

Response to the Green Paper “Land & Biodiversity at a time of Climate Change”



The Gippsland Integrated Natural Resources Forum (GINRF) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the ‘Land & Biodiversity at a time of Climate Change’ Paper. The Forum has developed this strategic response from discussion by members of GINRF. This submission is divided into 4 parts:

1. The Gippsland Integrated Natural Resources Forum
2. Overall Comment
3. Critical Issues
4. Further GINRF details

1. The Gippsland Integrated Natural Resources Forum

The Gippsland Integrated Natural Resources Forum is a coalition of all natural resource managers in the Gippsland region, actively pursuing alignment under the slogan Catchment Health, Gippsland’s Wealth. The Forum has a membership of some sixty organisations including government departments, catchment management authorities, municipal councils, rural and urban water authorities, universities, private industry, regional development bodies, community based groups, and cross agency groups (such as Gippsland Research Coordination Group). A sixteen member Executive Team is drawn from the broader Forum membership, comprising key regional stakeholders who meet regularly.

2. Overall Comment

The Gippsland Integrated Natural Resources Forum congratulates the authors of the ‘Land & Biodiversity at a time of Climate Change’ Paper for taking on the challenge of addressing such a broad and important topic. It is encouraging to see these issues being discussed around the state and we look forward to the production of a workable White Paper in 2009.

The GINRF view is that the Green Paper lacks a sense of urgency around the critical issues facing the future of land and biodiversity in Victoria and misses an opportunity to move in a new direction to secure our resources. Measurable targets and priorities must be made clear and institutional arrangements to fulfil these must be set out.

3. Critical Issues

1. *Focus, priorities & targets*

The GINRF supports the fundamental principle of preservation before restoration as a long term natural resources investment strategy for the State of Victoria. We are concerned that this approach is not made clear in the Green Paper.

The GINRF believes that the White Paper should clearly address the key focus for land and biodiversity management, identify clear priorities and actions and set measurable targets to assess land and biodiversity outcomes across Victoria. Resourcing of the suggested actions should be considered.

[Will the White Paper follow the integrated catchment management asset approach or the issues approach that appears to be followed in the Green Paper?]

2. *Leadership & Institutional Arrangements*

The White Paper is an opportunity for state government to be bold and take the lead on these critical issues. When priority tasks are set, institutional arrangements between The Australian Government, The State Government and Local Governments must be clearly delineated in The White Paper.

[The Green Paper places a lot of emphasis on 'community' & volunteers to carry out suggested actions...]

3. *Planning*

Planning and management of land and biodiversity in Victoria is being undertaken by a number of parties including Local Government, The Department of Sustainability & Environment, Catchment Management Authorities, private land owners and others. The GINRF believes The White Paper is a good opportunity to coordinate these planning efforts and state clear responsibilities as outlined in the above issue.

Coastal issues are not adequately covered by The Green Paper. The GINRF are acutely aware of the pressures to our coastline. Given the ongoing demands on these ecosystems, much more specific attention should be given to land and biodiversity management on our coasts within the White Paper.

[Clear policy direction is required on climate change issues]

4. *Scientific information*

There appears to be little use of scientific information in drawing the Green Paper together. Little scientific information is used in Section 1 to state the case for change. In Sections 2 and 3, limited referencing suggests a lack of scientific justification for the recommended actions.

Section 1 shows little acknowledgement of the damage people have done to our land and biodiversity and does not address the issue of repairing that damage.

5. *What's different?*

The GINRF questions how the future for land and biodiversity will be different from the current situation and feels that the suggestions in the Green Paper add no value to what is currently being undertaken across the state. If the status quo is to remain, evidence of the success of current approaches should be provided to justify this continued action.

4. Further GINRF information

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The GINRF Executive Group is comprised of a representative from each of the organisations listed below. The Forum is chaired by Mr Keith Hamilton.

Department of Sustainability and Environment
Department of Primary Industries
Environment Protection Authority
Parks Victoria
East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority
Gippsland Coastal Board
Gippsland Cultural Heritage Unit
Baw Baw Shire Council
Bass Coast Shire Council
Latrobe City Council
South Gippsland Shire Council
Wellington Shire Council
East Gippsland Shire Council
Southern Rural Water
Gippsland Water (representing urban water authorities)
Gippsland Research Coordination Group