GACA

GIPPSLAND ALLIANCE FOR CLIMATE ACTION

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STRATEGIC & ACTION PLAN

2023-2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Gippsland Alliance for Climate Action acknowledges the Gunai-Kurnai, Bunurong, Bidwell, and Ngarigo-Monero people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands across where we work, and that sovereignty has never been ceded. We pay respect to Elders past, present, and emerging.

We recognise the invaluable knowledge and role First Nations people have in caring for Country, and both mitigating and adapting to climate change.

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Vision

Gippsland councils collaborating to create effective climate action and build capacity across the region.

Purpose

Gippsland Alliance for Climate Action (GACA) was established to work with councils across Gippsland to support regional climate action. GACA works with member councils to undertake climate mitigation and adaptation projects that are best coordinated on a regional scale, and provides a platform for communication and collaboration between Gippsland councils.

GACA also works with other Greenhouse Alliances from across Victoria and other stakeholders to identify opportunities in the local government space and share best practice or innovative approaches. This may include collaborative projects and advocacy.

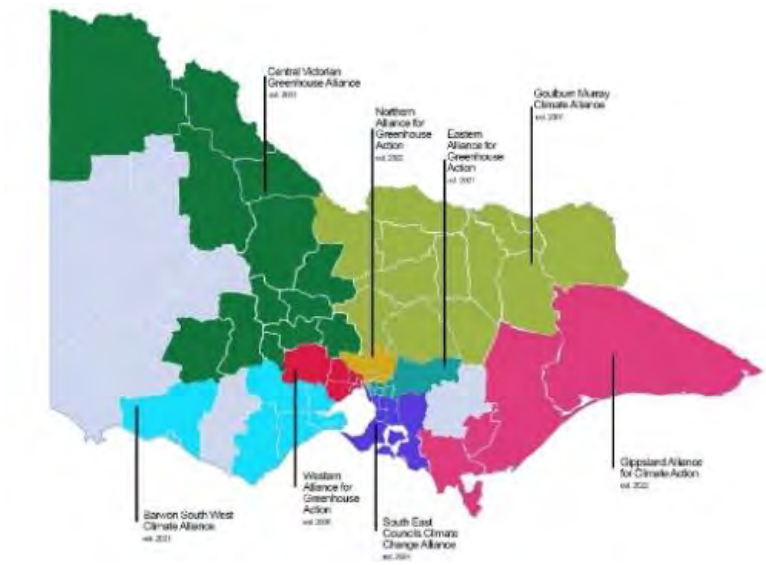
Shared Goals

- Taking action to mitigate climate change and transition to zero emissions across all sectors for councils and Gippsland communities
- Building understanding, preparedness, adaptive capacity and resilience to climate impacts for councils, communities and the natural environment across Gippsland
- Enhancing climate knowledge, organisational capacity and best practice of councils, with climate outcomes embedded within governance practices and a whole of council approach
- Supporting communities across Gippsland to understand and build capacity to act on climate change, and actively participate in the transition to a low carbon economy
- Forming partnerships and advocating to create greater impact and enact regional scale solutions to the common challenge of a changing climate

Context

Victorian Greenhouse Alliances

The Greenhouse Alliance model has been operating in Victoria since 2000, when the first Alliance was established. In 2022 Gippsland was the latest region to create a Greenhouse Alliance, joining eight others across the state who together make up the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances. The Greenhouse Alliances collaborate to share knowledge, and work together on shared projects, initiatives, and advocacy.



