

FUTURE OF ORBOST & DISTRICT PROJECT

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Orbost and District Bioenergy Circular Economy Options

An evaluation of biomass in the Orbost region, to establish where circular economy projects may be viable, has recently concluded. Circular economy strategies aim to recover and utilize organic waste as valuable resources, contributing to sustainability and reducing environmental impacts.

A full audit of available local biomass feedstocks was undertaken, including volumes, types, and locations. The audit focussed on organic 'waste streams' from the district's agribusiness, food service and retail, health care, wastewater, and gas sectors.

The work was undertaken by Gippsland firm EnviroMicroBio on behalf of the Future of Orbost and District Project, which is hosted by the Orbost and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The study was supported by Sustainability Victoria and a local benefactor.

The study has uncovered a number of opportunities, including technology solutions, for individual businesses to follow-up on. These range from waste to energy, to nutrient recovery and small-scale carbon dioxide (CO₂) capture.

Secretary of the Orbost & District Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Mr Garry Squires, says "due to privacy and business confidentiality we cannot release the full document, however we are optimistic that a number of our local businesses will follow-up and act on some of the specific findings and recommendations. We also welcome inquiries from anyone interested in sourcing local feedstocks to support circular economy initiatives".

The study also highlighted some of the challenges associated with extracting value from local waste streams and adopting circular economy principles in relatively small communities. These include the limited volume of the feedstocks that can hinder the economic viability of technological solutions, as well as the need for more awareness, innovation, and collaboration. Mr Squires says that one of the benefits of the study is having strong data around local waste feedstocks. "We can remain alert to innovation opportunities that might emerge into the future, as well support more awareness of the value in what has traditionally been considered 'waste'".

The Future of Orbost & District project is a response to the impacts of the end of native timber harvesting in Victoria's state forests, and the need to transition the local economy. The purpose of the project is to build on to Orbost and District's existing strengths and leverage opportunities for supporting positive economic, social, and environmental outcomes.

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