

Annual Report

2025-26



ADVOCATE.
COMMUNICATE.
COLLABORATE.
EDUCATE.
INNOVATE.



Our Vision

Recycling and reuse of organic materials within a circular economy is widely understood and supported by Australians.

Our Mission

AORA works with all stakeholders to facilitate an operating environment which maximises the recycling and reuse of organic materials, and promotes the benefits of compost, soil conditioners and mulches across the Australian community and business.



ORGANIC RECYCLING & PROCESSING

SOLUTIONS YOU CAN RELY ON



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Chair's Report

Kali Martin

A privilege to serve

This has been a defining year for Australia's organics recycling industry. As governments continue to invest in the circular economy and increase landfill diversion targets, our industry is increasingly recognised for the vital role it plays in improving soil health, reducing emissions and returning valuable organic resources to productive use.

Serving as Chair of AORA during this period has been both a privilege and an incredibly rewarding experience. Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to spend time with processors, equipment suppliers, consultants, researchers, regulators and, increasingly, the end users of recycled organic products. While each brings a different perspective, what has impressed me most is the passion that exists across every part of our industry.

Perhaps my biggest reflection from my first year as Chair has been the willingness of competitors to work together for the good of the industry. While we may compete commercially, we share a common purpose - to strengthen confidence in recycled organic products, improve environmental outcomes and build a more sustainable future. It is this collaborative spirit that makes our industry unique and gives me great confidence in what lies ahead.

I would also like to acknowledge our National Executive Officer, John McKew, whose passion, leadership and ongoing commitment have helped shape AORA into the respected national voice it is today.

Alongside John, our National Coordinator, Alex Hammett, continues to be the glue that holds so much of the Association together. Alex's professionalism, organisation and commitment to our members make her an absolute pleasure to work alongside

An industry entering its next phase

Growth presents enormous opportunity, but increased collection alone does not deliver successful resource recovery.

Our industry's success cannot simply be measured by the volume of organic material diverted from landfill. It must also be measured by the quality of the products we manufacture, the confidence of our customers and the value we return to Australian soils, agriculture and communities.

Growth must be supported by appropriate infrastructure, sustainable commercial models, effective contamination management and strong end markets. Government policy that focuses solely on collection without equal consideration of processing capacity, product quality and market demand risks shifting problems rather than solving them.

Circular economy outcomes will only be achieved when collection, processing, regulation and market development evolve together.



Chair's Report cont..

Practical, evidence-based advocacy

AORA's greatest strength is its ability to bring together technical expertise from across the industry to help shape better policy. Throughout the year we have continued to advocate for practical, science-based regulatory frameworks that protect both human health and the environment while enabling the safe recovery of valuable organic resources.

Emerging challenges such as PFAS reinforce the importance of evidence-based decision making. AORA will continue to advocate respectfully, but strongly, for practical, scientifically robust regulation. While processors have an important role to play in managing risk, they do not control the introduction of contaminants into the waste stream. Regulating only the final recycled product cannot, on its own, solve contamination issues. Lasting solutions require a whole-of-supply-chain approach that addresses contamination at its source while maintaining confidence in recycled organic products.

Recognising the growing importance of advocacy, AORA established a dedicated Advocacy and Policy Officer role this year. We are delighted to welcome Jacqui Payne to the team. Her appointment represents a significant step forward in ensuring our members' expertise is represented where important decisions are made.

Learning from one another

Our Annual Conference was once again one of the highlights of the year, bringing together the expertise, innovation and collaboration that defines our industry. Our international keynote speaker, Dr Alzbeta Bouskova from Ecogas New Zealand, challenged us to think more broadly about integrated resource recovery and the opportunities it creates across renewable energy, agriculture and the circular economy.

One of my personal highlights was interviewing Russel Brown - farmer, agronomist and retailer of compost products. Hearing directly from an end-user reinforced that our success is ultimately measured by the confidence and value experienced by those using our products.