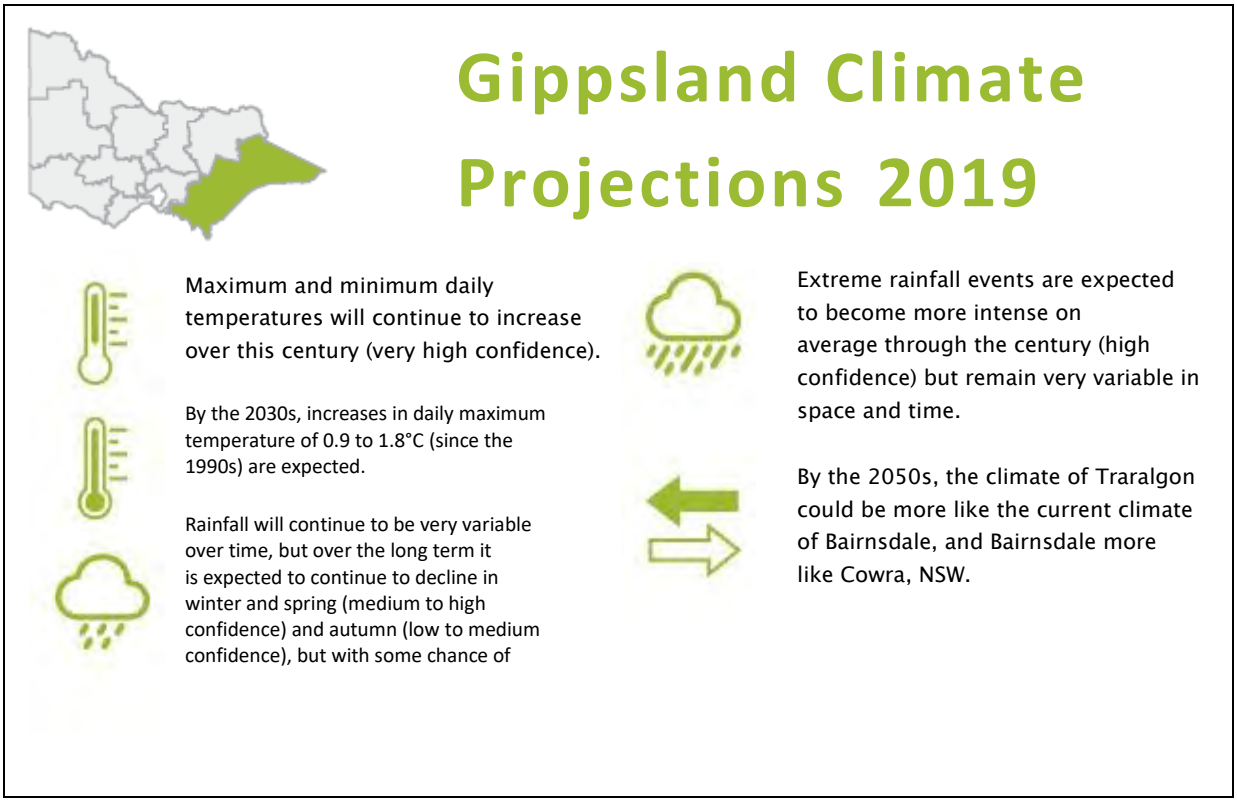
Map of Victorian Greenhouse Alliances

The Alliance model has proven effective in supporting regional coordination and climate projects. For example, for the Goulbourn Murray Climate Alliance, assessment of the outcomes from projects and initiatives found that the return on investment for member councils was approximately six-fold, with $1.1M in savings from climate projects, a $2.7M impact from advocacy, and 23,949 tonnes of avoided emissions. Many regional councils in particular benefit from the Alliance network, due to more limited resources compared to urban counterparts.

Gippsland region

Gippsland councils are committed to climate action, and have been working for years to support emissions reduction within their council and community. Recent projects by councils in Gippsland include installation of public electric vehicle infrastructure, installation of solar on council buildings and feasibility assessments into large-scale solar, use of geothermal and biogas across council buildings, energy efficiency upgrades, LED street lighting upgrades, and supporting revegetation.

The Gippsland region is particularly important to larger state climate policy, and is an area in major transition associated with the shift to a zero emissions economy. Gippsland has played a key role in Victoria's electricity production, with Latrobe Valley historically producing around 90% of the state's electricity through coal fired power stations. The closure dates for these coal fired power stations have now been set, and Gippsland is poised to be a major centre for renewable energy production, with offshore and onshore Renewable Energy Zones established.



