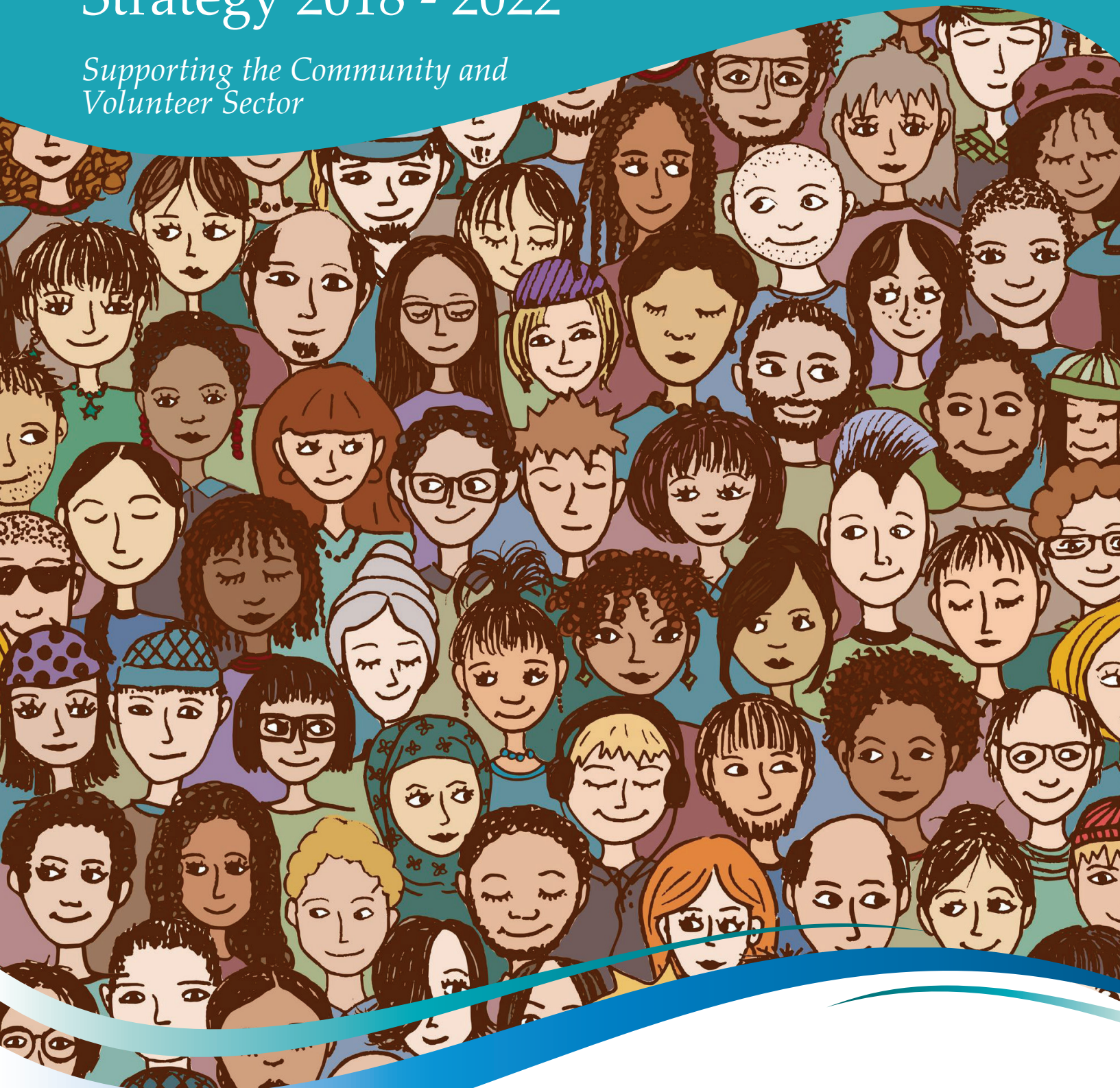


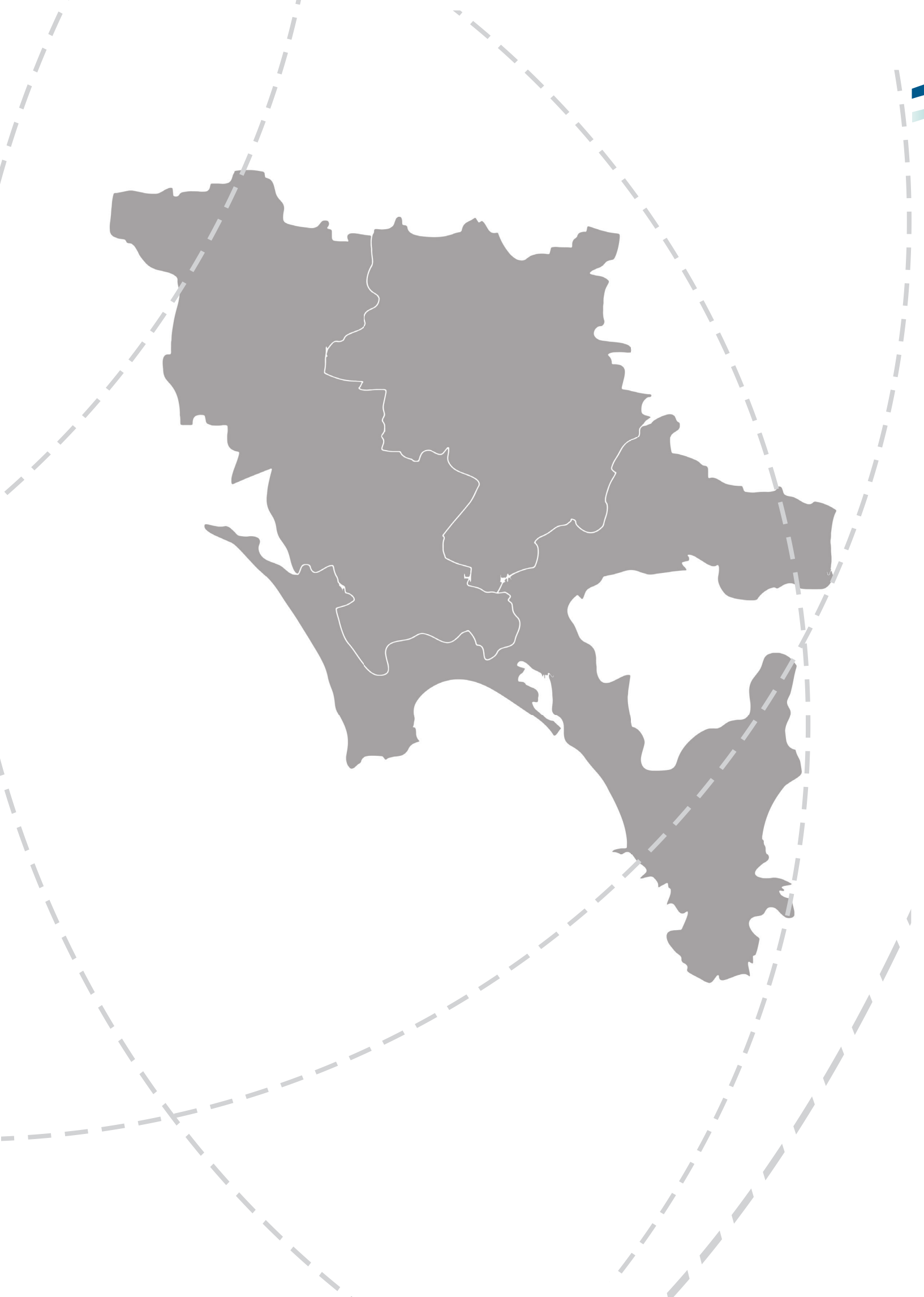
South Gippsland Shire Council

Community Strengthening Strategy 2018 - 2022

*Supporting the Community and
Volunteer Sector*



South Gippsland
Shire Council





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INTRODUCTION

Council has a responsibility to support its community to be resilient and harmonious. Community strengthening ACTIONS are inherent in most of Council's operations, which are aimed at improving or maintaining the living standards and viability of the South Gippsland community. As such, all Council departments are involved in some way in strengthening the South Gippsland community. One specific way that Council can deliver practical outcomes in this area is to strengthen the community's capacity to support itself. This work is primarily seen as Community Strengthening.

Council has recognised this key function in the 2017-2021 Council plan in a number of direct ways:

Objective 2	Build Strong Partnerships, Strengthen Arts & Culture and Deliver Equitable Outcomes.
Strategy 2.1	Update and implement strategies for Community Strengthening and Engagement.
Strategy 2.1.1	Where appropriate support community groups to achieve projects they have ownership of and want to progress.
Strategy 2.1.2	Investigate opportunities to consider a model for community self determination to facilitate working in partnership with the community.
Strategy 2.2.1	Review the Recreation Strategy (reliant on community run sporting groups).
Strategy 2.3	Update and continue to implement the Blueprint for Social Community Infrastructure (reliant on effective collaboration with the community sector).
Strategy 2.7	Develop and Implement a Youth Strategy (critical for the existing community sector and local civic leaders to support the youth of the district to develop their skills).