Another standout was Olympia Yarger's inspiring presentation on Goterra's circular economy model using black soldier fly frass. The subsequent news of Goterra entering liquidation was a sobering reminder that innovation alone is not enough. We must continue strengthening every part of the value chain - from feedstocks and practical regulation to sustainable end markets.

I would also like to acknowledge Veronica Dullens and Emma McVie from rEvolve Services, and the Conference Committee, for delivering an exceptional conference.



Chair's Report cont..

Building on strong foundations

This year also marks an important point in AORA's journey. On behalf of the Board and our members, I would like to sincerely acknowledge the extraordinary contribution of John McKew.

Through his leadership, AORA has strengthened its advocacy, expanded its influence and built enduring relationships across government and industry. John leaves an incredible legacy, and we thank him for the professionalism, energy and dedication he has brought to the Association over many years. As we acknowledge John's contribution, we also look forward with great optimism to welcoming our next Chief Executive Officer.

Building on the strong foundations established over recent years, we will continue evolving the Association to better support our members, strengthen our advocacy and ensure AORA remains the trusted national voice for Australia's organics recycling industry.

Looking ahead

If there is one word I believe will define our industry's future, it is trust. Trust earned through quality products, responsible operations, evidence-based advocacy and meaningful collaboration will underpin stronger regulation, stronger markets and greater confidence in recycled organic products.

There has never been a better time to be part of AORA. As landfill diversion targets continue to increase across Australia, our industry has an extraordinary opportunity to build new infrastructure, create skilled jobs, improve soil health and strengthen Australia's circular economy.

The challenges ahead are real, but they are certainly not insurmountable.

Thank you

It has been an honour to serve as Chair during my first year, and I look forward to continuing to work alongside our members as we build an industry that is respected not only for the waste it diverts, but for the value it creates.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank my fellow Directors, our State Committees, staff, volunteers, sponsors and conference partners for their ongoing commitment.

Most importantly, thank you to every AORA member. Your willingness to share knowledge, challenge ideas respectfully and collaborate for the benefit of the broader industry is what makes AORA such a strong and highly respected organisation. Together, I am confident we will continue shaping a vibrant and sustainable future for Australia's organics recycling industry.

**EVERY TONNE
DIVERTED FROM
LANDFILL STARTS WITH
THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT.**

Backed by our nationwide parts,
service and technical support.



National Executive Officer

Report - John McKew

The 2025/26 year was marked by stronger governance, deeper collaboration with governments and industry partners, and sustained advocacy on issues critical to Australia's organics recycling sector. Against a challenging financial backdrop, AORA continued to advance national policy priorities, support its members, and strengthen the industry's evidence base.

Key Achievements in 2025/26 include:

- Development of AORA's updated FOGO Position Paper: Involving extensive member consultation to support stronger advocacy on immediate and emerging challenges facing FOGO processing.
- Proactive and formal Policy submissions representing member interests, including areas such as biosolids, proposed end of waste codes, battery stewardship, packaging reform, IChEMS, PFAS testing requirements.
- Cross sectoral advocacy and engagement: with State Government agencies, peak local government associations, the Office of Queensland Mine Rehabilitation Commission (OQMRC), Cooperative Research Centres, Universities and the National Measurement Institute.
- Representation in key forums to represent AORA members interests and the future of organics recycling: including relevant Australian Standard review committees, state EPA working groups and industry reference groups.

This will be my final annual report as AORA's National Executive Officer. After four years in the role, I have made the personal decision to leave the Association and the industry. This is the right time for new leadership to bring the energy and commitment required for AORA's next phase.

I am proud of what we have achieved as an Association over the past four years. We have substantially improved AORA's governance and systems, strengthened its industry reputation, and expanded collaboration both within the organics recycling sector and with governments and other industry associations.

I wish the Association's financial position were stronger, although financial sustainability remains a persistent challenge for many industry associations. Government funding has become increasingly difficult to secure, particularly for associations representing commercial industries, despite the strong case that their work contributes to public-good outcomes.