Gippsland climate change projections, 2019, CSIRO.

As with other regional areas of Victoria, the climate risks that threaten Gippsland are also significant, with catastrophic fires and increased flooding recently experienced.

Projected changes and impacts within the Gippsland region include higher average temperatures, more heat waves, increase in the likelihood and intensity of bushfires, changes to precipitation, increased storms and extreme rainfall events, increased flooding, sea level rise and beach erosion, and biodiversity loss. Councils must deal with the emerging risks to their community, and their own organisations.

Governance

Legal Status

GACA is a non-incorporated Alliance, which is auspiced by the Gippsland Climate Change Network (GCCN), a not-for-profit organisation working on climate change across Gippsland. GCCN is responsible for employing the GACA Coordinator and managing GACA finance.

Membership

GACA is made up of member councils from Gippsland, who collectively decide on the key outcomes and priorities of the Alliance. An MOU with GCCN governs the terms of membership, including equal representation of member councils on GACA committees and in decision making.

The founding member councils that joined in 2022 were:

East Gippsland Shire Council

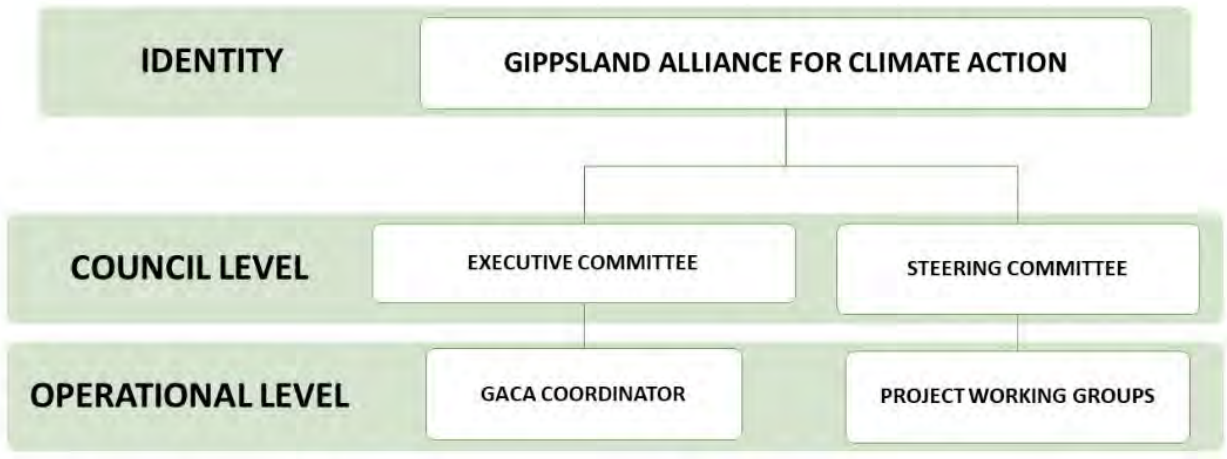
South Gippsland Shire Council

Latrobe City Council

Wellington Shire Council

Governance structure

GACA undertakes its work under the guidance of an Executive Committee, a Steering Committee, Project Working Groups, and a Coordinator.



Executive Committee

- Responsible for overseeing and endorsing the broad strategic direction of the Alliance
- Authorises GACA decisions, including approving GACA's strategic plan and priorities, projects, budget, funding submissions, and advocacy submissions
- Communicates back and promotes GACA's activities within their council
- Comprised of senior council staff (Managers) representing each member council
- Nominated Chairperson to chair quarterly meetings, and provide ongoing direction and active support to the GACA Coordinator.

