



Gippsland Environmental Agencies (GEA)

Annual Report 2023-24

Gippsland Environmental Agencies (GEA) is a forum for the Managing Directors/Regional Director/CEO of fourteen environmental agencies in Gippsland to meet to strengthen coordination, collaboration, and accountability, reduce duplication, and provide clarity on roles and responsibilities between key partners.

GEA brings the agencies together to work to improve the management of land, water and biodiversity resources across Gippsland. The 14 member agencies employ close to 1,200 people across Gippsland.

Catchment Partnership Agreement

Each GEA member is a signatory to the Gippsland Catchment Partnership Agreement (GCPA).

It is the GEA forum that drives and implements the GCPA via the development and implementation of the GEA Strategic Plan. The GCPA encompasses the East and West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority Regions working cooperatively across the whole of Gippsland. Trust across all agencies and relationships that have been built are vital for ongoing delivery of projects. The CPA has brought together a framework to strengthen relationships in the regions. A key to that strength is the partnership with our Traditional Owners and the commitment of all agencies to work with Aboriginal people to learn from each other, care for Country and deliver on their aspirations and priorities.

Principles

All members of Gippsland Environmental Agencies are committed to the following principles.

- **COLLABORATION**
- **CONNECTION TO COUNTRY**
- **SHARED DECISION-MAKING**
- **AN ENDURING AND EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP**
- **MUTUAL RESPECT**
- **COMMUNITY FOCUS**

Strategic Plan development

A key achievement for 2023 – 24 was the update of the GEA Strategic Plan.

The Plan highlights the key priorities for cross agency collaboration, working in partnership to support the successful implementation of priority projects.

The GEA Strategic Plan identifies synergies across agencies and further opportunities to work collaboratively to improve the management of land, water and biodiversity in Gippsland.

Key Areas of Common Focus

- ✓ People
- ✓ Partners
- ✓ Traditional Owners
- ✓ Environment
- ✓ Legislative Responsibilities



This all adds up to us being able to deliver enhanced nature conservation, capital investment and recovery programs for Gippsland’s environment.



The Strategic Plan was formally adopted by GEA at meeting # 44 on 8th December 2023.

A copy of the GEA Strategic Plan is located at [GEA-Strategic-Plan-2023-2028-Final-April-2024.pdf](https://wgcm.vic.gov.au/GEA-Strategic-Plan-2023-2028-Final-April-2024.pdf) (wgcm.vic.gov.au)

Communication

A key focus for GEA has been improvements in communication and networking across the agencies. This has been implemented in several forms and across all areas of common focus.

GEA Linked In page [Gippsland Environmental Agencies: Overview | LinkedIn](#)

GEA Linked page was established in January 2024, currently with 288 followers . The page showcases each agency, sharing employment opportunities, sharing days of significance, links to key regional strategies and sharing agency achievements.

Web presence

<https://wgcma.vic.gov.au/working-together/gippsland-environmental-agencies/>

A GEA webpage has been set up on the WGCMA website (as WGCMA is hosting GEA EO & Chair)

- A copy of the GEA Strategic Plan
- Links to each agency
- Information “who is GEA?”
- Partner case studies

Briefing sessions

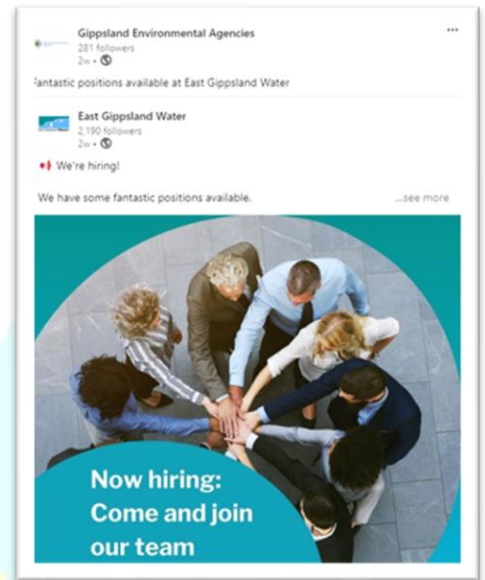
Commencing in 22/23, GEA continued to be briefed on key strategic issues. These briefings are held prior to the meeting, allowing extra time for consideration and discussions.

GEA members were updated on the following issues affecting agencies across Gippsland.

- Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Management Plan
- Victorian Waterway Management Strategy – review and update
- “The Path to Treaty “ Troy McDonald, Chair of GLaWAC
- Who is the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority (MLRA) ?
- MLRA – Engagement Report
- Fuel Load Management
- Psychosocial safety in the workplace
- Barry Beach Marine Terminal Maintenance and Upgrade Project – Offshore Wind O&M Facility and Esso Onshore Reception Facility for Decommissioning

In November 2023, GEA briefing sessions were expanded to a series separate to the meetings, held online, open to all agency staff and addressing the information needs across the agencies and strategic plan areas. Briefings held in 2023/34 were;

- Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan Renewal - EGCM
- Update by VicGrid and Offshore Wind Energy Victoria – DEECA
- Regional Catchment Strategy – East and West Gippsland EGCM and WGCMA
- Offshore Wind Energy update –DEECA
- IDAHOBIT Day (International Day Against LGBTIQ+ Discrimination) Minus 18



Key Areas of Common Focus

PEOPLE

Foster Innovation and empower our people.

Priorities:

- Foster a skilled, knowledgeable, flexible workforce.
- Encourage and support secondment opportunities.
- Strengthen leadership and development opportunities.
- Support regional leadership in diversity and inclusion.

2023-24 Highlights

Support Regional Leadership and Diversity

Friday 17th May was International Day Against LGBTQIA+ Discrimination. IDAHOBIT

IDAHOBIT briefing and morning tea

We had over 90 people attend, including some office locations.

It was wonderful to see everyone joining in and the presentation by Max Evans from Minus 18 was great, listening to his story was lovely and generated a lot of comments in our offices.



Max gave us three tips on how to send the right signals for inclusion

1. Listen to stories and experiences of the LGBTQIA+ community
2. Visibility: this can be as simple as a rainbow lanyard, also about being visible with your actions and how we educate ourselves and standing up against homophobic language “allyship when on-one is watching
3. Inclusive language - asking for pronouns, inclusive language in your organisation, and in your role, normalising the language.

These three points are also relevant for overall Diversity and Inclusion Plan implementation across the agencies and a range of topics.

Workforce Planning

- Human resource staff from all agencies are meeting on a 6 monthly basis to identify areas of common interest including options for sharing training and encouraging secondments.

Women in Leadership

- The GEA Women in Leadership (WLT) group has been undertaking amazing work in leadership and training for women over the past 10 years. Recent changes to staffing and work priorities, has meant that it was timely to evaluate the WLT Program and future plans.
- GEA has completed a situational analysis and MERI assessment to inform the role the GEA can play as a leader in relation to Women’s Wellbeing and Leadership. This evaluation engaged engaging past and present members of the Women’s Leadership Team to evaluate the effectiveness of the program over time
- Outcomes from the review (due to GEA in September 2024) will support GEA in determining the framework for embedding women leadership in its program into the future.

PARTNERS

Work together for innovative solutions to issues challenging our communities.

Priorities

- *Implement a collaborative model for regional emergency preparedness.*
- *Improve connections with other regional organisations.*
- *Jointly deliver key regional projects and reduce duplication.*
- *Provide the framework for cooperation and progress as well as better enabling other strategies.*

2023-2024 Highlights

Welcomed the Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority with Dr Jennifer Brereton, CEO joining GEA in January 2024

The MLRA has impact and alignment across many of the agencies and MLRA involvement in GEA provides a natural synergy across the region. This brings the number of agencies involved in GEA to 14. The inclusion of MLRA in GEA also aligns to Strategic Plan area: Partner – “*work together for innovative solutions to issues challenging communities*”.

Development of GEA Capability Statement

A key focus for GEA is the commitment to working together in a cooperative and collaborative manner.

This collaboration is no more evident in an emergency event where all agencies support each other with resources both physical and infrastructure.

The Capability Statement for GEA aims to take the collaborative approach to a broader level by documenting the capabilities of each agency on a day-to-day basis providing a single consolidated picture of GEA capabilities

It will provide a clear path the sharing of resources, avoiding duplication and maximising the utilisation of infrastructure, mobile and physical resources.

The Statement documented contact details, infrastructure, mobile, human and specialist capital.

It provides a clear path for the sharing of resources, avoiding duplication and maximising the utilisation of infrastructure, mobile and physical resources.

