading; Gippsland Trusted Provenance Trademark) – Latrobe Valley Authority [LVA]
- (vi) Climate Adaptation – Victorian Dept Environment, Land, Water & Planning [DELWP]
- (vii) Sector Employment – GRAEP, through Jobs Victoria Employment Network [JVEN]
- (viii) Sustainable Workforce Solutions – Workforce Training & Innovation Fund, through Victorian Dept of Education [DET]
- (ix) What's Your Food or Fibre Challenge Gippsland? – Federation University, Victorian State Government - Latrobe Valley Authority and Regional Development Victoria, Food Innovation Australia Ltd, Food Agility CRC
- (x) Fight Food Waste CRC
- (xi) Food Agility CRC
- (xii) Future Food Systems CRC

There are many people and organisations we wish to acknowledge, to thank for their support, skills, and time that they have contributed to Food & Fibre Gippsland Inc:

We thank our Board Members – current and past: Andrew Bulmer and Katrina Wallis (our Co-Deputy Chairs), Brian Davey, Sallie Jones and Damien Gannon (current Board members) and Stuart Quigley (previous Board member) and Joanne Butterworth-Gray who was our Independent Chair for a period of time.





The part-time and full-time passionate people who deliver our F&FG business, both employees and project contractors, enable us to do what we do; so, our special thanks go to Jody O'Brien, Julian Hill, Bonnie Dawson (and predecessor Shayne Hyman), Julie Tuhi, Ben Gebert, David Grimmond, Nicki Keddie, Stuart Quigley, Amy Cosby. And to Kate Gunn who delivers our Excellence in Agribusiness Awards, a big thanks for your efforts also.

Our interim CEO contractor, Nicola Watts, was a significant contributor as we began our work to create the new Gippsland Peak Body, and when Paul Griffin was appointed CEO, Nicola worked on our Smart Specialisation Project and in other roles. Nicola Watts was the EO of the East Gippsland Food Cluster from its inception but has now departed from F&FG; we thank her for her support and contribution over many years. Regrettably, Paul left after several months and we thank him for his hard work and contribution.

As mentioned at the beginning of this report an organisation like ours does not just happen!

We have had great support and assistance from Government – thank you Tim McAuliffe, Graham Scott and RDV, Karen Cain and LVA, Paul Ford and Maree McPherson from Gippsland Regional Partnerships for their advocacy, passion, and support. Thanks also to major partners Mirjana Prica and Peter Schutz from FIAL, Joseph Lawrence Pro Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise) Research & Innovation, the support from our Local Government Authorities, all of our grant program funding bodies, and many others.

Barry Rogers
Chair

Nicola Pero
Chief Executive Officer

Both Nic Pero and I stepped into our new roles – Chair and CEO respectively in the first quarter of 2020. As I (Barry) write this part of our report, I reflect on the incredible skills and capacity that Nicola brings to the job. Well done Nic, together with the Board we are building what I believe to be a high-quality organisation, charting a way to support, grow, and assist our members.

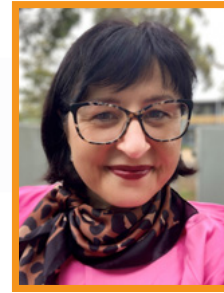
Which brings us to our final thank you: Our Members.

We exist because our members want Food & Fibre Gippsland to exist; our task is to identify ways to make the food and fibre sector in Gippsland (and therefore our members) stronger, more efficient, prosperous, and sustainable. We will continue to source funding for projects like those you will see in this report – projects that grow and develop our industry and its entire value chain, and in a new role – we take on greater advocacy and promotion of the sector.

I look forward to continuing to assist in growing, expanding, and developing a sector which, at around \$7b, represents almost 50% of Gippsland's annual GRP!

Barry Rogers, Chair.

COMMUNICATIONS, MEMBERSHIP & MARKETING



Our fabulous Jody O'Brien is F&FG's Head of Communications, Membership & Marketing and after a short break around the middle of this year, Jody has re-established our members only weekly newsletter 'Raw & Fresh'. This aligns with a new CRM (Customer Record Management) system implemented in the last couple of weeks called Active Campaign. What this system means for our members is the ability to create more targeted communications and sharing of specialized subject matter (together with our new platform KE-DI) – information to support our member businesses and what they do, whereas the e-newsletter is for broader member industry information. That weekly industry e-newsletter will be distributed across the region and to each Local Government Authority

Our social media continues to expand its reach with over 2,000 followers on Facebook, and Instagram continues as a great medium for all the fantastic videos and pictures from members and about our industry – everyone loves awesome foodie photos right! Our LinkedIn profile is more recent but already we have a couple of hundred followers on there. Twitter is very new, though we are planning to get more engaged on there in the months ahead. Social media is a powerful tool for F&FG to use to engage with members and promote member achievements and businesses out to a broader audience – so we use each of these social media channels for different audiences.

