

# Mayor's Message



We have had a momentous week with the opening of a new 2,300 hectare forest in the Strzelecki Ranges in South Gippsland. Minister for Environment, the Hon Lily D'Ambrosio marked the delegation as we took in the wonderful surrounds of the park and celebrated such an achievement.

We were fortunate to have Gunaikurnai Land and Water Aboriginal Corporation board member Dr Aunty Doris Paton reveal the name of the new park on site as Brataualung Forest Park. It was named after the local Gunaikurnai clan, one of five Aboriginal clans in Gippsland, after a community consultation process.

Brataualung Forest Park includes endangered cool temperate rainforest and significant stands of Mountain Ash. The park will also provide protection to significant species including the Slender Tree-fern, Koala, Powerful Owl and the Strzelecki Burrowing Crayfish. Due to this the park is the first step in protecting sections of the Strzelecki Ranges and the flora and fauna that call it home.

The community has been advocating and providing support to increase conservation reserves in the Strzelecki Ranges since the mid-1990s. It was wonderful to see that hard work come to such a successful outcome. Our community is strong and this is just one event that demonstrates its commitment to the environment particularly when securing the future of our region.

We look forward to seeing the rest of the agreement between the State Government and HVP Plantations – to return a total of 8,000 hectares in the Cores and Links area to public management by 2028 – implemented for our future generations. I know that many of our community members will continue to push such an important topic until such a feat has been delivered.

Everyone involved should be extremely proud of their contributions so far as it is this kind of work that makes me proud to come from and represent South Gippsland.

**Cr Lorraine Brunt**  
**Mayor**