



Welcome to 2025!

Happy New Year! As we step into 2025, we're excited to share updates on the Swifts Creek Future project. Together, we're shaping a vibrant future for our community, and this year promises to bring even more progress, innovation, and collaboration.



Aerial view Tambo Valley Race Club

January 2025

Inside this issue:

Collaborative Farming	2
Nature-based recreation & tourism	3
Education & Skills	4

Highlights

As we welcome 2025, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the success of Swifts Creek Future. Thank you to our Leadership Group, the Innovation Working Groups (IWGs) made up of dedicated community members, local businesses, and organizations like East Gippsland Shire Council, Parks Victoria, Destination Gippsland, Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship (ACRE), Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), Swifts Creek Community Centre, and Deakin, RMIT, and Swinburne universities. Your commitment continues to drive this project forward.

We welcome Kiri Allen to the role of Project Support Officer. Kiri brings a fresh perspective, strong organizational skills and a passion for fostering collaboration. We're excited to have Kiri on board and look forward to the valuable contributions she will bring to the team!

Collaborative Farming

In December 2024, Swifts Creek Future's *Value-Add Primary Industry Innovation Working Group* hosted a workshop focused on value-adding in primary industries and exploring collaborative farming models. The event brought together local farmers, industry experts, and community members to discuss innovative approaches that could strengthen the region's agricultural future.

The workshop featured a panel of expert guest speakers:

Sam Marwood – Founder, Cultivate Farms

Sam provided valuable insights into creating farm ownership pathways for the next generation. Through his work with Cultivate Farms, Sam has helped develop innovative farm collaboration models across Australia. He shared success stories and strategies for building partnerships between retiring farmers, investors, and aspiring farm owners, emphasizing the importance of succession planning and shared investment.

Stephen Fisher – Managing Director, Circular Head Farms

Stephen Fisher presented Circular Head Farms' pioneering model, which leverages local investment to facilitate dairy farm ownership. By pooling capital and expertise, Circular Head Farms has enabled aspiring farmers to sustainably own and manage dairy farms. Stephen's experience highlighted how collaborative models can foster

agricultural innovation, improve efficiency, and strengthen rural communities.

Anthony Taylor – Policy and Government Affairs Manager, Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM)

Representing the national peak body for co-operatives and mutuals, Anthony Taylor shared valuable insights on the role of co-operatives in agriculture. He outlined key benefits such as shared resources, reduced financial risks, and increased market leverage. Anthony also discussed how BCCM supports the development of co-operatives through policy advocacy and engagement with government.

Jayden Pearce – Upper Murray Beef

Jayden shared his experiences in establishing and managing a successful livestock enterprise with Upper Murray Beef. He explained how Upper Murray Beef's model started with a vision to launch a mobile processing facility, eventually leading to the successful acquisition of Corryong Butchers, which now supports their farm-to-market operations. Jayden's story underscored how co-operative approaches can help small producers overcome operational challenges and grow their businesses.

Next Steps – Developing a Collaborative Farming Feasibility Study

The workshop provided a opportunity for attendees to learn more about different models and practices in collaborative farming and opened up important discussions about potential models for the region. As a result, the working group is now planning to develop a feasibility study to assess the viability of establishing a collaborative farming model in Swifts Creek. The study will explore possible structures, benefits, and barriers to collaboration and identify how local farmers can work together to enhance productivity and profitability. A Request for Quotation will be developed and shared with consultants to obtain quotes in February 2025.

The working group encourages primary producers in the region to complete the Farmers Survey, this can be completed via the QR code or on paper and dropped into the Swifts Creek Community Centre or Swifts



Use the QR code to access the Farmers Survey digitally

Nature-based Recreation & Tourism

In December, a highly engaging and productive workshop on nature-based recreation and tourism was held in Swifts Creek. The workshop, facilitated by TRC Tourism, brought together community members, local business owners, and key stakeholders to discuss existing and potential opportunities for nature-based experiences in the region. With a strong turnout, the event fostered insightful discussions and generated valuable feedback that will inform the ongoing study.

