



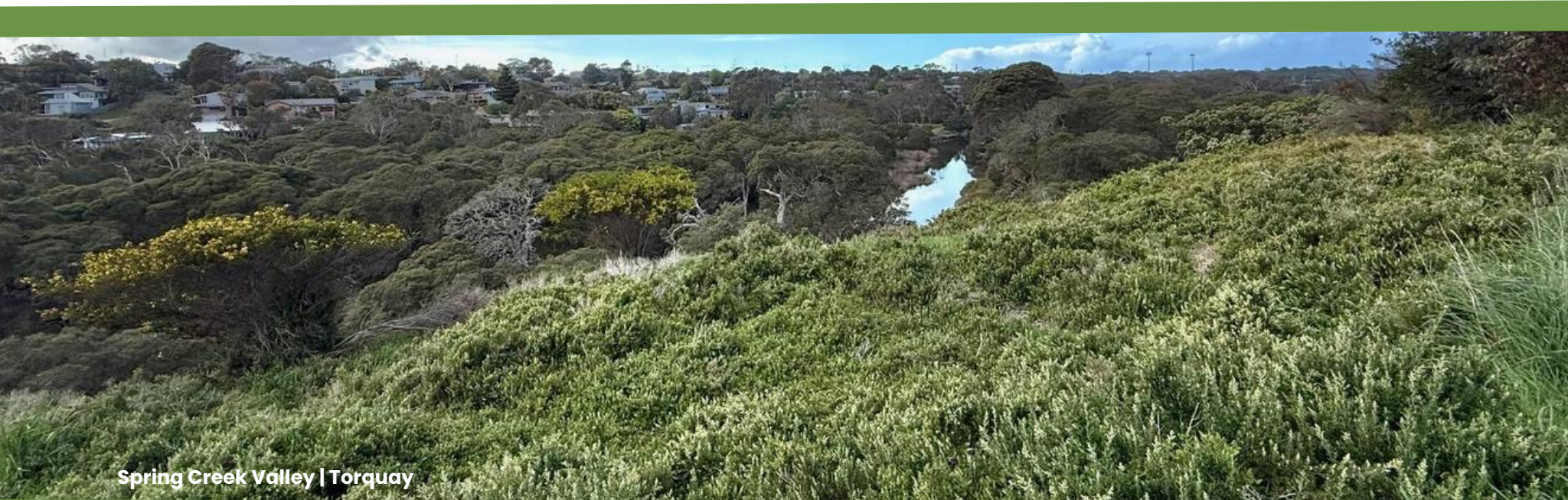
Acknowledgement of Country

This report was developed on the lands of the Wadawurrung people, whose sovereignty was never ceded. We pay our respects to Wadawurrung Elders, past and present.

We recognise First Nations stewardship and continuing connection to Country, Culture and Community. We learn from the wisdom and strength of First Nations people, while respecting the immense responsibilities they carry.

We walk alongside First Nations people in our community as they work towards self-determination, Truth and Treaty.

Always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.



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About Geelong Sustainability



Our purpose

We exist to build a powerful community movement for a just transition to a net zero future.



Our vision

Our vision is a thriving and resilient community taking urgent action on climate change together.



Who we are

Since our establishment in 2007, Geelong Sustainability has become the region's leading sustainability and climate action group with extensive networks in community, government and business throughout Geelong and the broader Barwon region.

We are recognised for our evidence-based and innovative initiatives, which support our community's transition to a thriving, net zero future.

Our Team

Our Board

David Spear
Sara van der Meer (2022 – June 2025)
Merilyn Harris (2021 – March 2025)
Emma Connan
Neil Plummer
Fred Ritman
Stuart Mkojera-Thomson
Mariah Chang (from April 2025)
Steph McDonald (from April 2025)
Evan Center (from April 2025)
Glenn Garnaut (from July 2025)

Our Volunteers

Vivienne Burke
James Rourke-Dunkley

Our Team

Dan Cowdell (until Dec 2024)
Jane Spence (from Dec 2024)
Emilie Flynn
Tania Bartlett
Karina Donkers
Emma Chessell
Behzad Falahati
Ruth Blackhirst
Jesse Holden
Alex Sullivan
Tim Adams
Cal Forsyth

We sincerely thank our many wonderful Sustainable House Day, event and campaign volunteers for their invaluable contributions and continued support throughout the year.