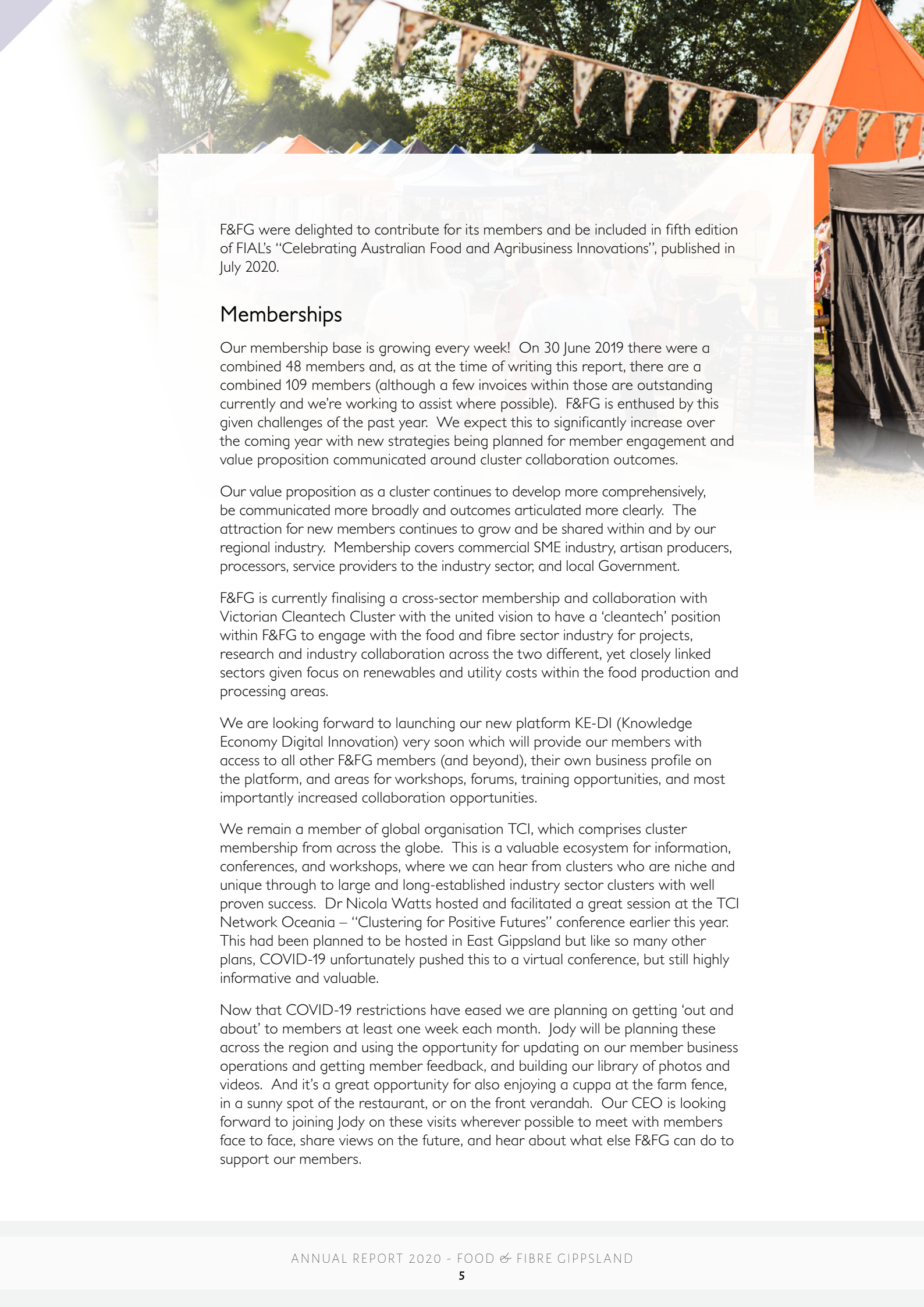
With F&FG now establishing a cycle of a members e-newsletter on a weekly basis, there will also be a public facing monthly newsletter, showcasing the region's products and producers, together with a wide range of information about the food & fibre sector that is of interest to the general public. We have an existing database of approximately 3000 and will encourage further and continuous subscription to this newsletter with consumer friendly, local and visitor focused content every month. The first edition of this is due to release in early December. A newsletter to each respective local Government Authority will be distributed on a quarterly basis. This will focus on member companies in their Shire, participants in F&FG programs and their achievements, development matters associated to food and fibre and general economic impact information for the sector and their Shire region. The Head of Communications, Membership & Marketing has implemented a cycle of one week per month for on-site member visits across the region – commencing in December.

All media releases are available on F&FG cluster's website and together with emails, e-newsletters, forums, social media, and member site visits form part of the F&FG's membership and stakeholder engagement and communication processes.

To align with the F&FG "Raw & Fresh" newsletter, development has been ongoing to launch a weekly podcast series focusing on the stories of its members and the region. Outcomes of this will be reported on as part of the 2021 Annual Report.

Direct contact and discussion on a regular basis from our Head of Communications, Membership & Marketing is driving collaboration between artisan producers in the region. Brewery collaborating with a citrus grower; dairy and bakery collaborations for package offers during COVID; bakery collaborations with Melbourne corporate entities for Gippsland produce items, to name just a small number of examples. Much work has gone into promoting online opportunities for producers during COVID, specifically on Victorian Country Marketplace/Click for Vic in showcasing regional produce and ordering online.





F&FG were delighted to contribute for its members and be included in fifth edition of FIAL's "Celebrating Australian Food and Agribusiness Innovations", published in July 2020.

Memberships

Our membership base is growing every week! On 30 June 2019 there were a combined 48 members and, as at the time of writing this report, there are a combined 109 members (although a few invoices within those are outstanding currently and we're working to assist where possible). F&FG is enthused by this given challenges of the past year. We expect this to significantly increase over the coming year with new strategies being planned for member engagement and value proposition communicated around cluster collaboration outcomes.

Our value proposition as a cluster continues to develop more comprehensively, be communicated more broadly and outcomes articulated more clearly. The attraction for new members continues to grow and be shared within and by our regional industry. Membership covers commercial SME industry, artisan producers, processors, service providers to the industry sector, and local Government.

F&FG is currently finalising a cross-sector membership and collaboration with Victorian Cleantech Cluster with the united vision to have a 'cleantech' position within F&FG to engage with the food and fibre sector industry for projects, research and industry collaboration across the two different, yet closely linked sectors given focus on renewables and utility costs within the food production and processing areas.

We are looking forward to launching our new platform KE-DI (Knowledge Economy Digital Innovation) very soon which will provide our members with access to all other F&FG members (and beyond), their own business profile on the platform, and areas for workshops, forums, training opportunities, and most importantly increased collaboration opportunities.

We remain a member of global organisation TCI, which comprises cluster membership from across the globe. This is a valuable ecosystem for information, conferences, and workshops, where we can hear from clusters who are niche and unique through to large and long-established industry sector clusters with well proven success. Dr Nicola Watts hosted and facilitated a great session at the TCI Network Oceania – "Clustering for Positive Futures" conference earlier this year. This had been planned to be hosted in East Gippsland but like so many other plans, COVID-19 unfortunately pushed this to a virtual conference, but still highly informative and valuable.

Now that COVID-19 restrictions have eased we are planning on getting 'out and about' to members at least one week each month. Jody will be planning these across the region and using the opportunity for updating on our member business operations and getting member feedback, and building our library of photos and videos. And it's a great opportunity for also enjoying a cuppa at the farm fence, in a sunny spot of the restaurant, or on the front verandah. Our CEO is looking forward to joining Jody on these visits wherever possible to meet with members face to face, share views on the future, and hear about what else F&FG can do to support our members.



Stakeholder Relations

Stakeholder relations continue to evolve and have done so considerably during 2020 and importantly across the whole of Gippsland. Despite challenges of COVID-19 and our current CEO starting one week prior to lockdown restrictions, presentations were undertaken to industry stakeholders and groups across the region (primarily in Government and Government agencies such as Agriculture Victoria and Regional Development Victoria). The response has been highly positive with feedback extended both informally and formally.