Council also recognizes the value of supporting the community sector to thrive by:

- Maintaining a specific Community Strengthening unit
- Allocation of \$300,000 for community grants
- Allocation of approximately \$200,000 to support major external grants for community (mostly recreation related infrastructure).

Council already has developed a range of other strategies that require a well-functioning community sector for effective implementation which include the Arts, Culture and Creative Industry Strategy and the Age Friendly South Gippsland 2017 - 2021 Strategy.

OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this Strategy is to strengthen the capacity and resilience of the South Gippsland community by assisting the community sector to be effective and independent in their own operations. Council is not the only agency working in this space, but few others have such a broad canvas on which to work on.

This Community Strengthening Strategy seeks to recognise, build upon, and engage through collaborative projects, the following strengths:

- High level of partnership being developed across the Shire between communities of interest and between towns / communities
- High level of community volunteerism
- Strong commitment by Council to strengthening local capacity to determine and implement local projects
- Emergence of community banks, cooperatives and benevolent funds that financially support local community activity
- Development of a more active state-wide philanthropic sector that is willing to contribute to rural projects
- Residents with significant life skills and previous work experience
- Enhanced collaboration with neighbouring Councils
- High level of inter departmental collaboration within Council

Council provides grants, direct officer advice and planning assistance to a wide range of locally based organisations including playgroups, progress /community associations, sporting clubs of all sorts, service clubs, Men's sheds, community houses, community gardens, arts groups, theatre groups, senior citizens clubs, community safety groups, environmental protection bodies - and the list goes on.

There are over 500 volunteer run organisations in South Gippsland and Council is not able to provide direct assistance for all the groups who might seek help in a given year. This Strategy provides a guide to the strong South Gippsland community sector on the key areas that Council can provide assistance with over the next four years.

BENEFICIARIES OF COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING ACTIONS

The primary beneficiaries of Council action to support stronger communities are the individual communities served by specific community groups. Every successful community project benefits the wider South Gippsland community by increasing the range of activities or facilities available to the community and by providing evidence to other current and potential volunteers that local effort can receive tangible rewards.

Council as an entity also benefits as the number and range of community members taking a responsible leadership role within specific projects develop stronger working relationships with Council staff. This creates the opportunity for this influential section of the community to develop a clearer understanding of the roles Council can play directly and where Council faces limitations financially and in terms of authority.

Even the business community is often a direct beneficiary of community groups successfully implementing a new project through potential to supply goods and services to the local groups, and with potential for direct sales to visitors when major events bring people into South Gippsland.

PLACE MAKING ACTIVITY

South Gippsland is made up of many small communities, with their own identities, strengths and challenges.

This Strategy supports these individual communities to increase their ability to collaborate internally and to develop effective partnerships with other South Gippsland communities and networks to achieve common goals.

Council is working with specific towns and districts to develop projects that engage a broad range of organisations, both volunteer and business. Current examples include the Korumburra Station Redevelopment Project and the Foster End of Life 'The Journey' Project.



COUNCIL BROAD ROLE IN COMMUNITY STRENGTHENING

Council recognises that Local Government is pivotal to the success of community strengthening initiatives. It has acknowledged that municipalities already possess many of the critical resources needed to sustain local improvements including:

- Knowledge of local issues and sensitivities
- Experience in coordinating other local agencies and groups
- Expertise in working with other levels of government
- Direct democratic accountability and
- Council plans, budgets and resource allocation plans as required by the Local Government Act (1989)

The term Community Strengthening has taken the place of community building or community development in recognition that many communities already have strong ties of collaboration and co-operation. South Gippsland is fortunate to have a strong local community with a very high proportion of community volunteers (over 30% of the adult population engaged in some form of community volunteering-2016 ABS census).

In addition to our community's existing strengths, many agencies, government, non-government and commercial are demonstrating an increased valuing of community participation in decision making.

The work Council undertakes to strengthen the community sector can benefit the ability of our local

communities to develop stronger and more sustainable partnerships with these other organisations and make effective contributions to developments being led by other agencies that impact on their community.

