
A lush forest scene with a stream and ferns. The image shows a dense forest with a stream flowing through it. The foreground is dominated by large, vibrant green ferns. In the background, tall, thin trees with light-colored bark stand against a backdrop of more dense foliage. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating dappled light on the forest floor. A fallen log lies across the stream in the lower foreground.

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF NOOJEE



We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians ongoing connection to the land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and their deep spiritual connection to it.

We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging.



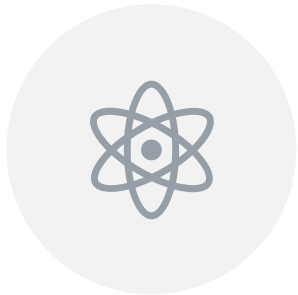
SHAPING THE FUTURE OF NOOJEE



Noojee is one of 11 communities identified by the Victorian Government for priority support in the transition away from native timber harvesting, via a Local Development Strategy (LDS) Grant.



Baw Baw Shire Council applied for the LDS Grant on behalf of the community and hosts the Project Manager.



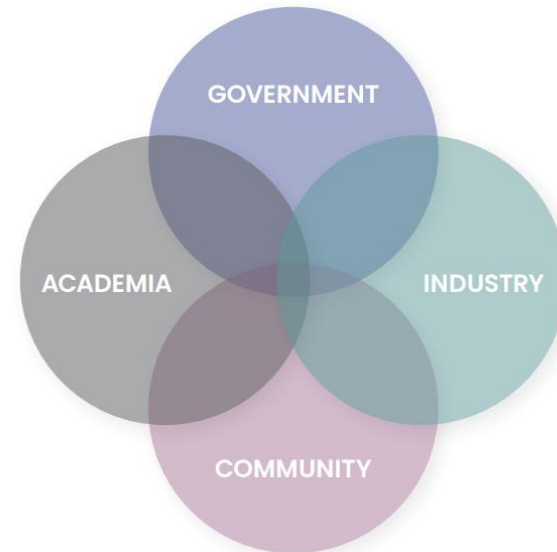
The project is supported by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and RMIT University.



The project follows Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3).

WHAT IS S3?

- European Union regions that employed S3 had a stronger and more robust recovery following the Global Financial Crisis.
- It is focussed on valuing local knowledge and assets and working to the region's unique strengths.
- It is an inclusive process with all those required for success involved throughout the process. This is known as the Quadruple Helix (Q4)