At the same time, the number of organisations in the sector, especially processors, is relatively static and may be shrinking as larger businesses expand through acquisition. This limits the potential membership base, while every departing member or sponsor places further pressure on revenue. AORA's annual conference remains an important source of income, but there are practical limits to its growth. With most revenue derived from membership, sponsorship and the annual conference, the Association remains financially exposed. A further income stream would improve resilience, although identifying a viable option has proved extremely difficult.

Despite these constraints, AORA has continued to deliver substantial value through policy leadership, government engagement, industry collaboration, and member services. The following achievements illustrate the breadth of that work during 2025/26.

NEO Report cont..

In 2025/26, the priorities for AORA will be to continue to prosecute the needs of our industry in a concise and vigorous manner to government at all levels – advocacy.

As the momentum behind the rollout of FOGO builds, the scrutiny on circular economy progress, the continuing dialogue around contamination and acceptable levels of various chemicals (e.g., PFAS) within the community, soil health and productivity, climate change, consumer and public expectations, etc. there has never been a stronger need or time for an effective industry Association like AORA to represent the Australian organics recycling industry.

In concluding my report for 2024/25, I would like to thank the AORA Board for their guidance and stewardship.

To Alex Hammett, our National Coordinator, my sincere gratitude for your commitment and dedication to the Association and your continued support. To our previous State Coordinators who moved on in 2024/25, Uma Preston and Tehani Suafoa, thank you and to our State Committee, thank you for your commitment of time and efforts to the Association.

As many of you are now hopefully aware, we have embarked on a restructure of activity from 2025/26 and we will be welcoming a new National Policy and Advocacy Officer to the small but dedicated AORA team.

To all of our members, sponsors and supporters, our heart-felt appreciation for your continued support of the Association – thank you.

Certified Compostable Products: A Sustainable Solution for Packaging and Waste Management



Why We Need Certified Compostables

Australians generate millions of tonnes of packaging waste annually, much of which ends up in landfill or contaminates recycling systems. Certified compostable products offer an environmentally responsible alternative by helping to divert food and packaging waste from landfill, contributing to a circular economy. Certified compostable products could facilitate participation in FOGO services, breaking down in industrial and/or home composting environments, leaving no toxic residues behind.



2.96million
sent to landfill in
2020-21.¹
tonnes of
packaging was



7.6million
tonnes of food
waste is
generated by
Aussies each
year.²



Landfills are under pressure, and the Australian Organic Recycling Industry Capacity Assessment 2022-23 showed the industry is capable of processing an additional 61.1% of organic materials with the existing operations and infrastructure.

Key Facts

Certified compostable products help divert organic waste from landfill, reducing methane emissions. ABA certified compostable products meet rigorous standards, including AS 4736 (industrial) and AS 5810 (home).

Key Facts

Products include compostable bags, food service items, packaging films and packaging. Packaging that has been contaminated with food cannot be recycled, but it can be composted if using certified compostable packaging.

About PFAS

Certified compostable products verified under the Australasian Bioplastics Association (ABA) certification scheme do not contain intentionally added polyfluorinated alkyl substance (PFAS). A condition of the certification programme is a declaration to that effect and ABA certified products must meet strict fluorine limits as part of the compostability assessment. Products exceeding these limits are not certified.

How Certified Compostable Products Benefit Australia

Certified compostable products simplify waste sorting and support circular economy goals.

Benefits of Certified Compostable Products:

- Reduce contamination in recycling streams.
- Lower greenhouse gas emissions from landfill.
- Support organics recovery targets set by federal and state governments.
- Promote innovation and green job creation in Australia.