Steering Committee

- Establishes and manages GACA operations, consistent with the strategic direction
- Supports the Coordinator with developing projects, project reporting, the GACA budget, GACA annual action plans, advocacy submissions and communication and promotional material
- Comprised of one or two officers representing each of the GACA member councils
- Monthly meetings, chaired by the GACA Coordinator or a member of the Steering Committee.

Project Working Groups

- Formed as needed for specific projects, to implement projects and for technical discussion and knowledge sharing
- Comprised of staff from councils participating in the project and ideally also including staff from relevant teams outside of sustainability
- Monthly meetings or as determined.

Alliance Coordinator

- Responsible for the day-to-day operations of GACA, including managing governance, policy, procedures, and finance
- Manages and delivers GACA initiatives, including projects, strategic and action plans, funding submissions, advocacy, and communication and promotional materials
- Manages and coordinates GACA meetings, workshops, and communication between participating councils
- Manages and supports relationships and communication with stakeholders, including active participation in the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances.

GACA decision making and regional representation

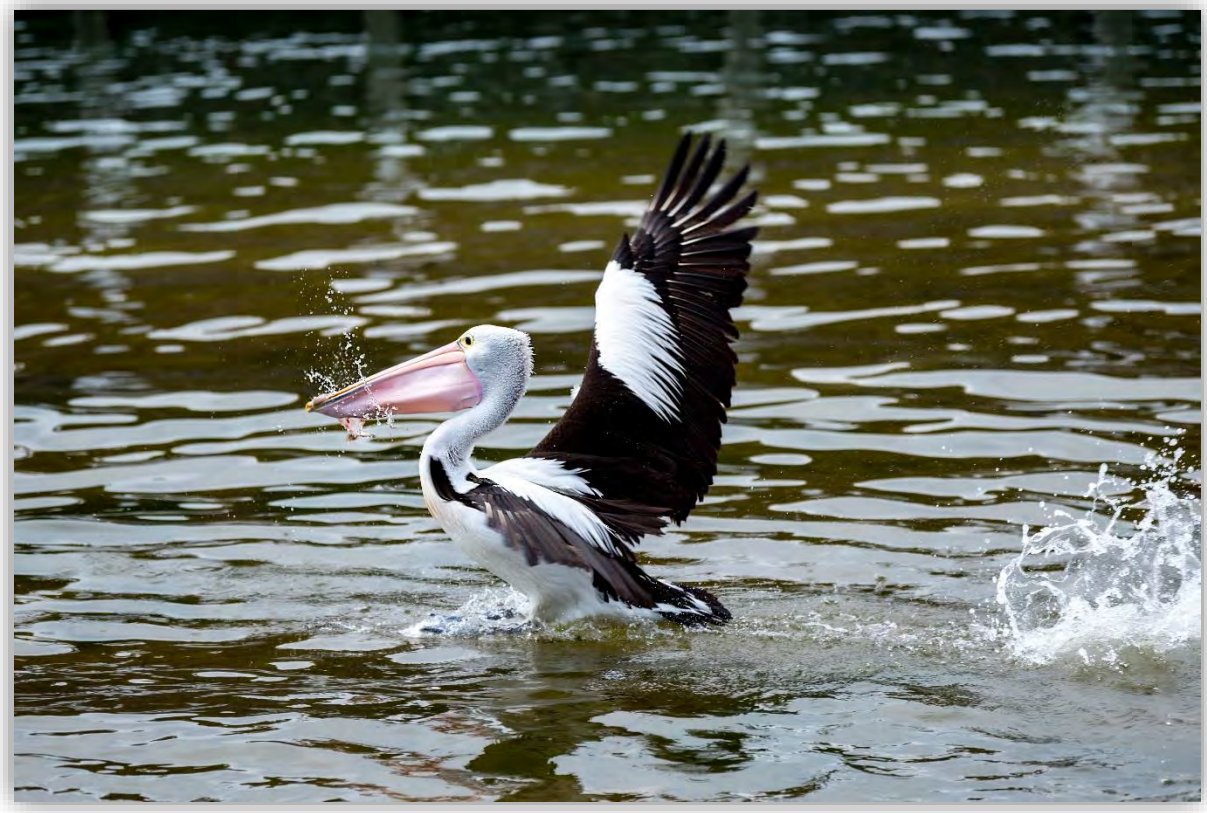
Through the above structure and as outlined in the MOU, member councils have equal contribution and voting rights to determine the direction and priorities of GACA.