Our Supporters

Supporters

- PMF Foundation
- Geelong Community Foundation
- Ian Rollo Currie Foundation
- City of Greater Geelong
- Surf Coast Shire Council
- GS Members
- GS Volunteers

Partners

- RACE for 2030
- City of Ballarat
- Borough of Queenscliffe
- Deakin University
- Geelong College
- Geelong Grammar
- Southern Otway Landcare Network
- Dillon Creative
- Geelong Media
- F2 Design
- Wyndham City Council



Collaborators

- Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment (PLACE)
- Renew Australia for All
- ACF Community Geelong
- Barwon Region Alliance for Community Energy (BRACE)
- Bellarine Catchment Network
- Environment Victoria
- G21 Geelong Regional Alliance
- Geelong Chamber of Commerce
- Geelong Field Naturalists Club
- Geelong Regional Library Corporation
- Surf Coast Environment Group
- Geelong Port, Community Liaison Group
- Committee for Geelong
- Women in Local Democracy (WILD)
- Real Deal Geelong
- Coalition for Community Energy (C4CE)
- Volunteering Geelong
- Winki Solar
- Ephe
- Too Hot To Handle
- Reclaim Energy
- Enviroflex
- Castleman Plumbing
- Enfort
- Our Community



Sponsors

- Zelena Homes
- Thermawood
- SO'R Construction
- Pickering Joinery
- Keystone Construction
- Barwon Water
- Volta Rocks
- Aphi Projects
- Barwon Timber

A message from our Chair and CEO

We're proud to present **Geelong Sustainability's 2024-25 Annual Report**, highlighting another year of building a net-zero, thriving, and climate-resilient future for our region. Over the past year, we've strengthened our programs, expanded our reach, and sharpened our strategic focus. This year, we **celebrated 18 years of impact** and nearly two decades of community-led climate action and collaboration.

Our influence has been broad, from **reducing emissions and lowering energy costs to engaging over 460,000 people** online. At the core of our success are our people – our passionate team, committed Board, dedicated volunteers, valued co-creators, generous supporters and donors, and the communities around us. **Together, we're demonstrating that grassroots solutions can inspire systemic change.**

We **supported over 1000 households electrify their homes** and improve comfort through **our award-winning Electric Homes Program**. We assisted dozens of community organisations in cutting energy costs and emissions via our Community Power Hub and Community Energy Revolving Fund. We were proud to secure funding to expand our Climate Safe Rooms initiative, providing vital climate resilience for our most vulnerable.

We launched and began implementing our ambitious 2030 Strategy – a community-led plan for a safe climate future. Our values-driven approach has strengthened our commitment to equity, inclusion and First Nations justice through meaningful actions that prioritise respect, truth and self-determination.

We have also increased our involvement in advocacy and climate campaigning. This year, we co-led a powerful community campaign against Viva Energy's proposed gas import terminal in Corio Bay, mobilised our community during the federal election with our Vote Climate campaign, and engaged with key decision-makers at both state and federal levels. **Throughout the year, our Climate Connect events and Sustainable House Day program brought together thousands of people** to learn, share, and take action. We understand that strengthening communities builds resilience – and when people are connected and motivated, they are more likely to act.

This year also marked a new chapter in our organisation's leadership. We farewelled our inaugural CEO, Dan Cowdell, and welcomed Jane to the role. We thank Dan for his leadership and legacy. As we look ahead, the need for urgent climate action is undeniable. But so is the power of community.

We thank all our members, volunteers, partners, and supporters for their commitment, passion and trust. Together, we are building a fairer and more resilient future for all.