RELATED STRATEGIES

The implementation of the Community Strengthening Strategy will be undertaken in partnership with the following existing Council strategies:

ARTS CULTURE AND CREATIVE INDUSTRY STRATEGY 2017-2021

Particularly with supporting the community arts sector to become more sustainable and access a greater quantity of funding.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE BLUEPRINT 2014-2029

Many Council facilities are leased and/or managed by community groups. Implementation and review of the Blueprint relies on a strong and effective community sector.

HEALTH AND WELL BEING PLAN 2017-2021

This Plan is primarily delivered by the health, social service and community sector. Effective locally based community organizations have a vital role in the implementation of this Plan.

AN AGE FRIENDLY SOUTH GIPPSLAND 2017-2021

This strategy involves significant collaboration with a range of community organizations and supporting these groups to be viable directly assists Council with implementation of this Strategy.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM STRATEGY 2018 -2020

Whilst the Community Strengthening strategy focuses on the not for profit community sector, the link between community groups and business associations and individual businesses in a rural community is extensive and crucial.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2018-22

Council's ability to engage widely with the community is significantly enhanced by having a vibrant and engaged volunteer sector.

This Strategy will help inform the development and or review of the following strategies:

RECREATION STRATEGY 2018/19

This strategy requires collaboration with the sporting community which is primarily managed in South Gippsland by volunteer committees and groups.

YOUTH STRATEGY 2018/19

Participation by young people requires support from community leaders and adults and sustainability of the volunteer sector relies and a new generation of volunteers.

ABBREVIATIONS

COMMS	Communications
Council	South Gippsland Shire Council
CS	Community Strengthening
ECDEV	Economic Development and Tourism
GO	Grants Officer
IP	Infrastructure Planning
RAO	Rural Access Officer
RO	Recreation Officer
SG	South Gippsland
SP	Social Planner

FIVE THEMES



Fostering COLLABORATION within the community sector and with external supporters

Increasingly community groups need to collaborate with like bodies within South Gippsland and at times with regional and state-wide associations. This need now often extends to working across interest sectors, with sporting and arts bodies needing to work with progress associations and traders groups to achieve local outcomes.



Supporting SUSTAINABILITY of the Civic Sector

Community Groups list organisational sustainability, particularly recruiting new volunteers and maintaining current volunteers as the major concern they have. Council's strategy directs support in this area through; leadership training, governance and organisational development training and direct advice to individual groups, communication and promotion skills development, connection to other organisations that share a common need, liaison with other groups who might have people willing to volunteer e.g. job network agencies, youth networks, older residents and new settler networks, and assistance to groups with development of business/feasibility and organisational plans.



ACCESSING financial and in kind RESOURCES

Community groups raise the major portion of the funds they need themselves through operational activities, fund raising drives and accessing funds and sponsorships independently. However, groups consistently seek Council's assistance in augmenting their funds for new projects and upgrading their facilities and activity range. Key Council activity includes provision of community grants, liaison with groups on major infrastructure funding applications, development of a South Gippsland grant givers alliance, linking volunteer champions with groups who need professional and experienced guidance.



Effective COMMUNITY EVENTS and PROJECTS

Community events have the capacity to activate local communities, create economic activity, and engage people in a community who might not otherwise be part of the civic sector. Major new projects being undertaken by an individual community group can have similar valuable impacts. However, these activities take significant time in the planning phase to be successful. This strategy recognises the value of this work and includes commitment of officer time to directly assisting groups with planning advice and support, and with access to community grants for events and feasibility studies for major projects.



Establishing a WHOLE OF COUNCIL contribution to strengthen the community sector

Many arms of Council play a direct role in enabling community groups to thrive. This Strategy commits Council to supporting a collaborative approach to this work, and to all departments of Council being involved at some stages with direct liaison with community organisations. The Community Strengthening team will take a liaison and leadership role in this work.



Action	Who Benefits?	Anticipated Outcome
<p>Community Plan Development & Reviews These plans are community driven and focused on specific towns and districts across South Gippsland.</p>	Whole Communities Council	Better targeting of local and Council human and financial resources. Reduced duplication of effort at local level.
<p>Reconciliation Action Plan Development of a Reconciliation Action Plan for South Gippsland in partnership with the local indigenous community and recognised Traditional Owners.</p>	Whole Community Indigenous Community Council	Clearer understanding of local indigenous history & culture. New pathways for indigenous community members to join local community groups.
<p>Facilitation of Specific Interest and Locality Networks Facilities such as local halls, Men's Sheds and community centres managed by volunteer committees have an important role in supporting community cohesion. Community groups with a common interest such as town development organisations can gain benefit from sharing knowledge on a regular basis.</p>	Specific facility committees. Networks of community groups in a specific locality. Communities served by these facilities and groups. Council through regular direct contact with community volunteers and organisations.	Improved viability of local facilities through streamlined management systems, sharing resources and promotion. Higher levels of collaboration within local districts and across the Shire.
<p>Information Guides on improving access for people of all abilities Guides to be made available to community groups to help them broaden their accessibility.</p>	People with disability & their carers Community groups	Greater involvement by individuals within local community activity. For groups - increased participation by people previously unable to be involved.