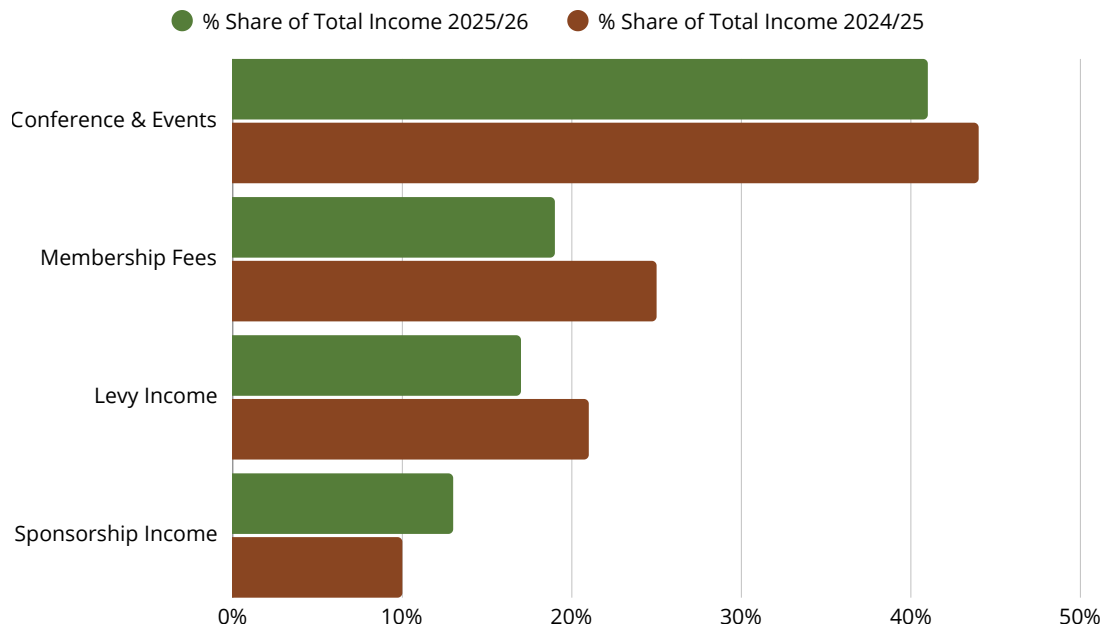
AORA Finance Report 2025-26

Members are welcome to request a full (audited) AORA Financial report for the year ended 30 June 2026

The 2024/25 financial year delivered a deficit for the Association of \$105 296.

Revenue and other Income: \$769 657

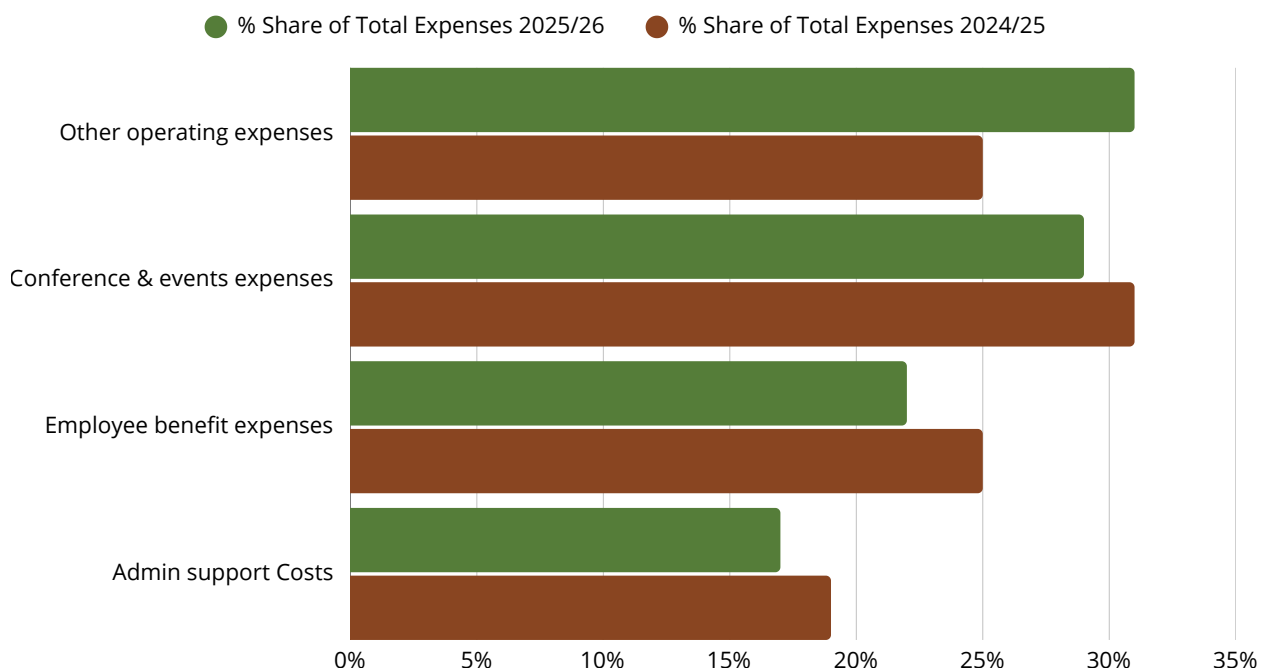
Income declined in 2025/26 compared to 2024/25 by \$75,825 due principally to a decline in membership income, levy income (some of which is associated with loss of processing members) and a reduction in conference income.