Jane Spence
CEO



David Spear
Board Chair

Our Impact

In 2024-25 we...



Proudly celebrated 18 years of impact



Saved our community over \$250,000 in energy bills



Supported over 1,000 homes to electrify



Reached over 460,000 impressions via social media



Connected with over 20,000 supporters across the region

*We deliver our initiatives across the Greater
Geelong and broader Barwon region.*



2025 highlights

Won the Energy Efficiency Council's *Leading Energy Management Project: Residential Award* for our Electric Homes Program

Enabled >1,000 households to electrify and improve home comfort across the Geelong and broader Barwon region and the City of Ballarat through our Electric Homes Program

Strengthened relationships with key local community groups to support vulnerable households to access our Climate Safe Rooms program

Supported 49 local community organisations to electrify, saving a combined \$135,000 on energy bills through our Community Power Hub

Contributed \$184,000 in interest-free loans to five community organisations to deliver energy savings projects through our Community Energy Revolving Fund

Connected and engaged hundreds of attendees through our annual series of Climate Connect events

Co-led a powerful community campaign against Viva Energy's proposed gas import terminal in Corio Bay with the Geelong Renewables Not Gas alliance

Supported our community to Vote for Climate during the Federal Election, activating a dynamic volunteer collective to build awareness and understanding of the importance of bold climate action

Collaborated with a diverse network of community houses, community organisations, local businesses and local councils to connect, engage and inspire climate action

Advocated to local, state and federal MPs for ambitious electrification and a just transition to net zero

Developed and launched our 2030 Strategy following extensive community engagement and stakeholder consultation.

GOAL 1. COLLABORATING FOR AN AMBITIOUS AND JUST TRANSITION TO NET ZERO

Key Achievements

Advocating for ambitious climate action

Over the past year, Geelong Sustainability has significantly increased its advocacy and climate campaigning, seeking ambitious electrification and bold climate commitments across all levels of government. We have advocated for our community and key partners on critical local climate issues and for stronger climate action at all levels of government.

Key activities included:

- Active engagement with local MPs, including meetings with:
 - Federal MPs: Libby Coker, member for Corangamite, and the Deputy Prime Minister and member for Corio, the Hon Richard Marles
 - Victorian MPs: Christine Couzens, Alison Marchant and Ella George.
- Meeting at Parliament House with the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio, the Victorian Minister for Climate Action, Energy and Resources, and the State Electricity Commission. This was a key opportunity to voice our members' strong concerns about the proposed Viva Energy Gas Import Terminal and to advocate for vital programs like Climate Safe Rooms to help vulnerable households improve their resilience to extreme weather events.

Key Achievements

Hosted the Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP in Geelong. The Minister toured our projects, witnessing firsthand the positive impact they have had on the community, and met with our delivery partners.

Presented at the Victorian Parliament Inquiry into Climate Resilience on how a Victorian Community Climate Adaptation Fund could help community organisations like ours support thousands of Victorians to build resilience to climate impacts.

Co-led a powerful community campaign against Viva Energy's proposed gas import terminal alongside the Geelong Renewables Not Gas alliance.

Submissions to:

- Viva Gas Terminal Project Supplementary Environmental Effects Statement Inquiry
- Proposed changes to the cap limit for thermal waste-to-energy facilities
- Victoria's Climate Change Strategy 2026-2030
- Vopak Victoria Energy Terminal Environmental Effects Statement Draft Scoping Requirements.

2025 federal election community activation, including:

- Cost of Living Community Forum with Corangamite candidates
- Climate Conversations training for our network
- Volunteers handing out Vote Climate scorecards at local polling places.

Joined the Renew Australia for All alliance, a new movement backed by social services, unions, faith, community and multicultural groups, environment organisations and industry working together to deliver a fairer, better and more secure future for all Australians.



Key Achievements



No New Gas: A community-led campaign

We continued to support strong community opposition to Viva Energy's proposed Gas Import Terminal in Corio Bay, working alongside the Geelong Renewables Not Gas alliance to advocate for the protection of our environment, community health and climate-safe future.

