

Enticing teachers

Monash University student teachers met with Council and gained a renewed understanding of rural communities and why it's so important they teach here. Twelve student teachers studying various undergraduate degrees are taking part in an inaugural Rural Professional Experience Placement Program (RPEPP).

On their visit to Council, they were presented with a brief snapshot of the Shire from Deputy Mayor, Cr Mohya Davies, detailing the driving agricultural and economic forces, before participating in an informal Q & A with councillors.

Students then listened to a number of panel discussions around local projects including Waste Management, Climate Change, Council energy projects, Youth Council and volunteering programs. Each panel discussion focused on the projects that Council undertakes, how they relate to local school involvement and how we value our volunteers to greatly shape what we experience as 'community'.

Student leader, Maria Gindidas, highlighted the fundamental aims of the RPEPP were to provide a real experience for students in understanding the rural context of both working and living in the country.

"So far, everyone in the program has felt welcome beyond expectation and they love the area and people," she explained. "There is a noticeable difference in what rural communities have to offer."

As part of their university placement requirements, the students will be attending a number of schools in Leongatha.

"They could have chosen any number of placement options, including overseas travel," Ms Gindidas said, "but selected South Gippsland so they could obtain a rural perspective from a teaching viewpoint."

"Should you choose to, as teachers you can definitely make a difference in a community such as ours," Cr Fawcett told the group. "It was teaches in the area who established the likes of the basketball association and swimming club. In the country, you are more than just educators in schools – you have the opportunity to extend your skills into the community and make a resounding difference."

Caption: 12 student teachers met with Council as part of a program to encourage rural placements.

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