In re-establishing its relationship with Agriculture Victoria, F&FG has been invited to join the Gippsland Regional Dairy Leadership Group, lending its voice to this strong industry sector. An invitation extended from ONE Gippsland (comprising the 6 Local Government Authority Mayors and CEOs, TAFE Gippsland, and Federation University) for F&FG to join the Board as “the” organization for our sector in Gippsland was accepted, and F&FG now contribute into monthly discussions as Board members. An invitation was extended and accepted to join an Agriculture Strategy Advisory Committee for East Gippsland. Our CEO contributes as a member to South Gippsland Economic Development Strategy Advisory Group, TAFE Gippsland Education & Training Board Committee, a Board member to Destination Gippsland, and a Ministerial Appointee to Federation University Australia Council. These provide opportunity for the voice of our sector to contribute and to hear from around the region, and to contribute to future workforce development and skilling.

Prior to COVID-19 lockdowns going into place, the CEO together with Andrew Bulmer from Bulmer Farms on behalf of our horticulture sector and Allan Cameron, the CEO of Gipps Dairy, were invited to attend a relationship building meeting with Senator Raff Ciccone. The Senator is very supportive of F&FG and the Gippsland food and fibre sector, and we're keen to continue building this network.

Our stakeholder relationships are important and valuable as they:

- Have direct connectivity to members and their business in respective Shires
- Influence credibility and activities of F&FG as a successful cluster
- Support engagement by F&FG on behalf of members
- Ensure F&FG can deliver relevant and specific communications to its members
- Promotes F&FG as “the” cluster organization to collaborate, innovate and engage with

Food Innovation Australia Ltd (FIAL) is our most important relationship, not just from a funding perspective where F&FG matches non-Government co-contributions to funding from FIAL, but the access to information, networks, and industry activations. Recently F&FG Board members and the CEO





undertook FIAL Cluster Board training sessions where we were able to engage and collaborate with other clusters from around the country and this now continues independently where we can share information and collaborate on engagement initiatives. There is much to share from other regions in areas such as regional logistics, new supply chain initiatives, membership value building, and innovation. FIAL have recently launched their own platform called The Food Matrix, where F&FG (on your behalf) can lodge questions to nationwide industry experts – so if you are thinking of diversifying, have an idea around process improvements, are considering a whole new product – almost anything in the food value chain – let us know and we'll seek the answers you need!

Our relationship with Regional Development Victoria continues to grow and develop with regular catch-ups between the two organisations, their valued support to the What's Your Food or Fibre Challenge Gippsland project, and their important leadership work in facilitating the East Gippsland Bushfire Recovery Working Group which F&FG has been a member of. Tim McAuliffe has done an outstanding job with this given the shadow COVID-19 cast on the deeply challenging months post the 2019/20 devastating bushfires.

The Latrobe Valley Authority have been a strong supporter of F&FG since amalgamation and we thank Karen Cain and her whole team, and for providing the opportunity of Smart Specialisation being piloted in Gippsland. More detail on those projects are referenced in this report, but it is important to note Smart Specialisation has the potential to be a 'game-changer' for our region and specifically our sector. New innovations, new sub-sectors within food and fibre, and a focus on quadruple helix engagement ensuring the voice of industry, Government, research and education, and community are 'at the table'. Food and fibre being part of the Gippsland Smart Specialisation has also allowed our contribution and involvement in a regional bioenergy scan and audit, and some early work on potential establishment of a culinary kitchen for student training, produce preparation for Melbourne restaurant use, and experiential activations for visitors to the region (keep an eye out in the newsletter over coming months for more news on that). The Victorian Government has strategically partnered with The Netherlands and this is a fantastic opportunity for us to engage and learn from a country who has mastered collaboration and innovation. Our Board member Sallie Jones, Dr Nicola Watts, Shayne Hyman, and Ben Gebert all joined an informative tour to The Netherlands in 2019 to learn more and see food innovation and collaboration in-situ.

Much relationship building and collaboration has been invested with Federation University thanks to Pro Vice Chancellor Joseph Lawrence (Enterprise) Research & Innovation and more recently with Leigh Kennedy in her role as Head of Campus. During a recent online presentation from the new Vice-Chancellor Duncan Bentley, the importance of food and fibre in the University's future strategy was strongly highlighted, so we are very excited to continue building on this collaboration. This invests in our sector's future workforce skilling, continues to build research capability and capacity into our sector, and strengthens ongoing opportunities to collaborate on grant applications to benefit the food and fibre industry and growth in Gippsland.

VEGNET – GIPPSLAND (PHASE 2)

Following on from the successfully acquitted VegNET – Gippsland VG15047 (May 2016 – April 2019) delivered by Shayne Hyman, Shayne continued with VG18003 which started June 2019. Bonnie Dawson came into the role late 2019 working with Shayne and completed the final delivery reports in 2020 following Shayne's departure.

Bonnie continues to now head up our current program – VG19013 - successfully awarded and started in April 2020, with acquittal expected September 2021. Objective of the VegNET program Phase 2 is development and delivery of user defined activities focused on targeted and measurable practice change to support profitability and sustainable growth of the vegetable industry.

These projects connecting to horticulture growers in Gippsland are awarded by and contracted to Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited (HIAL), funded equally by Commonwealth grant funds and industry grower funds. The HIAL VegNET contracts have been highly valuable in industry engagement, growth, and practice change. With almost 30% of Victoria's vegetables grown in Gippsland it is a highly valued sector, and one with considerable value-add opportunities for regional growth.

Focus has been toward building regional capacity for the vegetable industry, enhancing knowledge, facilitating adoption of vegetable research and development, building links with AUSVEG, and increasing industry stakeholder communications and engagement. More recently an updated 5-year strategy has been submitted to HIAL and new annual operating plans are currently under development in collaboration with HIAL representatives, the Gippsland grower industry and program leadership from Bonnie Dawson.



EAST GIPPSLAND VEGETABLE INNOVATION DAYS – EGVID

East Gippsland Vegetable Innovation Days (EGVID) has been a highly successful industry engagement via a field days type activation. Together with F&FG Head of Communications, Membership & Marketing Jody O'Brien, Bonnie Dawson was front and center assisting the organisers with development and hosting.

In 2020 the 10th Annual International Spinach Conference had been secured to run simultaneously where approximately 1,000 attendees were expected to attend. Due to COVID-19 the conference had to be cancelled and it is hoped this can be rescheduled for the future. Whilst the Spinach Conference was deferred it was decided to proceed with EGVID and evolve the event to reflect the circumstances of COVID-19.