Over the past four years, our community has made it clear: this project is not welcome. Hundreds of emails were sent, thousands of submissions lodged, and residents turned out in force for public hearings, rallies and community events, including two major actions – the Protest Picnic and Protest in the Park – each drawing hundreds of people to demonstrate local resistance.

This powerful campaign has already had an impact, significantly delaying the project and raising serious concerns that Viva must now address. Despite this, we were deeply disappointed by the Victorian Government's environmental approval of the project in May 2025 – a decision that contradicts the urgent need for climate action and undermines Victoria's commitment to transitioning away from fossil fuels.

However, approval is not the end. Experts – including rival gas companies – have raised concerns about Corio Bay's suitability, citing safety risks and the likely need for additional dredging. Viva still faces significant hurdles: securing a Floating Regasification Storage Unit (FRSU), proving commercial viability and completing safety and environmental assessments.

We remain committed to stopping this project and ensuring a climate-safe future for our region.



Key Achievements

Delivering impactful programs

Together, our flagship programs have strengthened regional capacity for climate action and climate justice, positioning Geelong Sustainability as a leader in community-driven energy transition.

Climate Safe Rooms

A significant highlight of the year was securing funding from philanthropic partners to expand our Climate Safe Rooms program to a further 10 households. We will retrofit a room in the homes of vulnerable community members living with chronic health conditions to provide a safe, temperature-controlled refuge during extreme heat and cold. The program delivers real, measurable benefits by reducing health risks, improving home comfort, lowering energy costs, and building resilience to climate extremes. By supporting those most at risk, we are demonstrating that climate solutions can also be community solutions – driven by inclusion and justice. The generous support from PMF Foundation has made this work possible.



Community Power Hub

The Community Power Hub entered its second year in 2024–25, providing expert energy advice to 49 local not-for-profit organisations, helping them to electrify and reduce operating costs.

The Hub provided free expert advice to community organisations on tariffs, rooftop solar, batteries, getting off gas, electric vehicles, and solar system sizing, and supported grant applications, feasibility assessments, supplier engagement, and long-term sustainability planning. Hub projects delivered over the last year saved local organisations a combined \$135,000 in energy bills and attracted \$143,000 in grant funding from various sources.





Key Achievements

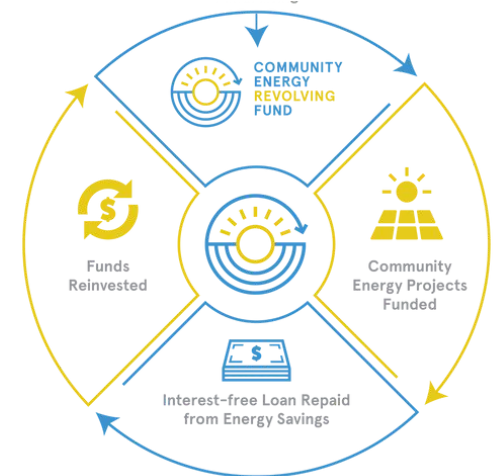
Community Energy Revolving Fund

A fundamental support to the Community Power Hub is the Community Energy Revolving Fund (CERF), which provides interest-free loans to community organisations to undertake energy-saving upgrades.

Since its establishment in 2023, the CERF has provided \$298,000 in loans to 10 community organisations, supporting the installation of 283kW of rooftop solar.

In 2024-25, the CERF contributed \$184,000 in loans to five community organisations to support energy-saving projects, including rooftop solar and heat pump hot water systems.

The CERF has supported YMCA Newtown, Freshwater Creek Steiner School, Torquay Community House, Cloverdale Community Centre, Apollo Bay Museum, Bellarine Community Health, Lonsdale Links Golf Club, Sirovilla, Bellarine Railway, and Norlane Community Initiatives.



Key Achievements

Electric Homes Program 2024

In 2024, we delivered our Electric Homes Program for the second year and extended it beyond the G21 region to Ballarat, scaling climate action across regional Victoria.