Expenses: \$874 863

Expenses increased by \$80,527 in 2025/26 compared to 2024/25.

Other operating expenses was the largest contributor to this increase in expenses with Conference costs being a large contributor (Melbourne is an expense location for a conference) and Project expenses (Fact Sheet project was an unbudgeted expense).



AORA Finance Report cont..

Deficit \$105 296

The 2025/26 financial deficit of \$105,296 is a disappointing financial result for the Association after three consecutive years of surplus results.

Membership income, levy income (from processing members), sponsorship income and the conference remain the four most significant income sources for the Association and any decline in any of these has a detrimental impact of the Association's overall financial position.

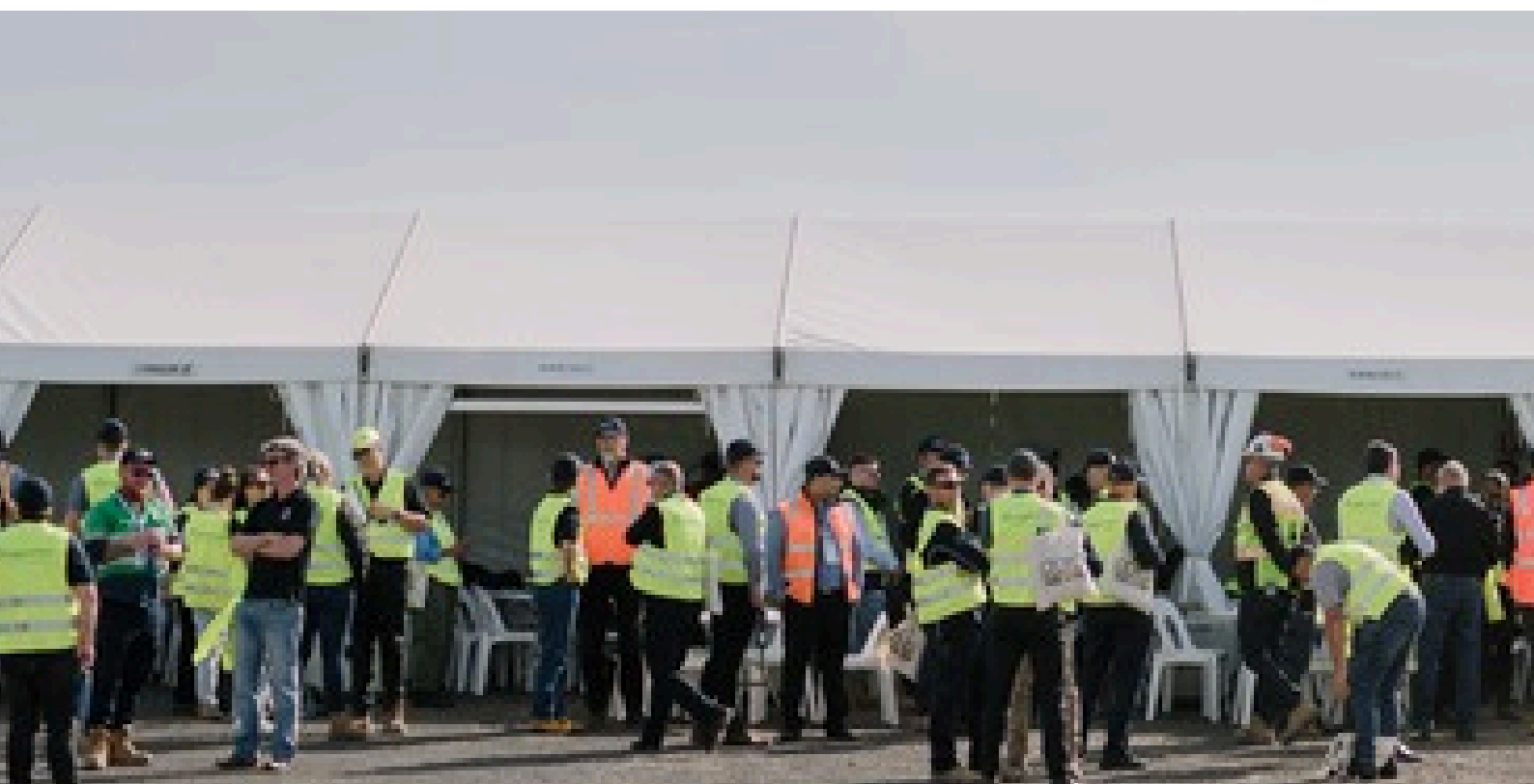
A continued focus on growing membership and sponsorship for the Association is a perpetual work-in-progress. As I have stated before, there is no substitute for a loyal, robust, and growing membership and sponsorship base. The two are not mutually exclusive (i.e., membership and sponsorship) - we understand that a growing membership base is attractive to all sponsors and a suite of strong industry sponsors is appealing to all members. Bringing the two together is the key to fulfilling this mutuality.