This Strategic and Action Plan is developed and approved by members, and sets key projects and priorities. Each member council through the Executive Committee also makes decisions as they arise, including about public-facing advocacy.

With member input and approval, GACA can act as its own entity to enhance regional climate outcomes, without decisions having gone through the formal processes of individual councils. This may include representing the region at events or meetings, collaborating with other Alliances on Victorian climate initiatives, and making advocacy statements.

Funding

Annual membership fees paid by member councils forms the majority of GACA funding. A grant from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (previously the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning) was also awarded in 2022 to support the establishment of GACA. GACA will plan for financial sustainability and longevity beyond this.



Action Plan 2023-2024

Projects

The below projects have been identified as the priority for GACA to deliver over the next 18 months, from January 2023 to the end of June 2024. These projects were identified during a planning workshop in November 2022.

Project	Description	Outcomes & milestones	Resources & delivery
Climate risk mapping	Project to assess climate risk at a fine scale across Gippsland, in order to build an accurate understanding of key climate risks and their variance geographically. A tool mapping these climate risks will be produced, with assets such as roads and buildings identified, and the likely hazards and impact to assets assessed. Once this project is completed, Councils can then use the information about risks to assets to develop adaptation responses. Councils may also extend this information to the community to communicate location-based risks.	• Scoping project methodology and funding opportunities • Engagement of key teams across project participants • Sourcing funding, including grants and engagement of key decision makers within participating councils to build internal support and allocation of budget • Engagement of consultant to undertake project • Collation and input of data to create accurate tool	Consultant to deliver project. Grant funding to be sought, alongside financial contribution from participating councils.
EV fleet transition plan	Development of an EV Fleet Transition Plan for Gippsland councils, which can be adopted as policy by member councils. This may include the identification of bulk buy opportunities for councils which could be undertaken as a next step after this project.	• Review of other EV fleet Transition Plans and best practice to inform project scope and methodology • Engagement with fleet teams • Collation of data and development of technical assessment • Development of general EV Transition Plan template • Council specific Plans developed	GACA Coordinator to undertake the majority of the project. Consultant may be required to review or finalise project, funded by participating councils.

ESD policy for council buildings	Development of an ESD policy for council buildings, to be adopted by participating councils into formal policy. Processes and procedures, and consideration of how ESD is practically included within council operations, will also be a core part of this work. Internal engagement will be undertaken to enable positive uptake.	• Review of other ESD policies and best practice to inform project scope and methodology • Engagement with key council teams and assessment of current council policies and processes • Development of a general ESD policy template • Council specific policies developed	GACA Coordinator to undertake the majority of the project. Consultant may be required to review or finalise the project, funded by participating councils.
Decarbonisation and gas removal in council buildings	Audit of gas in council buildings, and assessment of options to replace gas equipment. This may include larger gas users such as recreation centres, or focus on the next tier of gas use. A bulk buy or coordinated procurement of replacement electric equipment may be part of this work, following the initial assessment.	• Engagement with key teams across council to define project scope and priority buildings, and gather data • Contractor to audit identified buildings and identify replacement equipment and costs • Bulk buy of identified electric equipment, focusing on common equipment needed across councils.	Contractor to deliver the audit, funded by participating councils. Bulk buy coordinated by GACA Coordinator and Steering Committee, with equipment bought by participating councils.
Emissions monitoring	This project will facilitate a comparison of emissions tracking across councils, with the aim of making sure methodologies and tools used are consistent. This may include the expansion of emissions monitoring to include scope 3 emissions across LGAs. The software and tools used by councils for emissions monitoring will be reviewed, with a view to group procurement of software.	• Assessment of the current emissions monitoring tools, scope and methodology of participating councils • Assessment of available tools and software for emissions monitoring, their features, pros and cons and costs • Group procurement of software	GACA Coordinator and Steering Committee to deliver project. Group procurement of identified software will save councils money.

