

South Gippsland *Matters*



Taking our needs to Canberra!

The Mayor and CEO took Council's advocacy efforts straight to the national capital last month, meeting with key Ministerial Advisors to progress two current applications for Federal Funding – one for the Korumburra Integrated Children's Centre and the other for refurbishment works at the Port Welshpool Long Jetty.

Joined by Rebecca Marriott (Vice-President of the Karmai Community Children's Centre) the trio met with advisors to the Hon Warren Truss (Minister for Infrastructure) whose team will be deciding on our funding

applications submitted as part of the National Stronger Regions Fund. With substantial commitments already made from the community, Council and State, Commonwealth funding remains the missing link to realising these projects.

The Children's Centre is planned to provide 120 new places for child care, kindergarten, out of school hours care, maternal and childhood services and specialist children's services, reducing barriers for families and enabling local parents to enter the workforce or return to study. It will co-locate current services that are unable to meet

increasing demand and have no capacity to expand.

Constructed in the late 1930s, at over 900 metres in length, Port Welshpool's Long Jetty is the longest timber jetty in Victoria. A fire in June 2003 partially destroyed the historic structure and it was closed due to safety concerns. Strong tourism and community drivers have seen Council advocate for the refurbishment of this Jetty for many years.

Funding decisions are expected to be announced in May.

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2015-16 Budget

The challenge remains, and in fact it's growing!

Like all councils we face the task of preparing a responsible budget that provides and maintains the services and spaces we need to be a healthy functioning community.

Cost-shifting, ageing infrastructure and rate capping heading our way next year, have added pressure on our resources to meet the growing demands. So more than ever, we've needed to know what you see as priority projects and services and what services you may need less of, or delivered differently. This year we turned our normal budget process on its head, asking you for feedback and what is important to you before we started the budget deliberations.

In October we conducted the OurSay online survey which engaged 762 people and produced 98 diverse suggestions, with around 4,223 votes to determine what the priorities were. Although not a perfect system the aim was to give more people an opportunity to participate earlier and this proved successful.

What we've been doing.

Subsequently, two community workshops distilled the ideas jostling for attention down to the top ten priorities. Council has since met with the authors of the top five projects to flesh out their viability and potential Budget allocations. We then conducted a further two weeks of online engagement in late February to refine the proposed Budget, which went to the March Council Meeting.

"The challenge is of course to balance the wishes of the community with the realities of what the community can afford and is willing to pay, and now with rate capping restrictions next year, that's even more challenging"



commented CEO Tim Tamlin. "The dilemma Council faces is that three quarters of the ideas were for projects that would add a significant increase to the budget and in turn, rates. Only a quarter were either cost neutral or aimed at reducing rates. The proposed budget contains funding for quite a few of the community generated ideas."

The second OurSay survey highlighted that physical infrastructure and community services are deemed more important than economic development. While just over 18% ranked the provision of basic core services and a greater reduction in rates as their number one priority, just over 50% scored this as least important to them.

The key theme of the ideas proposed was a request for Council to focus on improved productivity or a leaner structure.

"Let's keep the conversation going. There will now be a formal consultation process. This means the Budget will be placed on public exhibition for comment. This is the last opportunity you have to influence the final budget before it is adopted in late June."

The Proposed Budget is available on Council's website and in hard copy at Council and local libraries.

Council's Priority Projects

Council identified its three priority projects which will focus advocacy efforts in 2015 and pursue funding support from State and Federal Government.

The Korumburra Integrated Children's Centre remains on the list, with balance of funds sought via a Federal Government Grant.

The Corner Inlet Tourism Development Project also remains with Federal funding required to enable the restoration of Long Jetty, State funding to progress works at Agnes Falls and Government support to enable the dredging of the Toora Boat Ramp.

A new project to feature is the realignment of the South Gippsland Highway Koonwarra Black Spur bends. A Study and Business Case will be presented to the State Government by VicRoads for funding consideration.