The event hosted ten seed companies and nine crop improvement companies. On-site attendance was limited to ensure COVID compliance over three days. Over 60 growers were represented, live streaming walk-throughs of the site over Facebook were undertaken, and most significantly, filming videos of each site were produced into a video library of over 50 individual videos. These are being hosted on the AUSVEG website. Survey results showed 8.4 (out of 10) satisfaction rate.



GIPPSLAND REGIONAL AGRIFOOD EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (GRAEP)

Funded through Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN) and running since January 2017, this program has been successfully delivering positive outcomes and meeting targets, resulting in multiple extensions, through the great work of Julie Tuhi as the Program Manager and Nicki Keddie as the Participant Liaison.

At the time of this Annual Report successful outcomes include:

- 243 employment placements
- 28 employment placements resulting in apprenticeships
- 492 total registrations in the GRAEP program

COVID-19 required 'thinking outside the box', with an exponentially growing unemployed demographic in the region, to ensure displaced workers did not become more disconnected, disengaged, and facing exposure to mental health challenges. Julie and Nicky developed a program called "Get Growing" where participants were issued with kits to create a vegetable garden at their own residence, undertaking basic horticulture learnings, and sharing successes and challenges on GRAEP communication channels. Get Growing has been an outstanding success with further expansion (mushrooms kits are next!) plans and the Department of Jobs, Precincts & Regions frequently raises the program as an exemplar of engagement with GRAEP participants during such a challenge.

As well as the broader food and fibre industry, many F&FG cluster members have engaged employees through the GRAEP program and benefits (paid induction hours, PPE, basic training, transport support – to reference just a few) the program supports. Since starting the program:

- 16 F&FG member businesses successfully sourced employees to date
- 181 GRAEP participants have been placed into F&FG member business operations

This has delivered particular benefit in this past year with COVID-19 challenges and during the long recovery period ahead is expected to deliver significantly higher benefits as our sector evolves to a new 'COVID-normal' status.





Australian Government

JobsFair



GIPPSLAND CONNECT

— SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES EXPORT HUB



Awarded in May 2019, this multi-year program has been funded equally by the Commonwealth through the Department of Industry, Science, Energy & Resources, and the State of Victoria through the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

David Grimmond leads this project with a wealth of global experience in export/import, international trade, food processing facilities, and domestic and international food plant compliance.

This program has focus on greater cooperation and collaboration between participating SMEs and others; growth of participating SMEs through activities such as developing collective brands and leveraging infrastructure to support the participation of their region in global supply chains; and improved local capability to increase exports, encourage growth and create jobs.

Through the establishment of a virtual Gippsland Connect Export Hub the project:

- Supports participating Gippsland agri-food SMEs to improve capabilities, increase exports, and support business/industry growth
- Develops and implements a collaborative targeted export strategy connecting Gippsland agri-food sector capabilities with export market demands
- Provides market intelligence about export opportunities and facilitation of opportunities for participating SMEs to access select global supply chains
- Reflects Gippsland's diversity including SMEs with niche/premium products from dairy, seafood, vegetables, and meat products (fresh and value-added), as well as craft beer and wines

COVID-19 has required engagement innovation specifically on meet-the-buyer activities, by activating professional short videos capturing 'heart and soul' by engaging the buyer on provenance, the producer's environment and practices – here's an early peek at just a few!

The target of 15-20 participants has already been exceeded with 23 current participants (and more growth expected), the majority of whom are F&FG members with several now exporting or just beginning to do first exports into Asia.



...improved local capability to increase exports, encourage growth and create jobs.



Some of our program participants"



'The target of 15-20 participants has already been exceeded with 23 current participants.'

IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE WORKPLACE SOLUTIONS IN THE GREATER GIPPSLAND AGRIFOOD SECTOR

This 2 year grant program was awarded in June 2019 through the Victorian Department of Education, with outcomes to date surpassing expectations. Dr Julian Hill has done an brilliant job of crafting the roadmap, leading development and collaboration with a global software developer to achieve what is now being viewed as, the new and highly enhanced way of learning and training, business-to-business engagement, and much more!

Knowledge engagement and digital innovation has been nothing short of outstanding for the significant investment made. Just a few highlights this new platform delivers include:

- Highly advanced learning management system
- Ability to federate with other systems (ie: moodle) and large HR systems
- Gamification to enhance literacy and/or digital challenges engagement
- Encrypted digital signatures to mitigate education fraud
- Multi-media engagement
- Payment system (meeting international payment and security compliance)
- Events booking
- Forums and Workshops area (both private and public options)
- Easy navigation (with a Facebook look and feel to support intuitive navigation)
- Light IT footprint (can be used on a mobile phone)
- Business to business direct engagement and search capability

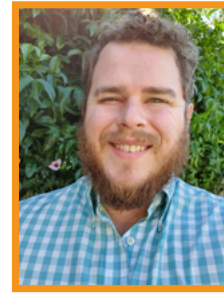
Previously used in its beta format, the platform is now going live with strong interest from the market in seeking to use it. Some F&FG members are already using the platform for both learning and training outcomes and content knowledge. All our members will benefit through F&FG setting each member up within the platform ecosystem where they can collaborate with others, engage in forum discussions/set up forums to invite others for discussion, participate in events, share at no cost in or sell/purchase training, book a call with our Head of Communication, Membership & Marketing and many other benefits.

The platform delivers Knowledge Economy and Digital Innovation. F&FG has registered the name KE-DI and is currently exploring opportunities to commercialise this, together with looking to develop and build additional modules that can deliver future produce traceability for Gippsland.





SMART SPECIALISATION



F&FG is partnering with Latrobe Valley Authority to deliver the food and fibre stream within Smart Specialisation, starting around mid-2019. Based on the European Union model of funding to EU countries, Smart Specialisation is being run as a pilot in the Gippsland region (Gippsland Smart Specialisation - GS3). Whilst it took some time for momentum to gather on the projects during 2019, LVA have confirmed a high level of satisfaction with progress made during 2020 and the partnering agreement has now been extended through to mid-2022. Ben Gebert has been heading up these projects under secondment arrangement during 2020 and as of the end of this year will take up providing full-time services to the role.

In addition to funding the project management service delivery, the LVA funds direct and specific works packages for investigative and analysis work to support the development of the each of the program streams, as outlined below.

The objective within the program is to undertake quadruple helix engagement (community, industry, research and education, and Government) with an Innovation Steering Committee guiding each of the projects. Works packages are undertaken to provide supply and demand analytics, investment logic mapping and any other outstanding areas of analysis work as determined by each of the Steering Committees.

