



## Council Supports its Dairy Farmers

South Gippsland Shire Council has been working closely with other groups and agencies to provide a coordinated response to the issues that arose in response to the farm-gate step-down in April last year. As the show season approaches Council is continuing to support its dairy farming families by providing free tickets to the shows at Foster and Korumburra through the Dairy Tight Times program.

South Gippsland Shire Mayor, Councillor Ray Argento is hopeful that the initiative will give farmers some respite from what's been a tough winter and a very busy hay season. "This is historically a time when farmers and their families can get together and celebrate the best of their herds, flocks and produce. To assist with this when times are tight, Council is helping farming families who may not otherwise have been able to attend the shows this year.

"Council has been working on a number of fronts to support the region's farmers," the Mayor continued. "This has included participation and engagement with the Gippsland Regional Dairy Leadership Group, which was established by the Victorian Government with representatives from farming, government agencies, local government, dairy companies and health providers.

"Council has also sponsored a number of community events including a bush dance for farmers at Meeniyah, free entry for patrons of the South Gippsland Dairy Expo, an event at Poowong with Kevin Sheedy as guest speaker, and a family barbecue at Coal Creek.

"We have also established a section on our website with relevant information on dairy issues, supported 'Tactics for Tight Times' workshops hosted by GippsDairy and the 'Look over the Farm Gate' community mental health sessions sponsored through United Dairy Farmers Victoria and GippsDairy.

"Given the recent improvements in the industry, we are hopeful that 2017 will be a better year for our farming community," the Mayor concluded.

The Dairy Tight Times Support program has an allocation of \$42,000 which included \$20,000 from the State Government. Applications to the program with funding of up to \$5,000 are available through the Council website and will be accepted until the 30 May 2017.

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