The Board Finance Committee, in association with myself, our bookkeeper (Lisa Dower) and our National Coordinator (Alex Hammett) meet monthly to review the latest monthly financial reports and results; this scrutiny/oversight is important to ensure the financial probity of the Association and to seek input and information into actions which may improve our financial sustainability.

A copy of the full (audited) AORA Financial report for the year ended 30 June 2026 is available to all members on request.

Thank you to all of our members, sponsors, and other stakeholders for your continued support of the Association.

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2025 - 26 Member Information

AORA Members as at June 30 2026

National Associate Members	41
National Processing Members	4
Local Government/Government Members	8
Processing Members	34
Associate Members	25
Individual Members	7
Student Members	3
Life Members	2
Total Members	121

2025-26 Partners



Founding Members



Research Partners



Media Partners



Our People

AORA Directors

Directors 2025-26

Angus Johnston
Ashley Johnston
Chris Hughes
Charles Emery
Daniel van Veen
Gregory Whitehead
Jennifer Hughes
Kali Martin
Lachlan Jeffries
Patrick Soars
Peter Thompson
Simon Humphris

Appointed 23 October 2025

Term finished on 23 October 2025

Term finished on 23 October 2025

Appointed 23 October 2025

Term finished on 23 October 2025

State

NSW
VIC
VIC
NSW
WA
QLD
NSW
QLD
SA
NSW
QLD
VIC

Attendance at Meetings

8 of 9
7 of 9
5 of 6
3 of 3
8 of 9
2 of 3
6 of 6
8 of 9
1 of 3
5 of 9
8 of 9
7 of 9