The primary goal of the study, led by TRC Tourism, is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the region's assets and opportunities. This includes:

Reviewing Existing Information: Gathering and analyzing local data and documentation related to tourism and recreation.

Gap Analysis: Identifying gaps in the current nature-based offerings and exploring new opportunities that could enhance the visitor experience and attract more tourists.

Policy Review: Examining relevant policies to ensure proposed initiatives align with regulatory frameworks and broader regional strategies.

Viability Assessment: Determining the most economically and environmentally sustainable opportunities for development.

Key Outcomes from the Workshop

Existing Strengths:

Participants highlighted the area's unique natural assets, including pristine rivers, forests, and trails, as key strengths. Current recreational activities, such as hiking, fishing, and cycling, were recognized as important offerings to build upon.

New Opportunities: Ideas for potential new experiences, such as guided eco-tours, mountain biking trails, and adventure tourism activities, were explored.

Challenges and Barriers: The group identified key barriers to growth, including limited accommodation options, lack of transport services, and seasonal access issues.

Community Involvement: Attendees expressed a strong desire to remain actively involved in the development of future initiatives, emphasizing the importance of ensuring any new opportunities benefit both the local economy and the environment.



December Nature-based workshop facilitated by TRC

Next Steps:

The feedback and ideas gathered during the workshop will be integrated into the ongoing feasibility study. TRC Tourism will continue to engage with stakeholders as they refine recommendations for nature-based tourism development. The final outcomes of the study will guide future strategic investments and help position Swifts Creek as a sought-after destination for nature-based experiences.

The project aims to deliver initiatives that balance economic growth with environmental sustainability, ensuring long-term benefits for both the community and the natural landscape.

For further updates on the study or to learn how you can get involved, please contact Alyce Richards via email at alycer@egipps.vic.gov.au, call

Education & Skills



Members of the Education & Skills Innovation Working Group. Back Row: Kath Smith, Ondine Bradbury (Swinburne), Tim Fish (Monash), Emma Halafihi, Alyce Richards. GFRont row: Kiri Allen, Robert Boucher, Ray Gallagher.

Exciting progress is being made by the Education & Skills Innovation Working Group on an Education and Skills pre-feasibility study. Following a Request for Quotation process in December 2024, consultants “Skills 4 the Future” selected to lead the project.

The pre- feasibility study aims to explore the potential for developing a Live and Learn facility in Swifts Creek, focused on delivering experience-based learning opportunities tailored to the region’s unique strengths. Over the December-January period, Skills 4 the Future commenced their desktop research on Australian and International examples, policies and draft opportunities.

Consultation and engagement with the community and key stakeholders will begin in February 2025, providing an important opportunity for local input. The study will examine how Swifts

Creek’s existing industries—such as forestry, agriculture, and nature-based tourism—can form the foundation for hands-on learning experiences whilst providing locals with the opportunities to study locally and create a skilled and reliable workforce and develop employment opportunities.

In addition to identifying opportunities within current industries, the study involves a gap analysis by reviewing similar facilities in other regions. This approach will help to pinpoint untapped areas of potential that Swifts Creek could capitalize on, broadening its future skills and education offerings.

Key Objectives of the Study:

Define Feasibility: Assess the viability of establishing a live and learn facility that can offer both short-term and long-term educational programs.

Consultation and Engagement:

Gather insights from local businesses, educators, and residents to ensure the facility meets community needs.

Stage 1 Focus: Concentrate on developing programs aligned with Swifts Creek’s existing industries while identifying future opportunities through research and engagement.

Barriers and Solutions: Address potential barriers such as accommodation, transport, and resource availability to ensure the facility’s success.

Community and Economic Benefits: Evaluate how the proposed facility could strengthen local industries, attract new residents, and contribute to long-term economic growth.

This study marks a crucial step in ensuring Swifts Creek remains future-focused by equipping current and future generations with the skills needed to thrive. Stay tuned for further updates as consultation gets underway in February!

For more information or to get involved, please contact Alyce Richards, Project Manager, alycer@egipps.vic.gov.au or 0456 173 361.

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