The four projects currently under delivery in this program are:

- Hi Tech Vegetable Waste Processing (valourisation)
- Online Trading Platform & Regional Logistics
- Craft Malting Facility
- Gippsland Trusted Provenance Trademark



Gippsland Trusted Provenance Trademark

This project has undergone industry discussion and engagement, and confirmation of desire to use a 'token' or 'trademark' that represents the clean, green, and trusted produce image of the Gippsland region. Financial contribution to the development and delivery of this project has included Latrobe Valley Authority, F&FG, Destination Gippsland, and Local Government Authorities.

The logo design has been collaborated on by F&FG and Destination Gippsland. Recent tourism branding occurred for the region, and it was considered important to link agri-tourism and visitor economy experience in the region, with familiarity to a trademark on Gippsland produce. This will provide connectivity on supermarket shelves, farmers markets, and export markets. Conversely consumers purchasing produce in the supermarkets/online sales/farmers markets may be encouraged to search "Gippsland" online whereby they would see the tourism Gippsland brand which is visually closely linked to the Gippsland Trusted Provenance trademark.



Gippsland Trusted Provenance Logo



Product Example

Industry response has been very strong, with intent to have this launched by the end of 2020. Finalisation is underway on formal submission for trademark approval.

It is expected Gippsland producers and growers will gain significant cohesive regional branding from this trademark. The project strongly ties to the Gippsland Connect export program and will be well supported by provenance videos of the region's produce and producers. F&FG look forward to reporting on outstanding results in the 2021 Annual Report.

Hi Tech Vegetable Waste Processing (valourisation)

This project is nearing the completion of work required so discussions can occur around the most suitable funding models (Government/private sector/industry). Supply and demand analysis have been completed with external subject matter experts and investment logic mapping is in the final stages of delivery. It is expected by the end of 2020, sufficient evidence-based data will support investment discussions being undertaken and grant opportunities sourced to support progressing this lucrative value-add project for the region. Intent is producing supplements for the lucrative nutraceutical sector, transitioning vegetable waste from the region to a valued commodity, providing a significant increase to value-add opportunity in the Gippsland region.

Online Trading Platform & Regional Logistics

Initially the focus was to deliver an online trading platform/marketplace with supply engagement for (a) export supply (b) consumer sales and (c) wholesale/end of season bulk supply. During COVID a range of trading platforms/online marketplaces have arisen with support through Victorian Government for Click for Vic/Victorian Country Marketplace now confirmed for the long term. Instead of providing even more competition to both regional and national platforms, this trading platform project seeks to transition focus to a regional waste-trading platform, engaging farm-to-farm trading of waste commodities.

Regional logistics continues to be developed to (a) mitigate empty transport vehicles travelling to – or from – Melbourne and Gippsland (b) address last-mile delivery challenges (c) deliver more efficient and effective solutions for Gippsland producer and grower supply to Melbourne restaurants.

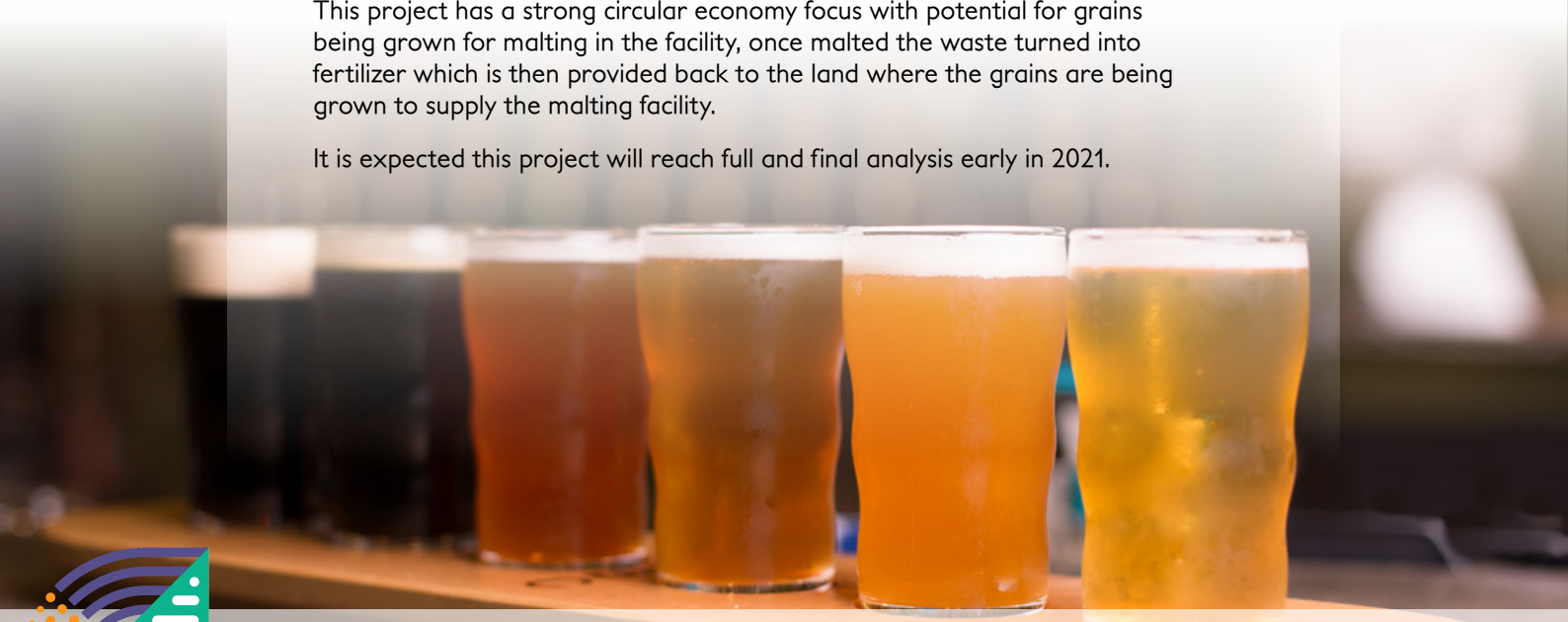
It is expected this project will be completed during the first half of 2021.

Craft Malting Facility

With Federation University currently completing works package requirements on supply and demand analytics, deeper engagement is now occurring with industry stakeholders interested in (a) investing in this facility (b) owning this facility under a co-operative model (c) firming up location specifics (long term leasehold vs land ownership) with both private and Crown land options being considered.

This project has a strong circular economy focus with potential for grains being grown for malting in the facility, once malted the waste turned into fertilizer which is then provided back to the land where the grains are being grown to supply the malting facility.

It is expected this project will reach full and final analysis early in 2021.