Stage One: Context Analysis

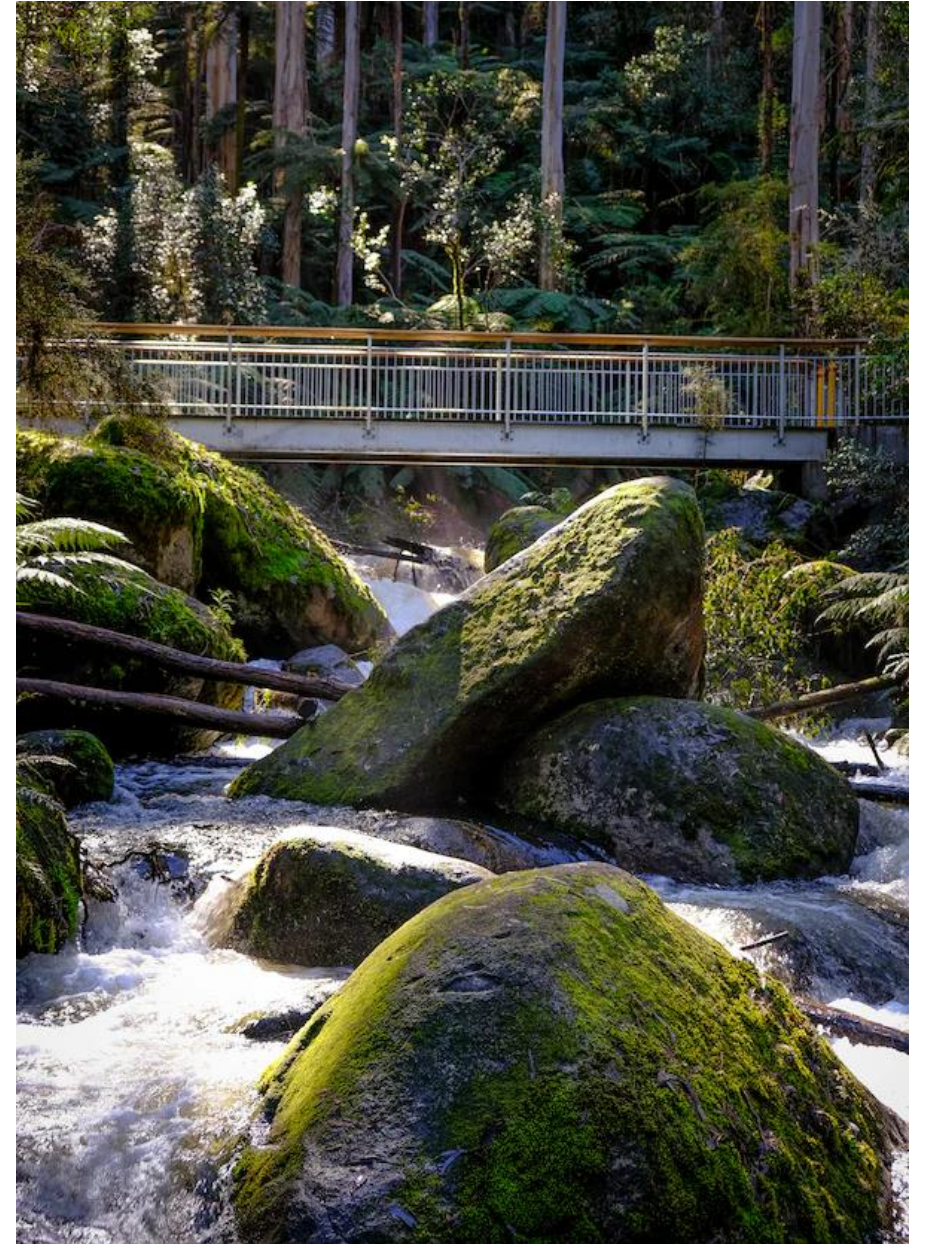
(August 2022 – May 2023)

- ✓ Desktop analysis
- ✓ 110 community interviews undertaken (35% of the population within scope)
- ✓ Innovation Opportunities identified

Stage Two: Entrepreneurial Discovery

(June 2023 – August 2023)

- ✓ Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) Workshops
- Innovation Working Groups formed
- Project Leadership Group established