A commitment to a narrowed field of projects proved successful last year, with funding secured and progress made on all key projects:

- Leongatha Heavy Vehicle Alternate Route (State: \$5.12M)
- Korumburra Integrated Children's Centre (State: \$1.6M)
- Several aspects of the Corner Inlet Tourism Development Project (State \$5M for the Long Jetty restoration) (State: \$1.2M to complete the Great Southern Rail Trail link between Koonwarra and Meeniyah).

It is hoped that by this year keeping the list small, but the hopes high, will see similar success. Council will continue to work on other key projects to progress them to an 'investment ready' stage. These include streetscapes for Foster, Leongatha and Korumburra town centres, expansion plans for SPLASH (gym and hydrotherapy pool) and the potential sealing of Grand Ridge Road.



Innovation = Savings

Over \$2M in savings have been captured by tight fiscal reviews of budgets over the past four years.

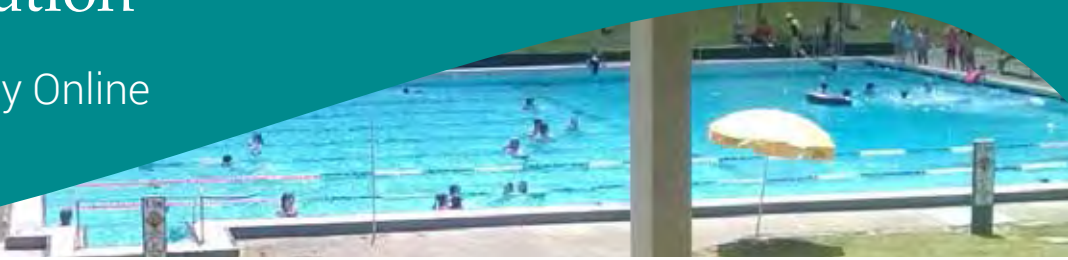
These have included:

- Removing discretionary expenditure
- Bringing the Koonwarra landfill back in-house
- Upgrading printers, copiers to significantly reduce paper usage and our printer service agreement
- Improving staff efficiency through new computer technologies
- Improving risk management to reduce insurance and WorkCover premiums
- Reducing energy costs through office & Depot operations, and installation of green street lighting
- Transitioning 4 cylinder car fleet to LPG

Some of these savings are funding new projects and initiatives requested by Council and the community. These remaining funds translate into \$5.8M of savings over the next 15 years. Productivity savings are a specific focus for this Budget.

Top 10 suggestions for budget consideration

Determined by the OurSay Online Survey & Workshop



1 FOSTER SWIMMING POOL

Request:

Work to keep the Foster Pool operating, heated and improved as an integral part of the Foster community.

2 MIRBOO NORTH SWIMMING POOL

Request:

Redevelop the Mirboo North Pool into a tourism recreational centre featuring the pools and a Recreational Vehicle Park.

Our response (Foster & Mirboo North Pools):

Advocates for both Foster and Mirboo North are keen to retain their pools, and are willing to work with Council to achieve this end.

At Foster there is a strong interest in developing a community ownership and management model, with Council contributing an agreed amount of funds each year, which could be similar to the current annual operational funding. Council is liaising with the Foster Pool Committee to investigate the options available for a greater role being taken by the community.

At Mirboo North the focus is on enhancing the recreational and tourism services connected to the Pool to increase the viability of the pool. Council is working with the Mirboo North Pool Planning committee to investigate the options and to identify resources required to enable viable additional activities.

Council is currently reviewing the Aquatic Strategy, and new options for community ownership, management and ongoing contribution to the provision of aquatic services are being considered.

3 FREE GREEN WASTE ALL YEAR

Request:

Green waste delivered to all Shire transfer stations should be free all year.

Our response:

Green waste disposal is never free. There is always a cost to Council to manage the waste. This cost can be shared by all ratepayers through their rates, or recovered from the users of the service through the current system of charging disposal fees. Charging disposal fees is consistent with most councils. The cost of providing the "free" green waste disposal service during the amnesty period in November and December each year is recovered from the general rates. If green waste disposal fees were removed, users of the new kerbside green waste collection service to be introduced from July would effectively be paying for their green waste disposal through the service charge as well as subsidising all residents disposing of green waste at transfer stations.