The Geelong program received [over 650 enquiries from households](#) looking to make the switch to all-electric, energy-efficient homes. Key program outcomes:

- [Over 200 energy savings upgrades completed](#)
- Stimulated [\\$1,023,665 of regional investment](#) in renewable energy and energy efficiency upgrades
- Expected household [energy bill savings of \\$77,672 per year](#)
- [Reduced household emissions](#) by approximately 319 CO₂ tons per year.

The Ballarat Electric Homes Program received enquiries from 323 households, with 119 energy efficiency actions undertaken across these homes.

A key element of our Electric Homes Program is our partnership with RACE for 2030's Energy Upgrades for Australian Homes (EUAH) research project. This was the second year we shared our approach to trusted partner selection, program promotion, education offerings, and resident feedback with research teams to enable the program's replication and scaling across the country. We were also [thrilled to win the Energy Efficiency Council's Leading Energy Management Project: Residential Award](#) for our Electric Homes Program, highlighting the program's leadership and impact in our region and beyond.



GOAL 2. A MOBILISED COMMUNITY ACTING URGENTLY ON CLIMATE CHANGE



Key Achievements

Inspiring and activating the community

We've continued to play a vital role in inspiring, activating, and connecting our community around climate action and resilience. By creating inclusive spaces for learning, dialogue, and celebration, we helped strengthen the social fabric needed to face the climate crisis together.

This year, we proudly hosted a diverse range of Climate Connect events, including:

- [First Nations Voices on Climate](#) for NAIDOC Week – a powerful evening centring Indigenous knowledge, lived experience, and leadership in climate conversations.
- [Seeds of Strength](#) – a warm and welcoming community dinner focused on climate resilience, shared stories, and collective care.
- [A World Environment Day celebration](#), where we launched our ambitious new 2030 Strategy.

We were also actively involved in the Parents for Climate EV & E-Bike Expo, helping families explore sustainable transport options and connect with local solutions.

Key Achievements

Sustainable House Day

Our 2024 Sustainable House Day was one of our most impactful yet, engaging the community with practical, inspiring solutions for sustainable living and demonstrating energy-efficient, climate-resilient design.

Through October, we welcomed 1,254 attendees across a diverse range of events, including open homes, a live webinar, a well-attended industry breakfast and an engaging sustainability seminar.

Our online reach extended far beyond the day itself, including 206,474 users on social media and 54,000 views of videos of people's homes - significantly expanding impact and reach. Feedback from participants demonstrated the program's influence on behaviour change. 80% of respondents indicated they were *extremely* or *very likely* to take action and implement some of the initiatives they learned about - ranging from solar installations and home insulation upgrades to all-electric appliances and passive design principles.

This was our first year collaborating with Deakin University for the event. We delivered a business seminar for industry professionals to launch the MOTIIVES tool, which provides home builders and renovators with a guide to sustainable building and design.

By connecting people directly with homeowners, industry professionals, and lived examples of sustainable housing, Sustainable House Day continues to play a key role in demonstrating climate solutions and empowering community-led change.

The 2024 program reaffirms that when people see what's possible and achievable in their own neighbourhoods, they are inspired to take action for a more sustainable future.

"Thanks for a very inspiring day, we get lots of great ideas"



"Great event! It was terrific to be able to speak with the owner/architect and ask questions."

Key Achievements

Inspiring and activating community

We continued to strengthen our role as a driver for regional collaboration, working alongside schools, community groups, local networks, and businesses to share knowledge, collaborate, and build climate resilience across the region.