Stage Three: Innovation Working Groups

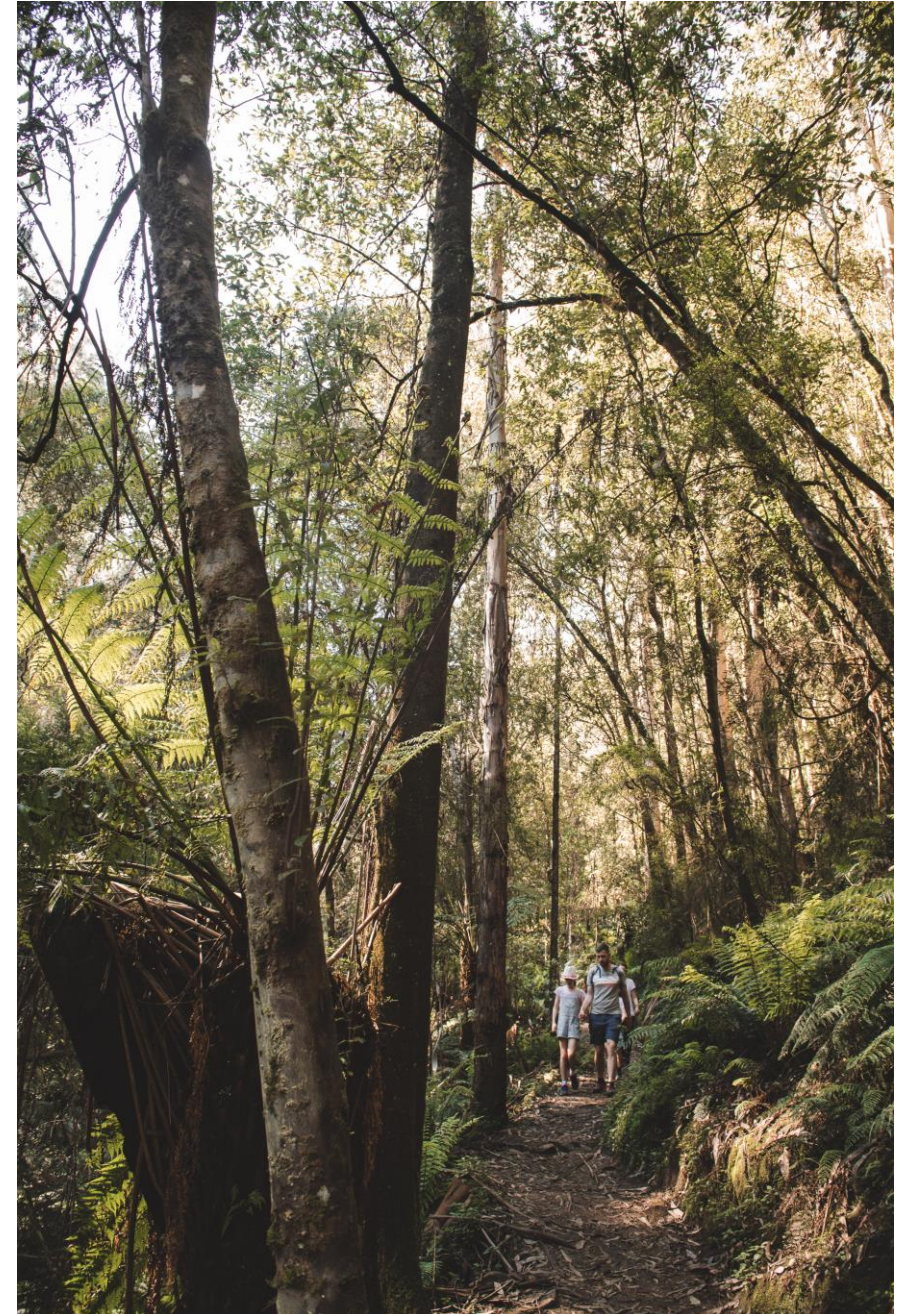
(September 2023 – November 2024)

- Innovation Working Groups test, and refine the idea, undertake feasibility, seek technical and specialist advice and identify sources of government and private investment

Stage Four: LDS Completion

(December 2024)

- Ongoing governance arrangements established



IDENTIFIED INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES

- Eco Tourism and Sports Tourism
- Niche Agricultural Industry Development
- Environmental Education
- Hunting and Game Processing
- Renewable Energy





In each workshop, the question was asked

‘Can this opportunity have a positive economic and social impact on Noojee and District?’