GIPPYAG

- GIPPSLAND INDUSTRY PROJECTS AND PATHWAYS FOR YOUTH IN AG



Starting in 2018 and awarded through the Victorian State Government as part of the Regional Skills Fund and was acquitted 2020 first quarter. The program was funded for targeted, place-based regional skills driven by industry and regional partnerships, in collaboration with the tertiary sector, working to build local capacity, resilience and to support the creation of jobs.

Outstanding results were achieved with F&FG engaging Central Queensland University for Gippsland based Dr Amy Cosby to expertly develop and deliver the program. Just a few of the hugely successful outcomes included:

- Supporting workforce planning capability in agri-food businesses (10 participants completed 2-day workforce planning training program)
- 11 new traineeships offered by agri-food businesses
- Approximately 800 people directly participating in the program
- Stronger partnerships development between education and agri-food sectors
 - More than 25 new education-industry partnerships developed
 - More than 700 students with increased awareness of agri-food opportunities
 - 28 teachers informally upskilled to engage with the agri-food industry



GIPPSLAND ADAPT:

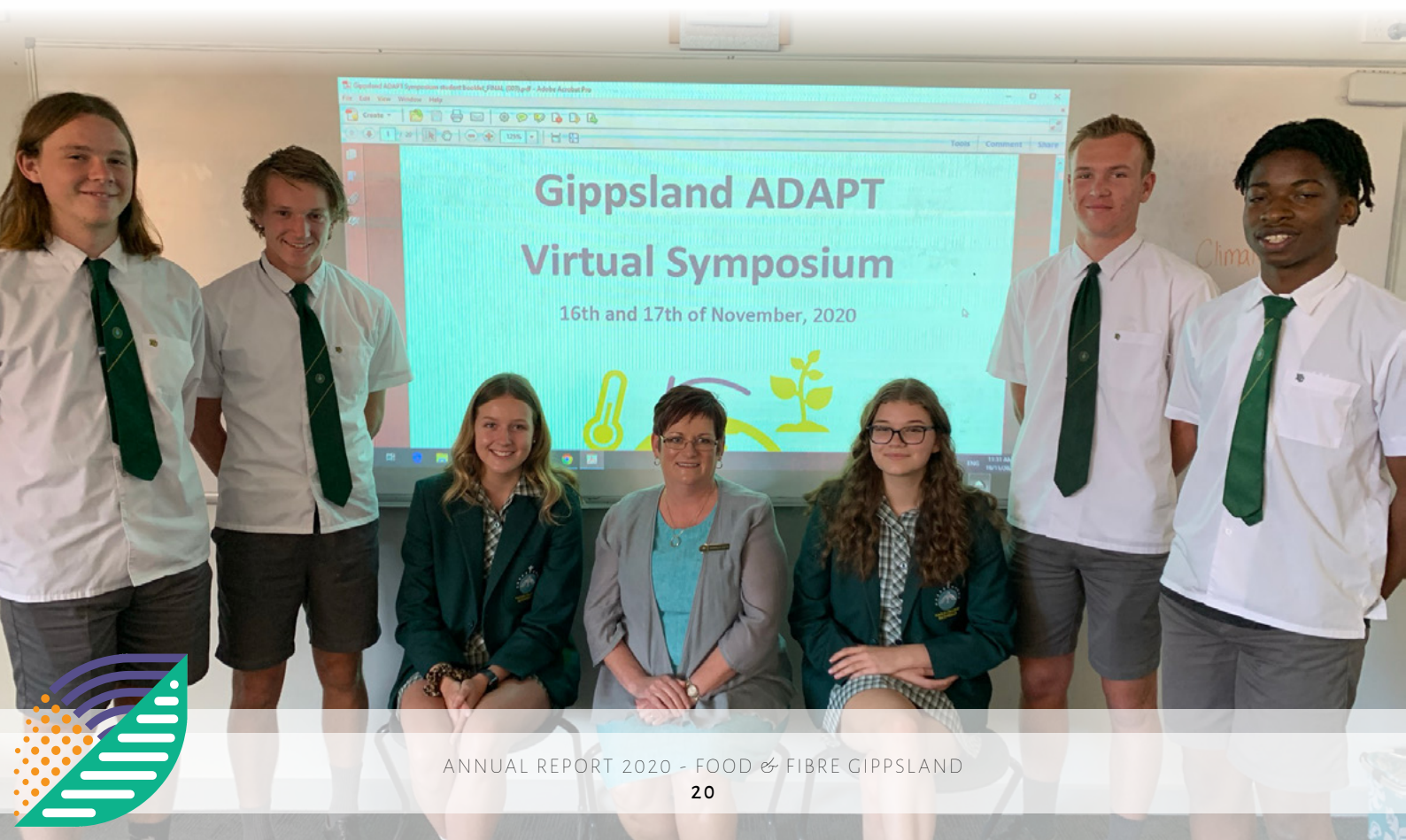
BUILDING CAPACITY IN YOUTH TO RESPOND TO CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT

Following success of GippyAg and partnering with Dr Cosby on behalf of CQU, F&FG were successful in being awarded Gippsland ADAPT from the Victorian State Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning in May of this year. Running until early in 2021, the program focuses on three regional priorities identified by the Regional Adaptation Snapshot – Gippsland initiative:

- Building awareness of local adaptation activities and translating broad climate risks into examples of local impacts and how individuals, communities, businesses and organisations can take actions
- Developing practical advice and guidance on how to embed climate adaptation into decision making
- Developing tailored communications for community to build awareness of concepts of adaptation and mitigation within Gippsland.

A symposium held in mid November had close to 200 participants.

Delivery of Climate Adaptation Champions program has been started where 20 participants will showcase climate adaptation activities in Gippsland. A case study at conclusion of the program, will be included in the Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy clearly articulating the project's activities, achievements, lessons learnt and communications and engagement activities. By engaging young people in the region, the program will build awareness of climate adaptation activities which they will begin to implement in Gippsland as part of this project.





WHAT'S YOUR FOOD OR FIBRE CHALLENGE GIPPSLAND?

Soon to be launched to the Gippsland industry, this dynamic and exciting project brings together Federation University, F&FG, the Victorian State Government through Latrobe Valley Authority and Regional Development Victoria, FIAL, and Food Agility CRC. Ongoing discussions are occurring with other Gippsland stakeholders to formalise their contribution and support. The program currently has over \$1M in partner commitment value.

Think of this as a 12 month 'hackathon-style' type activation! Focus is to the Gippsland SME food and fibre sector with challenge entries invited and aligned to themes. These themes, whilst not limited to, include industry challenges in areas of waste, new energy, circular economy, product and/or process innovation, supply chain transformation, agtech, etc.