4. STONY CREEK EQUESTRIAN CENTRE

Request:

Council funding for the business case and final concept design for a proposed exhibition / equestrian centre at Stony Creek; and work with the committee to pursue its development.

Our response:

In 2012 Council undertook initial studies, including development of a costed concept plan, for development of an indoor equestrian centre. The South Gippsland equestrian community is keen to see this project advanced, and has indicated that an appropriate facility might not need to be as extensive as originally envisaged. Council proposes to allocate \$35,000 toward the business case, management and governance options, facility ownership model and revised concept plan; and seeks a \$5,000 contribution from the Equestrian Centre Planning Committee.

5. CULTURAL TOURISM

Request:

Reinstate the Arts Acquisition Policy and employ a dedicated Arts Officer to grow cultural tourism encompassing food, wine and arts. An Arts Centre is also sought to provide a high quality venue for music, theatre and visual art exhibitions and to house, maintain and grow Council's art collection.

Our response:

Council passed a resolution in October to support the Arts, review the current Arts policy, how it's implemented and the level of support being provided to the community. It is holding a Forum in May to enable the Arts and broader community to contribute to this review. Council already facilitates quarterly Arts Network meetings and at the most recent meeting outlined how it could more effectively utilise Council's community grants to leverage other local and external funding sources.

6 CSG, FRACKING AND MINING

Request:

Prior to the end of the moratorium, consult to assess support for Shire exemption from CSG, fracking and coal mining.

Our response:

Premier Andrews has recently extended the moratorium until a further Parliamentary enquiry is held later in the year. Council echoes community concerns about this issue and has passed a resolution that advocates supporting the State Government's moratorium on CSG.

CSG advocacy updates can be found on Council's website. (This is a matter of ongoing monitoring and advocacy that Council is already actioning, but does not affect the Budget.)

7. REDUCE RATE INCREASES TO BELOW CPI

Request:

The rate income must be calculated first with moderate increases below CPI, then the Budget be adjusted to suit the available income.

Our response:

The development of the Annual Budget and Long Term Financial Plan is complex, given that 85% of Council's services are regulated by legislative requirements. Other constraints include Government cost-shifting, risk management, asset management and subsidising tied Government grants to meet basic quality needs.

Opportunities to reduce costs exist through productivity savings and more efficient resource usage, shared service provision, user pays services and changes to service levels. Rates are the principal source of income, supplemented by a range of grants. Encouraging shire growth increases ratepayer numbers to share the rates burden.

Council is currently looking at incorporating a \$5.8M reduction in expenditure over the next 15 years arising from the productivity savings made thus far. It continues to seek more efficient and effective ways to deliver services.

Notwithstanding all of the issues above, Council is drafting a budget that looks to have a 4.9% general rate rise, with 3% forecast from 2016-2017 through to 2022/2023 and increasing to 4% again in 2023/24 onwards. This is a budget that is proactively responding to community requests and also preparing for rate capping. It is being achieved by extensively reducing any expansion projects in the Capital Works program and finding further productivity savings from across its services and administration.

Rigorous community debate is needed on what the community needs, wants and can afford as we head into these tighter fiscal years.

Top 10 suggestions for budget consideration continued...

8. FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY HOUSES

Request:

Council should allocate \$40,000 annually to support the four Community Houses for negotiated outcomes.

Our response:

Council acknowledges their important contribution and already provides all four Community Houses with individual premises, including essential maintenance, at nominal rental. The value of this contribution is \$10,000 p.a. in maintenance and \$30,000 p.a. in rent.

Council will maintain these contributions and continue discussions with them to build a better understanding of mutual goals and obligations.

Requests to support the operational activities of Community Houses could be a cost-shift from State to Local Government, and Council is not prepared to take on this increased financial burden.