Finance Committee

Charlie Emery*
Greg Whitehead*
Peter Thompson
Kali Martin**
Chris Hughes**
Lisa Dower
John McKew
Alex Hammett

Technical & Policy Committee

Kali Martin
Patrick Soars
Daniel van Veen
Angus Johnston
Jennifer Hughes**
John McKew
Alex Hammett
Jacqui Payne**

*finished October 2025

** started November 2025

National Executive Officer
National Coordinator
National Advocacy & Policy Officer

John McKew
Alex Hammett
Jacqui Payne (started November 2025)

Our People cont..

State Committees

NSW Committee

Virginia Brunton (Chair)
Karen Muir (Deputy Chair)
Angus Johnston*
Shaun Rainford
Michael Bonnano*
Hugh Perrotet*
Charlie Emery*
Jennifer Hughes**
Alex Morris**
Roger Crisp**
Mark Darwin**

QLD Committee

Greg Whitehead (2025 Chair)
Kali Martin*
Glenn Dale
Peter Thompson (2026 Chair)
Tara Wilcox
Ben Arthur
Deepak Ide**

VIC Committee

Simon Humphris (2025 Chair)
Michael Wood*
Sage Hahn*
Fergal Rabette*
Ashley Johnston*
Kurt Palmer*
Emma Mountjoy*
Jacquelle Gorski (2026 Chair)**
Ray Trevorah**
Ben Carr**
Jaclyn Geddes**
Matt Brady**
Patricia Scott**
Tania Hall**

WA Committee

Greg Watts (Chair)
Tim Richards
Daniel van Veen
Colin Rossbridge
Brendan Doherty
Donovan Farrell

*finished October 2025

** started January 2026



Conference Summary

The AORA Annual Conference is the principal event for Australia's recycled organics sector, bringing together industry leaders to share knowledge, strengthen collaboration and explore key developments shaping the industry.

The 2026 conference was held in Melbourne, Victoria from 22–24 April 2026, attracting 268 attendees from across Australia and overseas.

The robust participation in the 2026 conference reflects the ongoing importance and resilience of the sector amid broader external pressures affecting global supply chains and economic conditions, including fuel supply constraints and international market uncertainty.

The theme for 2026 was Compost for Life. Saving our Soils, reflecting the essential role our industry plays in delivering practical, proven solutions to improve soil health, reduce waste and return organic resources to productive use.

This year's program focused on strengthening industry resilience, advancing innovation and supporting practical solutions to key challenges facing the sector.

Through technical presentations, case studies and sector-led discussions, speakers explored emerging technologies, regulatory developments, market opportunities and approaches to improving system performance.

The conference also provided strong opportunities for engagement, with attendees participating in sessions, panel discussions, networking functions and the annual Demonstration Day, which showcased leading equipment and technologies in operation.

The 2026 AORA Annual Conference reinforced the importance of collaboration, innovation and adaptability in supporting a resilient and sustainable organics recycling sector and its role in delivering circular economy outcomes.

During the event, the 2026 AORA and Pure Environmental Young Professionals Scholarship was presented to Aya Nasreddine, from MRA Consulting

At the Conference Dinner, sponsored by SPM, the AORA Legends Award was presented. This Award recognises an individual who has made an integral contribution to the development of the Australian recycled organics industry, and the 2026 was **Tim Richards**, of Richgro Garden Products.

A fourth-generation leader of one of Australia's longest-standing family-owned garden product manufacturers, Tim has advanced organics recycling through industry leadership, innovation and the practical application of circular economy principles. He has also provided longstanding service to AORA as a Board member, Vice Chair and WA State Chair, and is a strong advocate for research, collaboration and emerging professionals in the sector.

2026 CONFERENCE PARTNERS





Australian Organics Recycling Association Limited

ABN 17 158 519 736

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