

Media Release

The Hon Ros Spence MP
Minister for Agriculture
Minister for Community Sport
Minister for Carers and Volunteers



Friday, 30 May 2025

CREATING LOCAL LEADERS IN NORTHERN VICTORIA AND GIPPSLAND

The Allan Labor Government is expanding the Forestry Transition Program through a new Community Leadership Program which will help create emerging leaders in communities of northern Victoria and Gippsland.

Committee for Gippsland and the Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship are two established leadership providers that will deliver the tailored leadership programs, aimed at fostering a new generation of community leaders in these former native timber towns.

The programs will develop local leaders that are equipped for navigating change, leading their communities, and shaping the future for their regions.

In Gippsland the 'Building Resilient Forestry Communities Program' will support up to 20 program participants from the six priority forestry communities with Local Development Strategies in the region, including Noojee, Yarram, Heyfield, Orbost, Nowa Nowa and Swifts Creek.

In northern Victoria, the 'Lead a New Future for Your Community' Program will support the five priority communities with Local Development Strategies in the region (Murrindindi, Yarra Ranges, Benalla, Corryong and Koondrook) with a core program for 20 participants and further workshops for an additional 100 participants.

Currently, 11 priority native timber communities are being provided medium- to long-term support to identify new economic opportunities and create jobs through Local Development Strategy projects, the Community Development Fund and the Community Leadership Program.

More than \$10 million in funding has already been awarded through the Local Development Strategy and Community Development Fund to support native timber communities to transition successfully.

For more information visit vic.gov.au/forestry.

Quote attributable to Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence

"The Community Leadership Program will help community members gain new skills to strengthen and support their local communities as they transition to new economic opportunities."

Quote attributable to Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes

"We are continuing to support our Northern Victorian communities to build local leadership, strengthen resilience and create opportunities for sustainable economic growth now and into the future."

Quotes attributable to Member for Eastern Victoria Tom McIntosh

"Gippsland has incredible leaders who have been working on the big changes happening in the region including natural disasters, drought, and industry transition."

"This program will support those who have already given so much for their communities and help to grow the next generation who will continue to shape the future of the region."

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Quotes attributable to Committee for Gippsland CEO Tony Cantwell

"The forestry industry has a long and proud history in our Gippsland communities. Through the Building Resilient Forestry Communities Program, we are committed to supporting the development of local leadership to help guide these communities into the future".

"Drawing on our experience delivering the Gippsland Community Leadership Program, the Committee for Gippsland looks forward to strengthening these communities, building local networks of regional leaders, and ensuring that Gippsland has the leadership capacity to continue to thrive."

Quotes attributable to Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship Co-founder & CEO Matt Pfalert

"We're looking forward to unearthing new opportunities for the communities of Murrindindi, Upper Yarra Ranges, Benalla, Corryong and Koondrook.

"We understand that navigating change can be challenging for rural communities. We also know that supporting emerging leaders and building an entrepreneurial mindset can unlock new, localised futures that are community-led and self-reliant."