- We were proud to host a stop on the Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment (PLACE) Community Roadshow and Listening Tour. We brought together diverse local voices to build a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities for place-based climate action and to support connections to weave a shared pathway to net zero across the region.
- Inspiring the next generation remained a key focus, with our team supporting Geelong College's Futures Week for a second year – an immersive program designed to engage Year 9 students in critical thinking about climate change, sustainability, and the roles they can play in shaping a better future.
- We partnered with the Southern Otway Landcare Network to deliver a Sustainable Living Workshop led by Jess Hobbs from Waste Free Events, focusing on practical solutions to reduce household waste. We also conducted home energy assessments in Deans Marsh, empowering rural households to improve energy efficiency and home comfort.
- We developed solar feasibility reports, energy audits, and net-zero plans for a variety of organisations, including the Borough of Queenscliffe, Geelong Grammar, and Barwon Timber. We're excited to continue expanding these offerings into new spaces over the next year.
- We also engaged with businesses in the region, including via a community event during the Geelong Small Business Festival and hosting a stall at Wyndham Council's Business Expo, where we spoke with participants about energy efficiency for businesses.
- We're a proud member of the Real Deal Geelong alliance, a driving force for meaningful change in our community. Over the past year, the alliance has run a series of community events, including an Action Forum with the Hon Richard Marles MP, Deputy Prime Minister and member for Corio. This event brought together residents, local leaders and alliance members to focus on key regional issues and seek commitments on secure housing, meaningful work, the cost of living, care and connection and climate action. A Cost of Living Community Forum with Corangamite Candidates was held in the lead-up to the federal election, focusing on key drivers of the cost of living: housing and energy bills. We have also contributed to multiple submissions as part of the coalition.

Key Achievements

Expanding our reach

11,433 followers across social media



Facebook

Total followers: 4,963

391,311 reach

9,784 likes or reactions, saves, comments, shares and replies



Instagram

Total followers: 4,627

41,608 reach

1,403 likes, saves, comments and shares



LinkedIn

Total followers: 1,843

33,694 reach/impressions

1,234 reactions, comments and reposts

*67 articles in the media - across newspapers,
radio and local community newsletters.*



GOAL 3. A HEALTHY, HIGH PERFORMING ORGANISATION

Key Achievements

Strong leadership

This year marked a period of renewal in Geelong Sustainability's governance and leadership. We welcomed several new interim Board members, bringing fresh expertise and diverse perspectives to guide our strategic direction. In addition, we successfully appointed a new Secretary, further enhancing our governance capacity and compliance.

In a significant leadership milestone, we also completed the transition to a new Chief Executive Officer, farewelling Geelong Sustainability's first-ever CEO, Dan Cowdell, and welcoming Jane Spence. This change represents a new chapter for Geelong Sustainability, ensuring strong, future-focused leadership to drive the implementation of our 2030 Strategy and expand our impact across the region.

Values-led

Our work is grounded in a values-led approach that prioritises equity, inclusion and respect for people and Country. This year, we deepened our commitment to First Nations justice and self-determination by taking meaningful steps to listen, learn and build genuine relationships.

We attended significant events such as *Pilk Purriyn*, a gathering that celebrates culture and connection on 26 January, and the Yoorrook Justice Commission's Walk for Truth, which powerfully highlighted the importance of truth-telling in the journey toward justice.

We also began developing our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to formalise our commitment to acknowledging First Nations sovereignty, embedding cultural awareness across our organisation, and supporting reconciliation through action.



Key Achievements



Our 2030 Strategy

One of our most significant achievements in 2024-25 was the development and launch of our new 2030 Strategy – our roadmap to supporting community-driven climate action across the Greater Geelong and Barwon region.

The Strategy, developed in collaboration with our members, volunteers, and partners, outlines clear goals and practical pathways to accelerate the transition to a zero-carbon, climate-resilient future.

We proudly launched the 2030 Strategy at our World Environment Day celebration, bringing our community together to mark this important milestone. The event not only celebrated the release of the strategy but also reaffirmed our shared vision and the strong partnerships that will drive meaningful change in the years ahead.

Treasurer's Report

I would like to begin by sincerely thanking Sara van der Meer for her leadership and guidance as the previous Treasurer of Geelong Sustainability. Sara's contribution has been instrumental in strengthening the organisation, and I look forward to building on her work.

This financial year has seen Geelong Sustainability continue to grow its operations and impact. I'm pleased to report that for the second year in a row, we ended the financial year with a smaller deficit than anticipated, and we also ended with strong cash reserves.