9. COAL CREEK COMMUNITY PARK & MUSEUM

Request:

Further develop and market Coal Creek as a tourist draw card.

Our response:

Coal Creek already draws tourists, particularly for its popular family events, but is yet to be financially sustainable. While some have raised concerns with its ongoing costs and whether Council should remain involved in managing it, this facility is shared by over 20 local community groups and supported by many volunteers.

Council has resolved to receive a Business Plan by 30 June that addresses both concerns. It will have a focus on reducing the net cost to Council for running the facility, while at the same time looking for ways to increase revenue streams.

10. CREATE SAFE WALKING PATHS TO BEACHES

Request:

Improve local infrastructure in Venus Bay to deal with the influx of people during the holiday seasons that come to enjoy the beaches and gather pipis from the foreshore.

Our response:

Council has been working with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (formerly DEPI) and Parks Victoria to advocate for support to this holiday destination. It recently completed a 'Seasonal Population Impacts on Coastal Towns' study to identify the social and infrastructure requirements of each area. No additional funding is required for this initiative – it is contained within existing budget allocations.

More information on the OurSay Community Engagement results and feedback can be found on www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au

Resilient Businesses

A simple electronic card that looks like a credit card, could be kept in your wallet and hold all the vital information about your business. In the event of a disaster and loss of records, you could continue to operate by simply inserting the card in a computer to restore your operational essentials.

This is one of several innovative strategies touted at recent workshops with the tourism and business community to better support business to recover in the event of a disaster or emergency situation. Free Business Continuity and Resilience workshops were held in Mirboo North, Foster and Leongatha in February. Businesses were helped to identify their critical business functions and potential risks and to review their insurance and cancellation policies.

“A disaster may not be a fire or flood - it could be theft, herd disease, the death of a business partner, or a fire at a supplier’s warehouse,” explained Renae Littlejohn, Council’s Business Support Officer. “While we have a degree of control over our own business, we can still be severely impacted by what happens externally. Many of you could recall instances of a local business that has been destroyed by fire, with severe repercussions on nearby traders. Diffusing assumptions can also be a challenge, as we discovered when tourism bookings came to a sudden halt after past fires and floods. Promotional campaigns were urgently required to get the corrective message out.”

By working closely with Council the business community can respond to and recover more quickly and effectively from disaster. **For further information, contact the Economic Development and Tourism team on 5662 9200.**

Seasonal Population Impacts on Coastal Towns Study

Council is completing a ‘Seasonal Population Impacts on Coastal Towns’ study that has involved a survey of each of the coastal townships to find the social and infrastructure requirements of each area.

Following the initial survey to 5,000 residents and non-residents, including visitors to the area over summer, some key themes have emerged:

Some key issues identified included:

- car parking,
- beach access and footpaths,
- rubbish management,
- emergency management, and
- number of public toilets.

Included specifically in Venus Bay was the impact of pipi harvesting on beach access and car parking.

Next steps include further community discussion in each of the coastal towns and increase opportunities for seasonal visitors to participate.

For more information, please go to at www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au or contact Vicki Bradley, Social Planning Officer on 5662 9200.

Pictured: Yvonne Hess (Korumburra Florist) with Renae Littlejohn



Kerbside Green Waste Collection

Starting soon!

Residents are reminded that Council's new kerbside green waste collection for most urban households is set to start on 1 July, with 240 litre wheelie bins due to be delivered in May.

These will be collected fortnightly, on the alternate week to your recycling collection. The green waste will then be taken to a licensed facility in Morwell for composting.

The service is being introduced for households that receive kerbside garbage and recycling collections and will be compulsory, with exemptions for non-residential properties, units, flats and properties over one hectare. Properties outside the township areas and Venus Bay which do not have a compulsory kerbside service are also exempt. (Any exempt property owners currently receiving a kerbside garbage service can opt-in by contacting Council if they would like a green waste collection.)

Analysis of residential garbage bins shows us that more than 20% of content is green waste. When placed in landfill this breaks down and produces methane, a damaging greenhouse gas. Reducing organic waste to landfill will minimise these emissions and prolong the life of the Koonwarra site.