A helix engagement (Government, industry, academia) of subject matter experts will collaborate and innovate to provide solutions to the successful challenge pitches, and then for industry implementation.

What's Your Food or Fibre Challenge is expected to be launched to the market in the final weeks of 2020 in calling for expressions of interest, with final submissions and successful entry selections in the early part of 2021.

Keep your eyes peeled for member newsletter updates on this truly exciting project for our Gippsland industry sector and we look forward to reporting on the outcomes as part of the F&FG 2021 Annual Report.



Quadruple Helix Engagement

Private sector

Investing in people and ideas that will create growth.



Public sector

Developing coherent policies that link territorial development to innovation and higher education.

Community sector

Linked to and benefiting from larger regional vision.

Higher education sector

Generating intellectual and human assets for the region through strong research application with industry and public sector.

BOARD MEMBER PROFILES



Barry Rogers

Chair

Barry is the Board Chair, contributing many years of Board, industry and community experience in the Gippsland region.

He is a leadership developer, trainer and coach – working to support directors, senior managers and community members grow and hone their leadership skills. Barry is a lifelong Gippslandian – who is lucky enough to have spent some of his early years in other parts of Victoria before coming home in his early twenties!



Andrew Bulmer

Deputy Chair

Andrew is the Managing Director of Bulmer Farms, one of Australia's largest producers of Fresh salads. The business is based in Lindenow, East Gippsland and farms ten different properties over around 500 hectares in the Mitchell River Valley. Andrew puts their success down to "hard work, resilience and a passion for quality".



Sallie Jones

Sallie Jones is Co-Founder and Managing Director of Gippsland Jersey, an independent, farmer-owned premium milk brand based in country Victoria.

Her love for regional Victoria and her local community knows no bounds, and she thrives on bringing ideas, events and activities to life that she knows will deliver benefit, joy and wherever possible, that good dose of kindness.



Kate Wallis

Treasurer

Kate is the Executive Manager Regional Agribusiness for Gippsland with Commonwealth Bank, this role covers agribusiness and commercial banking across Gippsland with a strong focus on supporting communities and building awareness and investment in agriculture.

Kate is passionate about the growth and sustainability of Gippsland, specifically in the areas of agriculture and services to agriculture.





Damien Gannon

Born in Tinamba, Damien worked on the family dairy farm after leaving school.

After many successful years he and his partner have recently sold the Tinamba Hotel to Simon and Tania Johnson.

Damien is a passionate advocate for quality local produce, and for supporting Gippsland businesses to become better known in their own region and beyond.

He is also a board member of Destination Gippsland.



Brian Davey

Brian Davey has a background in the coal and power sector with more than 30 years' experience in the operations, financial, marketing and technology sectors of the industry.

Outside of work Brian has been an experienced Board member with more than 11 years as member of the West Gippsland Healthcare Group and has served as Chair and vice Chair for 7 of those years.

Along with his wife he runs a small stud beef farm in West Gippsland.



Peter Schutz

Board Observer - (non-voting)

Peter was our Interim Chair, helping to guide the amalgamated organisation forward – and has continued to support in an observer status throughout 2020.

With over 50 years' experience and achievement in the food and agriculture industry, his knowledge and sage advice has been an invaluable contribution to our success to date.

Peter holds a number of board positions, including the Future Food Systems Cooperative Research Centre, of which FFG is a participant.



Dr Joseph Lawrence

Board Observer - (non-voting)

Throughout his career, Dr Lawrence has led and implemented numerous large-scale, high-value, strategic initiatives that brings together sector-wide industry partners (SMEs to large multinationals), academia, and government, in industries such as advanced manufacturing, food and agriculture, med-tech, and energy.



Karen Cain

Board Observer - (non-voting)

A Latrobe Valley resident for 25 years, Ms Cain has significant experience working across government, leading strategic innovation, and developing and implementing policy in Gippsland.

For the past 23 years, she has owned and operated a commercial beef farm with her husband at Boolarra South.



Graham Scott

Board Observer - (non-voting)

With a career interest in regional economic and community development, Graham has a strong understanding of the connection each of these elements plays in providing regions with both employment opportunities and work life balance choices.

CO-OPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRES (CRC'S)

The role of CRC's is valuable to our sector, bringing important research skills and application, education, specialist industry expertise together to work on challenges, issues, growth strategies and much more. Food & Fibre Gippsland contributes time, expertise, and industry connectivity as in-kind participation for its role with CRC's. We continue as a formal participant with:

- Fight Food Waste CRC
- Food Agility CRC
- Future Food Systems CRC

Over the course of the past year work has been undertaken in launching the \$10M "Mission Food for Life" campaign with Food Agility CRC and F&FG as a partner to that project. The virtual launch was well received, and F&FG CEO was a panel member speaker at the launch. Further details on the project can be accessed here: <https://www.foodagility.com/mission-food-for-life>

F&FG is collaborating with Federation University and Food Agility CRC on "Better Data for Better Decisions" focused on data constellation development and management for the agriculture sector. Outcomes will be reported on in the 2021 Annual Report.

Future Food Systems CRC and F&FG are collaborating on two projects, being (a) Modelling Platform and (b) Data Partnership – both projects awaiting outcomes of the bid submission from Future Food Systems CRC. If awarded, outcomes will be reported on in the 2021 Annual Report. Information on this CRC can be found here: <https://www.futurefoodsystems.com.au/>

F&FG has been an active contributor and a lead proponent together with Federation University in a new project. This exciting project – "What's Your Food or Fibre Challenge Gippsland" involves Federation University, F&FG, FIAL, Food Agility CRC, Regional Development Victoria, Latrobe Valley Authority. The program has over \$1M commitment and is a hackathon-style program lasting 12mths. Focus is for SME's who must propose an industry challenge, aligned to predetermined themes (eg: circular economy; food industry waste; agtech, etc) and once finalist entries are selected, a helix engagement of researchers, education, Government, industry and specialists will collaborate to resolve the challenge for implementation by the industry entrant. Outcomes will be reported on as part of the 2021 Annual Report.



PACKAGE ASSISTING SMALL EXPORTERS [PASE]

David Grimmond is leading this program which is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment and was awarded to F&FG in August of this year, with a due completion date of October 2022.

The purpose of this grant program is to assist small exporters in the dairy, fish, eggs, grain, plant, horticulture, meat, and animal product industries to overcome barriers to market access. Additionally, the program has outcomes to support small exporters – and potential small exporters – to increase participation in the export sector after collaborative investigation (and resolving) of those barriers that limit their export growth and sustainability of exports.