Financial Position

For the year ending 30 June 2025, Geelong Sustainability reported a deficit of \$32,959, which was significantly lower than the forecasted deficit of \$125,789. This planned deficit was endorsed by the Board as a strategic decision to maximise impact and make considered use of our strong cash reserves. The lower-than-expected result was partly due to an organisational transition period as we welcomed a new CEO, with a focus on maintaining business-as-usual operations during the leadership handover. At the end of the reporting period, our total equity remains strong at \$486,604, reflecting careful financial management and our continued commitment to long-term sustainability.

Income

Our strategy to diversify income sources is being successfully implemented, which can be seen in the changes from 2024 to 2025 in the financial charts. Our donations have almost tripled, with the first of three large annual donations from PMF Foundation recognised on 1 July 2024 alongside other philanthropic gifts and donations throughout the year. Our sponsorship more than doubled, due mostly to the Electric Homes Program, Sustainable House Day and the revised structure of our Business Supporter offering.

Expenses

Our largest expense for the year was employee costs, at 69% of our total expenses. This includes wages, superannuation, workers compensation insurance, and training and development. Our administrative expenses increased significantly due to the lease of a dedicated office space.

Treasurer's Report

Assets and Liabilities

Our total assets have decreased by 14% from \$936K in 2024 to \$808K in 2025. This can be attributed to the planned deficit. Our liabilities have also decreased, from \$417K to \$322K, meaning our total equity has decreased by 6% from \$520K to \$487K. As a result of providing more interest-free loans this financial year through our Community Energy Revolving Fund, a significant amount of our assets have moved from cash at bank to loans receivable.

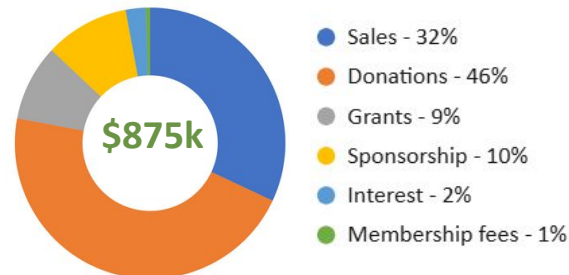
Next Financial Year

Looking ahead to the 2025–26 financial year, we are forecasting a planned cash deficit of \$136,000. This reflects our strategic decision to invest in building organisational capacity and expanding our ability to deliver impactful programs across the region. A conservative budget has been adopted for 2025–26, designed to responsibly draw on reserves to support the delivery of more strategic and targeted initiatives. This approach aligns with our vision of a thriving and resilient community taking urgent action on climate change together.



Glenn Garnaut
Treasurer

FY25 Income



FY25 Expenses



Get Involved

Become a member

Support us by becoming a Geelong Sustainability Member and get VIP access to attend our Annual General Meeting as well as special offers and updates. Visit our website to find out more: geelongsustainability.org.au/join

Volunteer your time

Join us today and contribute towards the campaigns, events and activities that will help achieve meaningful outcomes for our region and move us towards a zero-emission, climate-ready future.

To register your interest, visit: geelongsustainability.org.au/volunteer

Make a donation

Your support helps us continue to deliver events, projects, campaigns and services to achieve our vision of a thriving and resilient community taking urgent action on climate change together.

Visit our website to donate: geelongsustainability.org.au/donate

Leave a bequest

Your generous gift supports community electrification, community climate resilience and climate action projects, creating a lasting legacy that benefits both the community and the planet for future generations.

Contact us for more information: info@geelongsustainability.org.au

Become a corporate partner

Geelong Sustainability has been connecting and collaborating with like-minded organisations since 2007. We partner with local businesses that demonstrate alignment with our purpose and work together to build lasting relationships for ongoing impact. Find out more: geelongsustainability.org.au/partner-with-us

Contact Us

1300 133 702

PO Box 258, Geelong VIC 3220

info@geelong sustainability.org.au