Indicators of Success

- Council has an endorsed Reconciliation Action Plan by December 2019
- Collaborative projects are undertaken by Community Halls that include small rural communities and town based halls
- Value of these projects to the wider community will be assessed using a formal Return on Investment process with outcomes reported to Council and the communities involved via the Halls Network.
- All communities with a Community Directions Statement participate in development of the 2021 - 2025 Council Plan and Community Vision
- Reviews of individual community plans will include participation from a range of Council teams including Economic Development, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Planning to ensure that the value of broad based Placemaking is captured through these processes.



Action	Who Benefits?	Anticipated Outcome
<p>Skills Development Workshops & Support Ongoing series, including recruitment, leadership, governance & mediation skills and succession planning - direct engagement with individual clubs / groups and workshops / forums.</p>	<p>All participating community groups Individual participants in workshops. Whole of Shire Council</p>	<p>Greater ability to plan and manage their organisations effectively. Key local projects developed and implemented in local communities. Renewal of committees in the volunteer sector.</p>
<p>Business & Strategic Plans for Community Groups This will include broad workshops and direct support for individual groups.</p>	<p>Participating community groups Council External funding bodies</p>	<p>Better use of resources within groups, with less duplication of effort. Higher level of success with accessing external funding for projects. Better targeting of Council grant funds.</p>
<p>Engaging Young People A guide developed in conjunction with the Youth Strategy that can assist community groups with engaging young people.</p>	<p>Current community groups</p>	<p>More young people taking an active role in implementing community projects. Committee renewal.</p>
<p>Volunteer Champions Network Establishment of a network of skilled community members who can support individual groups with specific needs.</p>	<p>Skilled individuals Community groups</p>	<p>People with limited time but significant skills can target use of their time for best outcomes. Current volunteers who need a rest can reduce their workload. Individual committees can develop new ways of managing their work that is more time effective.</p>

Indicators of Success

- Number of community organisations lodging Consumer Affairs Victoria annual reports within legislated timelines increases. Base Line data to be developed in 2018/19 to assess level of change.
- Number of community organisations unable to form an executive committee decreases annually. Base Line data to be developed in 2019/20 with investigation in 2021/22 to assess level of change.
- Volunteer Champions Network includes individuals with skills including Financial Management, Marketing, Project Management and Organisational Development by end of 2019.
- Number of groups assessing members of the Volunteer Champions network increases annually.
- Number of volunteer champions joining the Network increases annually.



Action	Who Benefits?	Anticipated Outcome
<p>Community Grants Program Council makes available matching funds for major and minor projects, events, festivals and equipment to the volunteer sector</p>	<p>Individual groups The communities they serve</p>	<p>Community groups undertake large and small projects. Locally raised money and external money is leveraged by Council contribution. Higher level locally directed activity due to direct funding provision.</p>
<p>Provision of Community Infrastructure Matching Funds Council makes available matching funds for major community infrastructure projects to leverage external funds, generally from state or federal governments.</p>	<p>Whole Community I</p>	<p>Community groups undertake large and small projects. Locally raised money and external money is leveraged by Council contribution. Higher level locally directed activity due to direct funding provision.</p>
<p>Provision of Advice and Support with Accessing External Funding Opportunities Community groups are assisted with locating suitable funding partners and help with understanding guidelines.</p>	<p>Individual groups The communities they serve</p>	<p>Effort of volunteers is used effectively by understanding the requirements of external partners. Better knowledge can lead to more projects receiving support.</p>
<p>Establishing and Facilitating a South Gippsland Grant Givers Alliance South Gippsland philanthropic groups and individuals provide over \$500,000 every year to community projects in South Gippsland.</p>	<p>Grant giving groups Community sector</p>	<p>Grant givers share skills, partner with each other and more effectively promote their services through a shared understanding of their colleague organisations. Joint funding on major projects. Less duplication of time for volunteer groups if they know who is available locally to assist.</p>