In the workshops participants identified the possible benefits the opportunities would bring to the region. Below are some of those identified:

- Increased employment opportunities and diversity in skilled jobs available in the community
- Repurposing of existing facilities
- Attracting visitors who will look after the environment
- Improved infrastructure
- Greater community cohesion
- Establishing Noojee as a place of rest, relaxation and exploration
- Power and telecommunications resilience
- Community education regarding energy (energy literacy)
- Improved quality of life and safety for the community
- A more vibrant township with a revitalized population
- Increased spending in town by visitors and better visitor experiences
- Increased regional products
- More diverse businesses in the region
- Improved workforce pool for businesses
- Development of a Circular Economy in the region
- Establishing Noojee as a destination experience
- Steady income for businesses

ECO TOURISM AND SPORTS TOURISM WORKSHOP

Identified Strategic Competitive Advantages

- Surrounding forest with unique flora and fauna, including endangered and threatened species,
- Noojee is an established tourism town (Top Tiny Tourism Town Awards),
- Existing small businesses that cater to the visitor economy,
- Proximity to Melbourne makes it an attractive day trip location,
- Popular natural sites, historical sites, established tracks and trails and free campgrounds,
- Popular location for outdoor activities (trail walking, hiking, fishing, hunting, mountain biking, road cycling, picnicking, camping, dirt biking and 4-wheel driving),
- Close proximity to Mt Baw Baw Alpine Resort (approx. 120,000 visitors in 2022),
- The International Nature and Forest Therapy Alliance (INFTA) has identified Noojee as a suitable site for the first Forest Therapy Centre in Australia.



Identified Key Challenges

- Seasonal and extreme weather impacts to visitation,
- Limited fee-for-use activities encouraging investment by visitors,
- Insufficient activities to incentivise longer stays,
- No low-budget accommodation or commercial camping,
- Limited suitable land availability for new projects,
- Protecting the rustic “Noojeenes”,
- Road maintenance and congestion,
- Poor phone and internet reception outside of the Noojee town centre,
- Insufficient public transport access.

ECO TOURISM INNOVATION WORKING GROUP

The **Eco Tourism Innovation Working Group** will explore:

- A Health and Wellbeing Centre centered around Forest Therapy
- A Tree Top Walk and Flying Fox
- Guided Tours e.g., animal spotlight and biodiversity tours
- Integration of Virtual Reality activities at historical sites
- A Visitor Welcome Point
- Development and connection of tracks and trails
- Accommodation for visitors

NICHE AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

Identified Strategic Competitive Advantages

- The topography of the land and rainfall (the Noojee annual mean rainfall is 1126.3mm) result in lengthened growing seasons and the ability to produce rarer species,
- Established small-medium sized businesses specialising in niche agricultural markets with competitive supply agreements in place and capacity to grow,
- The District is in close enough proximity to a variety of commercial distributors ensuring transport with little to no deterioration of the product.



Identified Key Challenges

- Environmental risks (fire, flood and damage by wildlife),
- Current dependence on seasonal staff due to a lack of available local workforce with sufficient training and/or skills,
- Available suitable (zoned) land for business expansion,
- Siloed government departments and support,
- Insufficient accommodation for staff,
- Current employment opportunities are usually seasonal preventing locals from being able to rely on the work as a regular income stream.

SPECIALISED AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

The **Specialised Agricultural Industry Development Innovation Working Group** will explore:

- A local training and research base for agricultural innovation, including a horticultural training program,
- An industry network to share workforce opportunities, infrastructure, and information,
- Agritourism and farm gate opportunities,
- A Circular Economy in Noojee and District.

RENEWABLE ENERGY WORKSHOP

Identified Strategic Competitive Advantages

- The area is sufficiently sized and geographically isolated to form a renewable energy 'village',
- Noojee has a unique historical relationship with local renewable power which was introduced to the region in the 1920s,
- Adoption of an environmentally sustainable power source could also be leveraged as a unique marketing asset for tourism and education activities.



Identified Key Challenges

- Inclement weather with high fire and storm damage risks,
- A portion of the community are thought to prefer electricity interruptions and the financial compensation as a result, over an improved power supply,
- Network capacity,
- Microgrid feasibility,
- Identification of a suitable location with limited suitable land availability.