Communications and training	Internal training and workshops for staff and councillors from member councils will be delivered, to ensure better climate knowledge and outcomes from across the organisations. This will particularly focus on and complement other GACA projects. GACA will also develop communications collateral with consistent messaging that can support council staff to communicate climate change and issues to the public. Additional workshops and communications material focused on the community may also be developed as opportunities arise.	• Develop an engagement and communications plan • Develop communications collateral on key topics • Deliver workshops and training for member councils • Engagement with key decision makers in support of other GACA projects	Content developed by GACA Coordinator and Steering Committee. Speaker fees and design fees funded by participating councils.

Additional areas of work

Areas of interest

There are other projects, topics or issues that are not key GACA projects over the next 18 months, but which have been identified as areas of interest. GACA will observe those areas of work and identify and communicate any emerging opportunities.

These areas of interest include:

- Community engagement on climate change, and supporting community capacity, awareness and options for response
- Assessment of community emissions
- Energy Efficiency, ESD and other climate outcomes for private housing and development
- Planning scheme amendments and opportunities for climate mitigation and adaptation within the planning scheme
- Low carbon transition, renewable energy transition and economic diversification across Gippsland, and supporting a Just Transition for affected communities
- Agriculture, revegetation, and localised offsetting, and options for finance
- Circular economy opportunities.

Advocacy

GACA is well placed to undertake advocacy to support the climate objectives and priorities of member councils. This can include advocacy relevant to the key GACA goals, projects, and priorities identified within this Strategic and Action Plan, as well as projects consistent with the strategic plans or climate priorities of member councils.

One of the main avenues for advocacy is through involvement in collaborative advocacy with the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, who successfully and regularly work together on joint advocacy campaigns. Advocacy by GACA will be approved by the Executive Committee but not formally adopted by individual members, and may not necessarily represent the views of all members.

Engaging with Stakeholders

GACA will work with regional and state-wide stakeholders to identify emerging opportunities for collaboration and learning. This includes:

- engaging with other councils and local government networks, including groups working on relevant projects e.g. Climate Emergency Australia basecamp discussion groups
- involvement in Victorian Greenhouse Alliances meetings, discussions and relevant projects
- working with stakeholders across Gippsland, e.g. Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation; Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation; Bidwell-Maap Aboriginal Corporation; Nindi-Ngujarn Ngarigo Monero Aboriginal Corporation; Latrobe Valley Authority; Gippsland Climate Change Network; Gippsland office of the Department of Environment, Energy, and Climate Action; Sustainability Victoria; and regional Catchment Management Authorities.

Communications materials

Over the next 18 months GACA will develop a website and other communications collateral that can provide interested parties information about GACA.

Funding submissions

GACA will seek funding to support the implementation of key projects, as well as ongoing operations. This may include submitting grant applications, seeking project partners with in-kind contributions, and actively seeking other philanthropic opportunities.

Evaluation and review

This Strategic and Action Plan will be reviewed in early 2024, with new projects identified for the 2024-2025 financial year. This Strategic Plan is intended to be a dynamic document, and can be updated and amended earlier if needed, with approval from the Executive Committee.

An evaluation will also take place to assess the achievements of GACA. This will include an evaluation of the key projects delivered, as well as the overall achievements of GACA, including an assessment of return on investment for member councils.

The governance structure and arrangements will be reviewed after one year of operation, at the end of 2023. This was agreed to by council members in 2022 when finalising governance arrangements. Financial sustainability and income will also be assessed to ensure effective ongoing operation of GACA.