Green Waste Amnesty

Residents readily took advantage of Council's free green waste disposal offer during November and December to clean up their properties, delivering more than 6,800 loads of green waste to the six transfer stations.

"It's a great partnership that shows people taking responsibility for the safety of both their property and family during the fire season," said Peter Roberts, Waste Management Coordinator.



"And the benefits continue, with this waste being mulched and available free of charge to the public.

More information regarding the service, including frequently asked questions, can be found at:
www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au

New website under construction

A new dynamic website for Council is currently being developed. The site will be compatible with mobile devices and emerging technologies to make interactions with Council easier. Also featured will be the ability to make online payments and complete and submit certain applications.



"We're conscious that people are time poor and when using our website, the navigation and tasks they need to complete should be simple and clear," said CEO Tim Tamlin. "This is a substantial upgrade and we expect to go live by August, so stay tuned!"

National Broadband Network Update

The National Broadband Network (NBN) is about to be expanded in the Shire, with several towns soon able to connect to high speed broadband.

The fixed wireless tower at Port Welshpool should have been switched on by Easter. A cluster of towers providing services to Bena, Ruby, Meeniyana, Dumbalk, Koonwarra and Leongatha South should be switched on mid-year. Testing of these sites is occurring now and the exact switch on dates will be confirmed.

Nyora, Nyora North, Loch and Poowong fixed wireless towers are planned to be switched on early next year. Mirboo North has now been added to NBN Co's 18 month rollout plan and will be the first larger town in South Gippsland to receive the service.

Two new NBN satellites will be launched later this year which will provide high speed services to areas outside our towns next year. It is expected that these will resolve most of our broadband black spot issues in rural areas.

NBN Co regularly updates the program and you can view the roll out map at their website: www.nbnco.com.au



Council host SEATS Conference at Port Welshpool



Photo: CEO Tim Tamlin, Tim Weight (Deputy Chair Gippsland Regional Development Australia), Mary Aldred (CEO Committee for Gippsland), Mayor Cr Jeanette Harding, Danny O'Brien (Member for Gippsland South), Richard Elkington (Chair Gippsland RDA).

SEATS is an influential lobbying body that aims to stimulate and facilitate investment in transport infrastructure in south eastern New South Wales, eastern Victoria and the ACT. Their support in advocacy has helped Council attract funding for the Leongatha Heavy Vehicle Alternate Route and increased funding to road repairs in the Shire.

Fifty seven delegates from Councils and agencies down the eastern seaboard converged on Port Welshpool in February for the two day quarterly meeting.

Conference topics included the Gippsland Safe Freight Network, the Gippsland Food Plan, Transport Issues in Gippsland and the South East region.

The Mayor, Cr Jeanette Harding is the Chair of SEATS.

Latest Rail Trail Section Opens

Mayor Jeanette Harding was pleased to welcome Harriet Shing MLC to launch the Toora to Welshpool section of the



Great Southern Rail Trail (GSRT) in February. On hand were close to 200 enthusiasts keen to tackle the newly extended trail.

The Trail is already proving to be a major tourism attraction and it is estimated to draw an annual economic benefit of \$1.9M to South Gippsland once complete. A State Government contribution of \$1.29M from the Putting Locals First Program, together with a significant financial investment from Council will also see a 2.6km unmade section of the Great Southern Rail Trail known as the 'Black Spur' completed by the end of year, creating a seamless 70km Trail from Leongatha to Port Welshpool.

This is the latest chapter in a saga that began in 1892 when the South Gippsland rail line opened, joining Dandenong to Port Albert, with a later extension to Woodside and branch lines to Strzelecki, Outtrim and Wonthaggi. The railway was important for settlement and provided transport for forestry and dairy products to Melbourne. The line was closed to trains in 1992, a century after opening.

Soon after, Friends of the Trail formed and within a few short years the first leg from Leongatha to Koonwarra was opened.