For the purposes of this grant program, small exporters are defined as having annual revenues from export activities of less than \$10 million for each registered establishment; and less than \$20 million in total revenue for both domestic and export activities.



EXCELLENCE IN AGRIBUSINESS INDUSTRY AWARDS

The Excellence in Agribusiness Awards was launched in 2019 and for the first presentation was an overwhelming success, achieving national media attention and strong support from local industry, local Government, and national partners – including KPMG and Australian Rural Leadership Foundation. The event was self-funding and received strong industry buy in.

The Awards is a Gippsland region-based program to recognise, celebrate and reward our food and fibre sector, covering the whole supply chain, pre and post farmgate, and is an important vehicle for recognising success, sharing achievements, and inspiring others in our region. By showcasing the sector, we create an opportunity to position Gippsland's food and fibre sector as leaders in the country and beyond. The Awards provide a framework to tell our story and to give thanks to the success stories that we are very lucky to have on our doorstep in Gippsland. We have so much talent, productivity, and output of \$7 billion per annum from our region. These Awards acknowledge that achievement and give accolade to the food and fibre businesses that deserve it.

Close to 200 people from all over Gippsland and beyond came together in August 2019 for a celebration in Sale to reward and recognise those who are shaping the future of Gippsland's food and fibre sector. The inaugural Food & Fibre Gippsland Excellence in Agribusiness Awards Gala Dinner was held at The Stables and guests were treated to a feast of Gippsland's finest produce. 10 sponsors were secured and 72 entries across 9 categories received with the judges being overwhelmed with the quality and talent of the entries – important in setting the benchmark for year 1 of the program.

Employing 350 staff, Flavorite was crowned the Gippsland Agribusiness of the Year and was described by the judging panel as an outstanding Gippsland success story, with the Nichols and Millis families revolutionising the tomato business in Australia. Their investment in glasshouse technology has taken them from a cottage industry to a major supermarket supplier and one of the top four players in the country in their category. Other categories and winners in 2019 included:

- Excellence in Service to the Food & Fibre Industry: Full Circle Nutrition
- Excellence in Workforce Capability: Mulgowie Farming Co.
- Excellence in Exporting: ViPlus Dairy
- Excellence in Research and Development: Macalister Demonstration Farm
- Excellence in Food Manufacturing: Patties Foods
- Excellence in Innovation: Hussey & Co
- Excellence in Sustainability: Blackwood Piggery
- Excellence in Adaption to Change: Soilkee

The program has created increased awareness for the food and fibre sector and helped communities become more aware of the diversity and quality of produce grown in our region – with the inaugural 2019 Gala Dinner an outstanding success as culmination of those efforts.





The 2020 Excellence in Agribusiness Awards gala announcement this year was online, and premiered on the Food & Fibre Gippsland website on November 20, and remains there available to replay anytime. The lead up was an overwhelming success despite having to pivot the typical format due to the upheaval and distraction of Covid-19.

Hosting the 2020 virtual Awards as MC was highly respected food writer with The Age Good Food, Richard Cornish.

Key highlights of the 2020 program include:

- Sourcing and commitment from 16 sponsors including a range of corporate and government partners
- Introduction of new major prize/category: Female Agribusiness Leader of the Year sponsored by Leadership Victoria who are offering their Women in Leadership course
- Increased number of categories to 15 across the entire food and fibre supply chain ensuring all aspects of the sector are recognised and included (additional 5 from 2019)
- Successful virtual launch of the 2020 Awards program with sponsor vignettes leveraging their involvement and importance of the program
- Received an outstanding 115 entries across Gippsland which was an overwhelming result considering COVID-19 has been a big distraction and upheaval for many agribusinesses
- Entries shortlisted to 34 finalists across the whole Gippsland region for online judging and feedback from the 7 highly regarded judges noting incredible diversity, calibre, and quality of finalists
- Winners were announced 20 November 2020 via the virtual awards on F&FG website streaming and coincide with National AgDay!

These Awards are professionally managed by Kate Gunn who F&FG would like to thank. Kate brings encouragement to entrants, and superb engagement with sponsors and judges both for the 2019 and 2020 Awards program.

Special thanks are extended to the Awards judges who kindly volunteer their time, expertise, and passionate engagement. Head Judge Paul Ford is supported by Stuart Quigley, Ben Gebert, David Piedrafita, Dr Jessie Horton, Vanessa McGrath and Jessica Reeves.

2019 GIPPSLAND BUSINESS OF THE YEAR




2020 AWARD WINNERS

South Gippsland Dairy



Winner of the
EXCELLENCE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP
Award

Victoria Valley Meats



Joint Winner of the
EXCELLENCE IN WORKFORCE CAPABILITY
Award

ViPlus Dairy

Winner of the
EXCELLENCE IN FOOD & DRINK MANUFACTURING IN A
BUSINESS WITH GREATER THAN 10 EMPLOYEES
Award




Warragul Farmers Market



Winners of the
EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE TO THE
Food & Fibre Industry Award

Alberton Timber



Winner of the
EXCELLENCE IN INNOVATION
Award

Flavorite



Winners of the
EXCELLENCE IN SUSTAINABILITY
Award

Sailors Grave Brewing



Winner of the
EXCELLENCE IN COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS
Award

Schreurs & Sons



Winner of the
EXCELLENCE IN ADAPTION TO CHANGE
Award

Gurney's Cidery



Winner of the
EXCELLENCE IN FOOD AND DRINK MANUFACTURING IN
A BUSINESS WITH LESS THAN TEN EMPLOYEES
Award

Hussey & Co




Winner of the
EXCELLENCE IN EXPORTING
Award

Jaydee - Cows Create Careers



Joint Winner of the
EXCELLENCE IN WORKFORCE CAPABILITY
Award

Radial Timber



Winner of the
EXCELLENCE IN FIBRE INDUSTRY
Award

Soilkee



Winner of the
EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
Award




Gabrielle Misere
Co-Founder of Sailors Grave Brewing

**FEMALE AGRIBUSINESS
LEADER OF THE YEAR**



Rob Bayley - Blackwood Piggery

**YOUNG AGRIBUSINESS
LEADER OF THE YEAR**



**Greenham Gippsland
GIPPSLAND AGRIBUSINESS
OF THE YEAR**



“THANK YOU TO THE ORGANISATIONS WHO SUPPORT US THROUGH AWARDING OF GRANTS, SPONSORSHIP AND INDUSTRY CONTRIBUTIONS”



Australian Government







Food & Fibre Gippsland

ANNUAL REPORT
2020

