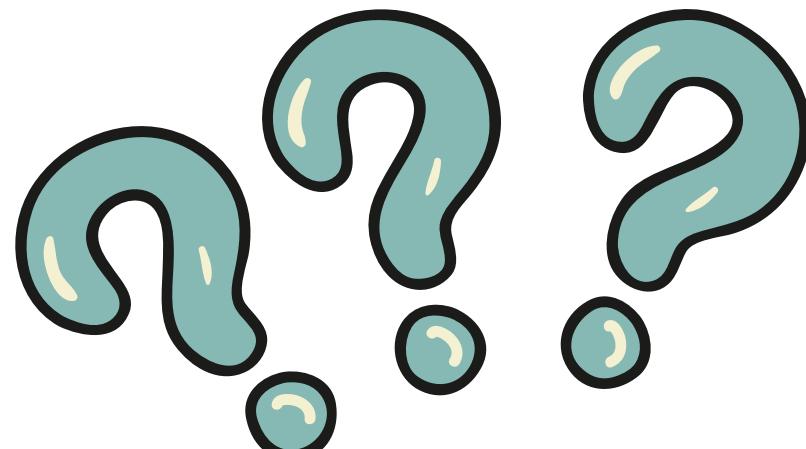




SWIFTS CREEK FUTURE – PROJECT UPDATE

February 2026

Swifts Creek Future – FAQ



What is Swifts Creek Future?

Swifts Creek Future began when State Parliament started discussions about ending the native timber harvesting industry. At that time, a group of passionate and concerned local leaders came together to form the Swifts Creek Community Reference Group. The group met regularly to understand what the closure would mean for our town and to explore ways to reduce the impact while creating new opportunities for the future.

So, what is Swifts Creek Future now?

Since those early discussions, the closure of the native timber harvesting industry was officially confirmed and the deadline was brought forward by six years. In response, the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action developed a range of funding programs to support eleven nominated Timber Towns through this transition, with Swifts Creek being one of them. Swifts Creek Future is supported through the Community Development Fund.

What is the Community Development Fund?

The Community Development Fund is a funding stream established by DEECA to help Timber Towns create new economic opportunities, strengthen community capacity, and support long-term resilience as communities transition away from native timber harvesting.

What is the purpose of Swifts Creek Future?

Funded through the Community Development Fund, Swifts Creek Future has received two rounds of \$500,000. This funding supports a dedicated project team, builds local capacity, and develops the evidence needed to attract future investment and drive sustainable economic development in our region.

How did we approach this work?

The first step was listening to our community. Extensive consultation was undertaken to understand the strengths, assets, and challenges across the region, using the Smart Specialisation approach to ensure voices from industry, community, government, and academia were included. More than 80 interviews were conducted, largely with people from within the region, leading to the development of the Regional Context Analysis. This report highlighted key strengths and challenges and informed the next phase of work through Discovery Workshops. At these workshops, participants explored potential opportunities based on local strengths, which led to the establishment of three Innovation Working Groups focused on value-added primary industry, nature-based recreation and tourism, and education and skills. These groups operate under the guidance of a Leadership Group made up of the Community Reference Group and representatives from DEECA, Regional Development Victoria, and East Gippsland Shire Council.





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Swifts Creek Future – FAQ – continued

What have we achieved so far?

The goals of Swifts Creek Future are captured in the Local Development Strategy, which is regularly reviewed to ensure it continues to reflect the needs of our community. The Education and Skills Innovation Working Group investigated the feasibility of a live-and-learn educational facility and also delivered the “This is Swifts Creek” children’s picture book in partnership with Swifts Creek P-12, universities, local artists, and Council. The book celebrates our region through the eyes of local children and has helped foster a strong sense of community pride.

The Nature-Based Recreation and Tourism Innovation Working Group focused on the natural and community assets of the area and explored opportunities for investment in tracks and trails. This work resulted in a report identifying seven potential investment opportunities with strong prospects for positive economic returns.

The Value-Added Primary Industry Innovation Working Group consulted with landholders across the district to identify shared strengths and challenges within local agriculture. The group is now undertaking an analysis of potential joint farming models that could increase industry capacity, strengthen collaboration, and help address ongoing challenges faced by producers.

Beyond the Innovation Working Groups, Swifts Creek Future has also supported the Oram Estate independent living project at the Swifts Creek Bush Nursing Centre by providing consultant support to reduce the workload on volunteers and assist with grant applications. Additional contributions include funding for a local Youth Agritech Officer position, delivery of lifeguard training locally that supported employment for 14 residents over the summer months, and support for the Tour de Tambo as part of the East Gippsland Winter Festival, helping bring visitors to the area during the quieter winter months.