Indicators of Success

- Community Grants are received by groups in at least 20 separate South Gippsland communities every year. Distribution of grants by quantity, funds and per capita distribution across the Shire reported to Council annually.
- South Gippsland community projects receive funds from external philanthropic organisations. Base Line data developed in 2018/19 on the number of external philanthropic grants received by South Gippsland groups and change in level of resourcing measured in 2020/21 and reported to Council.
- Grant Givers Alliance meets bi-annually and includes at least 5 separate organisations. Base Line data developed in 2018/19 on number of community projects receiving assistance from more than one local grant giving body and measured again in 2020/21 to assess impact of this Alliance with outcomes reported to Council and all members of the Grant Givers Alliance.



Action	Who Benefits?	Anticipated Outcome
<p>Event and Project Planning Advice for Individual Groups</p> <p>Council staff can provide expertise in event and project planning and requirements at the commencement projects.</p>	<p>Individual groups The communities they serve Council</p>	<p>More effective use of volunteer time. More events and projects are delivered effectively. Community groups receive information in time to make judgments on progressing a project. More timely accessing of information on any regulatory requirements from Council.</p>
<p>Event Equipment</p> <p>A range of equipment is owned by Council that can be loaned to community groups for use at public events and forums.</p>	<p>Individual groups The communities they serve Council</p>	<p>Less money spent by individual groups on equipment that is rarely used. Less pressure on volunteers to store and maintain equipment.</p>
<p>Establishment and Facilitation of a South Gippsland Event Coordinators Network</p> <p>Community event committees are intensely involved for a short period and there is a high burn out rate of volunteers. This network can help with sharing knowledge that can benefit individual events.</p>	<p>Individual groups Local communities</p>	<p>More effective time spent with event planning. Greater sharing of resources between events in South Gippsland. Potential for better use of funds through collaborative purchasing of services.</p>

Indicators of Success

- Community managed festivals / events are successfully run in at least 10 communities every year.
- Funding received from Council for continuing events becomes a smaller percentage of event costs annually
- Event Coordinators Network is established by May 2019
- Event Coordinators Network includes representatives of recurrent events and occasional events. Base Line data developed in 2018/19 on the number of community events run in South Gippsland that are registered with Council, including estimated economic value to the local community. Increase or decrease over time will be reported to Council and the Network in 2020/21.



Action	Who Benefits?	Anticipated Outcome
<p>Multi Department Community Strengthening Strategy Implementation Group</p> <p>Representatives of key Council teams meet regularly to share place based information to assist with local project development.</p>	<p>Council Individual communities</p>	<p>Timely advice to specific communities about Council activity. Current localised information available to a range of Council teams. Reduced duplication of work by Council teams.</p>
<p>Promotion and Marketing of Community Events and Projects</p> <p>Council via current services and Council events that have a public focus assist with promotion of community activity.</p>	<p>Individual groups The communities they serve</p>	<p>Less expenditure in time and funds by community groups on advertising and promotion. A greater reach in promotion via Council's existing avenues.</p>
<p>Marketing Community Events and Key Projects in Partnership with Council Funded Services, including Libraries and Sports Facilities</p> <p>Council financially supports a range of people focused services. This action will build a partnership with these services to support promotion of community events.</p>	<p>Individual groups The communities they serve</p>	<p>Less expenditure in time and funds by community groups on advertising and promotion. A greater reach in promotion via Council's existing avenues. Council services will benefit through stronger engagement with the event managers.</p>

Indicators of Success

- Representatives from 10 Council teams participate every quarter on Internal Strategy Implementation group
- Community managed events are directly promoted at all Council run events and via Council's facebook presence
- Community managed events are regularly promoted in all static Libraries and Council owned swimming pools by December 2019.



STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES REVIEW PROCESS

A report on implementation of this Strategy will be provided annually to Council and to key Shire wide networks that are facilitated by the Community Strengthening Team.

Continuous review will be undertaken internally, with Council to be advised of emerging opportunities for new actions or extension of planned actions as they arise.

Council will collaborate with other rural and regional Councils to share outcomes and seek alternative opportunities to support the community sector and to support place making activity.

Base Line data will be developed in 2018/19 related to the Strategy themes to assess impact of the specific initiatives and Council investment in strengthening of the community sector.

A specific number of projects will be assessed for value to the South Gippsland community using a Return on Investment process that include social impact with outcomes reported to Council through the annual review of the Community Strengthening Strategy.



Community



South Gippsland: Community Strengthening Strategy, 2018 - 2022