POWER AND CONNECTIVITY RELIABILITY WORKING GROUP

Prior to a **Power and Connectivity Reliability Innovation Working Group** being established, an audit of current energy usage and needs is required. If the audit identifies that Noojee and District is suitable, the Working Group will explore:

- Improved power supply and telecommunications for Noojee and District,
- Biomass (organic matter used as a fuel) processed by a local anaerobic digester for local gas supply,
- Establishing a showcase for renewable energy which could be used for education and tourism.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION WORKSHOP

Identified Strategic Competitive Advantages

- Noojee is in a valley surrounded by forest with unique flora and fauna, including endangered and threatened species,
- The Noojee Primary School (currently destaffed),
- Established tracks and trails and historical artifacts both in the town centre and throughout the forest,
- Accessibility of the school and forest from the town centre and suitable bus parking locations,
- The proximity to Melbourne makes it an attractive day trip location,
- The Noojee Recreation Reserve (next to the Noojee Primary School) is managed by DEECA who are willing to explore mechanisms for community management of Crown Land enabling possible expansion of the Noojee Primary School site if warranted for activities,
- There are several operational models e.g., permanent teaching staff, a facility booked for excursions with visiting students and teachers, third-party facilitators such as The Gould League who have also expressed interest in the site at Noojee.



Identified Key Challenges

- Insufficient accommodation available,
- Limited suitable land availability for new projects if the Noojee Primary School is deemed not appropriate or is not available for repurposing,
- Inclement weather and environmental risks (fire, flood and storm damage),
- Protecting the rustic “Noojeeness”,
- Identification and establishment of an appropriate management model e.g., a Community Committee of Management,
- Road maintenance and congestion,
- Poor phone and internet reception outside of the Noojee town centre.

MULTIPURPOSE COMMUNITY HUB AND EDUCATION CENTRE WORKING GROUP

The **Multipurpose Community Hub and Education Centre Innovation Working Group** will explore:

- Possible community uses e.g., library facilities, meeting spaces and room hire,
- Education spaces for primary, secondary, tertiary, trade, and community classes,
- Delivery of environmentally focused education experiences,
- Research opportunities,
- Demonstration site for best practice e.g., sustainability, agriculture, local produce development,
- Complimentary accommodation.

HUNTING AND GAME PROCESSING WORKSHOP

Identified Strategic Competitive Advantages

- The district has an established hunting market,
- The proximity to Melbourne makes it a suitable location for day and weekend hunting trips,
- Local guides with experience,
- Sustainably sourced, local ingredients are growing in popularity as awareness of the environmental impact of the food supply chain increases,
- Venison is an extra lean and nutrient rich meat which has growing interest regionally by local chefs and agencies such as Food & Fiber Gippsland,
- There are a range of markets from domestic, fine dining and pet food.