2023– 24 GEA members

Ag Vic: Bruce Weston
Regional Leader South East

DEECA: Darren McKenzie ,
Regional Director Gippsland

DEECA: Sam Quigley
Deputy Chief Fire Officer Gippsland

EGCMA: Bec Hemming CEO

EGW: Steve McKenzie
Managing Director

EPA: Jessica Bandiera,
Regional Manager Gippsland

GW: Sarah Cumming,
Managing Director

GLaWAC: Daniel Miller, CEO

GKTOLMB: Craig Parker, CEO

Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority Dr
Jennifer Brereton , CEO

Parks Vic: Kerri Villiers,
Regional Director Eastern

SGW: Robert Murphy,
Managing Director

SRW: Cameron FitzGerald,
Managing Director

TfN: Robyn Edwards, / Catherine
Crowden
Area Manager—Gippsland

WGCMA: Martin Fuller, CEO

Belinda Brennan , Executive Officer

TRADITIONAL OWNERS

Empower traditional owners on their journey towards self determination

Priorities

- Support Aboriginal people in their journey to self- determination and greater connection to work on-country
- Support the development of an Aboriginal Employment Development Strategy
- Develop relationship with non RAP Traditional Owners

2023- 24 Highlights

Presentation – The Path to Treaty by Troy McDonald, Chair of GLaWAC

Commenced development of Gippsland Aboriginal Workforce Framework

A key aspect will be to create linkages and opportunities as they exist and then bring together into a user friendly, readily accessible toolkit to help all agencies be cultural safe and supporting Aboriginal employment across the region resulting in;

- Streamlined procurement procedures that enable direct engagement of Gippsland Aboriginal businesses.
- Support for local Gippsland Aboriginal businesses to build their service delivery capacity
- Pathways for GEA organisations to then engage with these businesses directly
- Guidance and support to enable humanistic approaches to recruitment and employment.
- Cultural safety and building competency in senior leadership.
- Avoiding duplication of already delivered services, but to further build the capacity

LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Maintain a high standard of partner and community engagement whilst meeting our obligations.

Priorities

- Strengthen the cross organisational cooperation and contribution for review and implementation of key policy and strategies.
- Create more integrated strategy and policy solutions for Gippsland region.

2023-24 Highlights

- Briefing and contribution to the review and renewal of the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan
- Briefing and contribution to the renewal of the Victorian Waterway Management Strategy
- Regular updates from Victoria's offshore Wind Program and VicGrid - transition of the Latrobe Valley Energy industry is important for all agencies

Legislative Responsibilities document- contain up to date information and live links to all Acts

GEA – Our Legislative Responsibilities – Part 1 – Acts

GEA – Our Legislative Responsibilities – Part 2 – Victorian Policies and Strategies

GEA – Our Legislative Responsibilities – Part 3 – Regional Strategies

GEA – Our Legislative Responsibilities – Part 4 – Alignment to NRM activities

ENVIRONMENT

Protect, enhance and restore our region.

Priorities

- *Develop joint framework for implementation, reporting and evaluation of regional strategies and plans.*
- *Strengthen collaboration in implementation of key NRM Regional Strategies and Plans.*
- *Investigate collaborative climate change mitigation and adaptation options.*

2023-24 Highlights

- Briefing on Regional Catchment Strategies for East and West Gippsland
- Briefings on seasonal outlook and the fire management

Partnerships in Action

West Gippsland CMA partnered with Bunurong Land Council to deliver the Powlett River/Kugerungmome Cultural Heritage Management Project. The highlight to date was the hosting of a partnership session for West Gippsland CMA, Parks Victoria, Trust for Nature, Bass Coast and South Gippsland Landcare Networks to learn from their On Country team.

Over 40 staff across the agencies learned about the Cultural Heritage at the mouth of the Powlett/Kugerungmome River.



Partners working together

Fourteen environmental agencies are members of the Gippsland Environmental Agencies.

- [Agriculture Victoria](#) (Ag Vic)
- [Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action](#) – Gippsland (DEECA)
- [East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority](#) (EGCMA)
- [East Gippsland Water](#) (EGW)
- [Environment Protection Authority – Gippsland](#) (EPA)
- [Gippsland Regional Water Corporation](#) (GW)
- [Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation](#) (GLaWAC)
- [Gunaikurnai Traditional Owners Land Management Board](#) (GKTLOMB)
- [Mine Land Rehabilitation Authority](#) (MLRA)
- [Parks Victoria – Eastern](#) (PV)
- [South Gippsland Regional Water Corporation](#) (SGW)
- [Southern Rural Regional Water Corporation](#) (SRW)
- [Trust for Nature – Gippsland](#) (TFN)
- [West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority](#) (WGCMA)



For more information about the Gippsland Environmental Agencies partnership, please send an email to Executive Officer, Belinda Brennan E; belindab@wgcm.vic.gov.au