What can we expect to see in 2026?

Another key milestone has been the successful application by East Gippsland Shire Council to develop a Structure Plan addressing housing, zoning, development, and wastewater issues. A draft of this work is expected to be released for community comment in the coming months. The Joint Farming Analysis project will also commence, beginning with community consultation and workshops from Wednesday 25 February. If you are interested in contributing or learning more around this please don’t hesitate to get in contact with the project.

In addition, several grant applications, totaling over \$900,000 are currently in progress, with outcomes anticipated to be announced over the coming months.

Coming up next week we have a joint working group meeting where all of our working groups and our leadership group will come together to discuss the last few years and the learnings we have had. We will look to the future and determine what our goals will be and how to reach them.

This meeting will be held on February 17th at the CFA Shed in Swifts Creek at 4:30pm and is an open invitation to the public.



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Have Your Say on the Future of Farming in Swifts Creek! 🌱

RM Consulting Group is working with the community to explore whether a collaborative farming model could help strengthen local farm businesses, create new opportunities and support long-term resilience in the Swifts Creek region.

Over the coming weeks, we'll be speaking with farmers, community members and local groups to understand ideas, challenges and opportunities. Your insights will help shape a feasibility study and potential action plan for how joint farming might work here.

What the project aims to deliver?

Improved economic and employment opportunities to communities in the Swifts Creek region by providing an assessment of the viability of establishing a collaborative farming model in the region. The study will explore opportunities, barriers, costs and benefits of such approach, and identify how local farmers can work together to enhance profitability and resilience.

What do we expect to come out of it?

A feasibility report with analysis and recommendations, including:

- An analysis of joint farming Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
- Technical and economic feasibility assessment of joint farming
- Governance documentation to support joint farming model identified as fit for purpose (if applicable)
- A strategic roadmap and action plan and budget for project implementation (if applicable)
- Branding for product marketing (if applicable).

💬 How you can get involved:

- Come along to upcoming workshops (and get some ideas on farm succession planning)
- Share your ideas and experiences
- Talk to us about opportunities for working together

Your knowledge and ideas are essential in shaping the region's future. We look forward to hearing from you!

Wednesday 25th February

- Drop in session at Swifts Creek Community Centre and on-farm interviews - 1:00pm – 4:00pm
- RMCG workshop at drop-in venue from 5:00pm – 6:15pm
- RMCG to facilitate a short presentation and discussion on the basics of farm succession planning at drop-in venue from 6:15 – 6:45pm

Thursday 26th February

- Ongoing drop-in at Swifts Creek Community Centre and concurrent on-farm interviews from 9:00am – 1:00pm

To make an appointment or on farm interview, or for more information contact Kiri or Lily at swiftscreekfuture@gmail.com or call 0491 902 650



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Swifts Creek Mill Closure

As most of the community will be aware the employees of Swifts Creek Mill were informed of the closure of the mill at the start of March with the first round of redundancies at the end of January.

No formal statement has been released by Pentarch however ForestWorks met with employees and community on Wednesday 21st to explain to affected staff the range of eligible support options, including up to \$8k for skilling or upskilling to change careers, relocation assistance (such as stamp duty reimbursement for moves over 100km within 15 months of redundancy), additional payments for those aged over 45, and the evidence required to access forest work payments and health and wellbeing support including referrals to clinical services and gap payments for up to 10 sessions with an approved service provider.

Update on the Omeo District Place Plan Community Engagement Workshops and Survey.

Community workshops and the survey for the development of the Omeo District Place Plan have now closed. Thank you to everyone who shared ideas, experiences, and perspectives. Your input is invaluable in shaping the future of the Omeo District.

In total, there were 7 workshops held with 38 participants and 85 survey responses received, capturing 1,333 items across values, vision, priorities, challenges, and actions. Feedback has also been considered from other engagement activities, including the recent Councillor visit.

The team are now reviewing all contributions and preparing a version for the next stage of engagement where they will work with the community to strengthen and prioritise feedback.

What's next?

- Further community sessions to be held February 2026. Dates will be shared via YourSay - <https://yoursay.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/omeo-district-place-plan> and advertised in the Omeo Newsheet.
- A developed list of engagement outcomes will be shared prior to February workshops for community to review
- A follow-up survey will invite feedback on these outcomes

Want to get involved in other Council community engagement opportunities in your district? Visit the following pages:

Swifts Creek public recreation amenity | Your Say East Gippsland
Benambra - public toilet facility at Dejarlais Park | Your Say East Gippsland