Identified Key Challenges

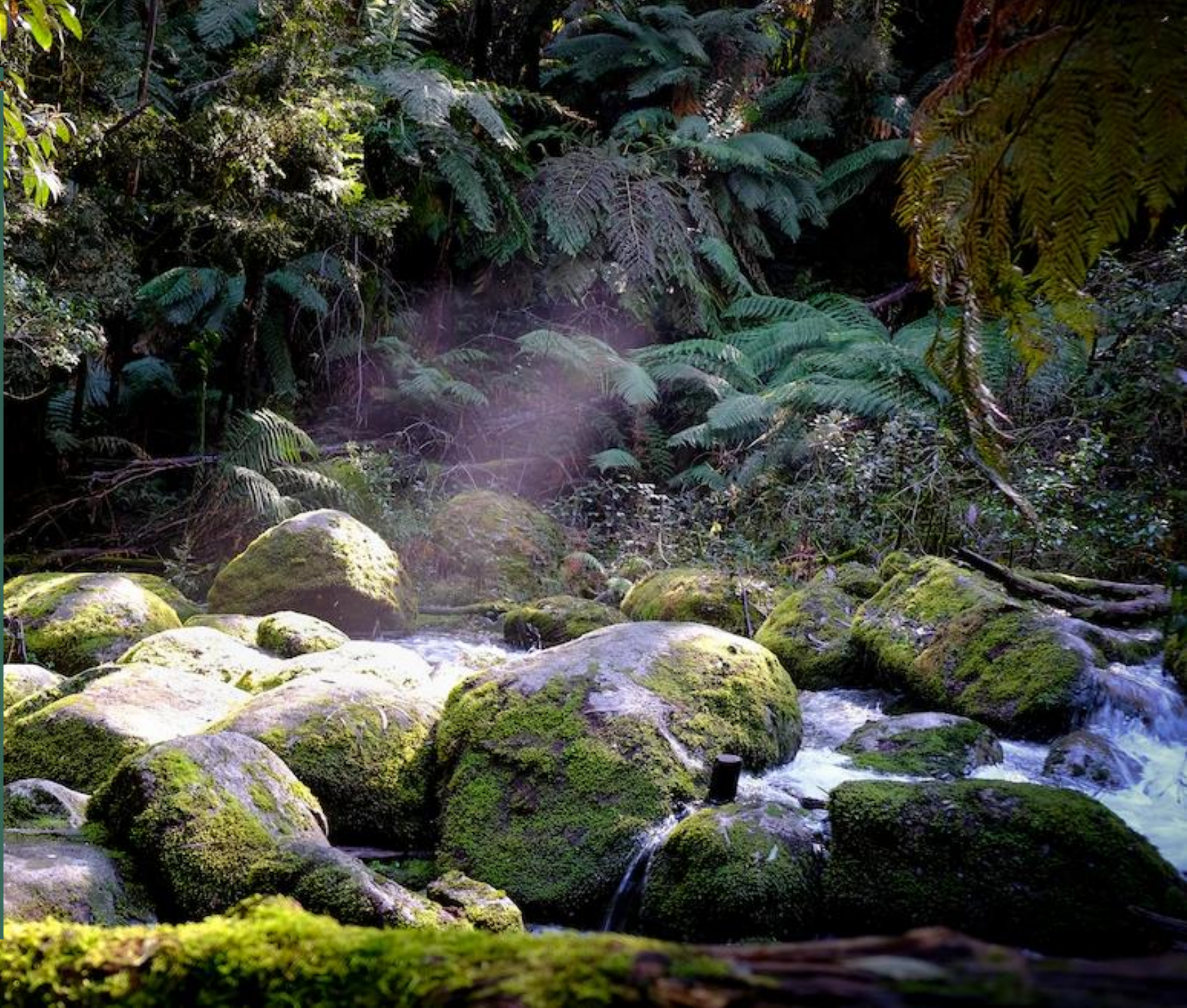
- There is a growing interest in the use of venison by restaurants, however mainstream popularity has not yet been achieved,
- Workforce and regulatory challenges in the meat processing industry need to be addressed,
- Viability of an industry that is traditionally seasonal needs to be investigated,
- Community education around ethical hunting and the environmental principles followed by the industry required to address the negative reputation of hunting.

ETHICAL HUNTING AND GAME PROCESSING WORKING GROUP

The **Ethical Hunting and Game Processing Innovation Working Group** will explore:

- Opportunities for hunting experiences e.g., hunter education, tracking, cooking lessons and butchery,
- Connecting property owners with hunters and complimentary accommodation opportunities,
- Establishing a same day butchery/processing service,
- Establishment of a retail facility selling local venison products alongside other local produce.

WHAT ARE THE
NEXT STEPS?



INNOVATION WORKING GROUPS

- Working Groups will meet monthly commencing in September
- All attempts will be made for the meetings to be hybrid (both in-person and online)
- If you would like to be involved in this exciting project, please complete the Expression of Interest Application Form between **Monday, 31 July and Sunday 27 August 2023**

www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/Noojee/Shaping-the-Future-of-Noojee