Numerous grants, Council and community support for over 20 years have created an outstanding tourism asset that is drawing nature lovers from near and far.

"It has been an incredible partnership of community groups, volunteers, Council and State Government to bring this project to fruition," the Mayor commented. "It greatly strengthens our reputation as a diverse nature-based destination for visitors while serving our own health and recreation needs."

A Marketing Plan for the Trail has been endorsed and new branding adopted through a grant which will fund new signage and Trail infrastructure, a dedicated website and supporting promotional material.

Former Member for Gippsland South, Peter Ryan, was a strong advocate for the GSRT and should be commended for his support over many years.



Interact with Coal Creek

The old meets the new, with Coal Creek now hiring e-tablet devices for \$10 to guide you on a fascinating GPS tour of the Park.

Firstly you will be introduced to 'James Hardwick' who was the manager of the Coal Creek Mine in the 1890s. Through his footsteps you will learn about our pioneers and for some, your forefathers.

Videos, old photographs and information panels highlight these colourful characters that lived and worked in the Coal Creek mining settlement between the 1880s and 1920s, and the buildings they inhabited.



Coal Creek Courthouse

Cut out this voucher to receive a FREE ticket on the diesel train at Coal Creek.

Please call to confirm the train is available, as it is operated by volunteers 5655 1811

Expires: 30 September 2015



Image: findingourwaynow.com

ANZAC Centenary Celebrations

25 April 2015, ANZAC Day, marks 100 years since the Gallipoli landings and is our nation's annual commemorative day for acknowledging and remembering those who served not only in the First World War, but in conflicts and operations throughout the last century. We encourage you to get involved in the ANZAC Centenary. Visit www.anzacentenary.vic.gov.au to plan how you will commemorate, to share the stories of those you will be remembering and to remind yourself of the history – the reason we stop to remember.

As you travel around the Shire you may spot one of 55 special Commemorative ANZAC signposts, recently installed to honour pioneers who served in WWI. Many of our towns have Avenues of Honour and it's a perfect time to pause, enjoy these often magnificent trees and reflect on the enormous sacrifices made for our freedom.



ANZAC Room open at Coal Creek

Coal Creek's ANZAC room will be open for ANZAC Day for visitors to look at the refurbished exhibition highlighting the Dawes brothers. The room has a photographic Honour Roll board of all residents from Korumburra who served in WWI. There is also WWI memorabilia donated by local families.

Coal Creek Community Park & Museum
12 Silkstone Road, Korumburra, 3950
P 5655 1811
E: coalcreek1@southgippsland.vic.gov.au
W: www.coalcreekvillage.com.au

Open Thursday to Monday, 10am to 4:30pm
Open 7 days during the Victorian School Holidays
Admission is free.

Your Councillors

Coastal Promontory



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Calendar of Events

Date	Event
APRIL	
Fri 17 - Sun 19	Prom Coast Sea Change Festival 1
Fri 24 - Sun 26	Prom Coast Sea Change Festival 2
Sat 25	ANZAC Day Centenary
MAY	
Fri 1 - Sun 31	Gippsland Arts Festival
Fri 8 - Sun 10	Mirboo North Arty Gras & Art Show
JUNE	
Sun 7	Coal Creek Teddy Bears' Picnic
Sun 7	Loch Food & Wine Festival

For more events, go to:

visitpromcountry.com.au/events

Full details of these events, plus local markets and exhibitions are available on visitpromcountry.com.au (organisers are invited to submit events to this site).

Alternatively, phone 1800 630 704 for details or download the 'Prom Country' app from the App Store or Google Play.



Prom Country Visitor Information Centres

South Gippsland Highway, Korumburra
(Coal Creek)

Cnr McDonald & Main Streets, Foster
(Stockyard Gallery)

infocentre@southgippsland.vic.gov.au

1800 630 704 visitpromcountry.com.au

Leongatha Community & Visitor Information Centre

McCartin Street, Leongatha (Memorial Hall Complex)
Ph 5662 2111



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