

FUTURE OF ORBOST & DISTRICT PROJECT



Media Release – 26th April 2024

Field to factory – exploring opportunities in local cheese making

From field to factory, a small group of Orbost and District farmers recently had an inspiring visit to Maffra Cheese. The visit was part of the activities of the Future of Orbost & District Project's Agricultural Innovation Working Group which has a keen interest in exploring opportunities to value-add local produce.

Hosted by Maffra Cheese founder and 'diminutive dynamo', Ferial Zekiman, the visit provided a firsthand insight into award winning cheeses handcrafted from milk produced on the Tinamba Farm, which delights customers across the country and around the world. Vanessa Daniel Ingram, who was part of a group who organised cheese-making sessions for Orbost & District community members during 2023 said that it was a great insight into cheese-making at scale and what is required. "The science and magic that occurs during the cheese process is fascinating, and Ferial is certainly an inspiration. I would love to see us producing cheese locally in the future."

Local dairy farmers Chris and Helen Nixon, and Narelle Macalister, who were among the participants were very excited about the potential opportunity for Orbost and District, and how it could also strengthen the district's visitor economy. Chris Nixon said, "we need to explore whether there is a business or individual who would like to pursue the opportunity or whether it could be realised through a more collaborative business model. We have all the ingredients for producing cheese in our district, we just need to find the right people to make it happen – and first and foremost that requires a skilful and passionate cheesemaker!"

The group will be considering next steps and options for taking a cheese-making opportunity in the Orbost & District further. Anyone at all interested, is encouraged to connect with the Future of Orbost & District Project team.

A range of other innovation and diversification opportunities in the district's agriculture sector are being explored by the Agriculture Innovation Working group, and there is an open invitation for interested parties to get involved.

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. The Future of Orbost Project is receiving support through the Victorian Government's Forestry Transition Program's Community Stream through to September 2025.

The Orbost and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry has an agreement with the Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) to deliver the Future of Orbost & District project, which is overseen by a community-led governance group.

To get in contact with the project team, email: project@orbostregion.com.au.



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