

## CONSERVING EUCALYPTS: THE WHY AND THE HOW

The Bjarne K Dahl Trust and the Royal Society of Victoria jointly hosted a one-day symposium held on 18 March 2016. The symposium was aimed at highlighting eucalypt diversity and conservation, and was part of the celebrations of National Eucalypt Day 2016, sponsored by the Dahl Trust.

The symposium included scientific presentations from nine leading scientists, who gave their insights into the future of Australian forests, woodlands and biota. The first theme of the symposium was the application of genetics to eucalypt conservation. Professor Michael McCarthy discussed how conservation of biodiversity can be based on maximising lineage diversity. He illustrated for Victoria how this can be linked to spatial prioritisation and that a relatively small increase in reserve area can capture significant diversity. Dr Michael Bayly summarised current knowledge of the phylogeny and evolutionary history of the eucalypt group, and the significant contribution that genomics and DNA analyses is making to this understanding, from the level of genera to species populations. Professor Brad Potts and Dr Suzanne Prober illustrated the application of genetics: managing gene pools and assessing the risks of exotic gene flow; and the adaptation of widespread eucalypt species to climate change. Associate Professor Peter Vesk presented the results of field experiments in Victoria that inform management options for eucalypt re-establishment on cleared land, particularly assessing environmental

variability and challenges to achieving regeneration from seed from existing trees in the landscape.

The second theme of the symposium commenced with a presentation from Professor David Lindenmayer on the significance and conservation challenges of Australia's large long-lived eucalypt trees, with comparison to other iconic tree species of the world. Three subsequent speakers focused on informing management and policy. Associate Professor Kevin Tolhurst provided an overview of eucalypt vegetation, fire and risk management. Professor Andrew Bennett drew attention to the importance of scale from individual trees to whole landscapes for conservation of native wildlife that depends on eucalypts. Associate Professor Baker gave a forest-science perspective on sustainable management and conservation. Many of these speakers highlighted the challenges faced under climate change.

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*The Bjarne K Dahl Trust is a philanthropic body focused on eucalypts, an Australian icon and a significant aspect of Australia's natural environment and biodiversity. The Trust envisages a public inspired by and appreciative of eucalypts: [www.dahltrust.org.au](http://www.dahltrust.org.au)*