

# Message from the Acting CEO



The Administrator, Julie Eisenbise has really hit the ground running and we have been busy trying to get her up to date with everything that's going on around the municipality. Julie and I are both intent to be out and about in the community, attending meetings of community groups and various events as they come up. There has been so much damaging news about Council over the past year or two, I feel that it is vital that you hear from us first-hand about all the good work that has been going on. If you're not a close follower of Council business, it would be easy to assume that the reported Council dysfunction would apply to staff and services too – but nothing could be further from the truth. Away from the headlines Council officers have been busy getting on with their work.

Last week the Minister for Local Government, Adem Somyurek announced that four Gippsland councils had been successful in applying for more than \$4 million to support a shared-services initiative. South Gippsland will be partnering with Bass Coast, East Gippsland and Wellington Shire Councils on a project that will assist all the participating councils to streamline their administrative processes and – eventually – save money on work that is currently being duplicated.

While the shared services project will be largely invisible in terms of what the community gets to see, one very public project is about to get underway. Work will soon commence on the Bair Street redevelopment, which is very exciting. The redevelopment is the culmination of several years of work by many people in the organisation and within the community. The catalyst for this project was having VicRoads divert heavy vehicles along Long Street, freeing up Bair Street for works that will make it more like a promenade than a dual-lane highway. It has been made possible with a \$2.7M contribution from the Federal Government's Building Better Regions Fund, \$1.5M from the Victorian Government's Fixing Country Roads Program and a \$1.2M Council contribution. I'd like to thank a number of Council's teams for the work they've done to get the project to this point: the Strategic Planners, the Infrastructure Engineers, the Communications team for its advocacy work and the Grants team for tirelessly pursuing funding opportunities.

A bit of a quirky one to finish on this week. The local libraries may not have Council logos on them, but the reality is that the West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation is a great example of a shared services project. Bass Coast, Baw Baw and South Gippsland all chip in to fund West Gippsland Libraries, which in turn provides a terrific service to our communities. Last week it was announced that – in the spirit of goodwill and to boost both membership and borrowing rates – all outstanding fines would be waived and that the libraries will no longer impose any late fees. So, to anyone who's been avoiding the library to get out of paying a fine, now's the time to get back into borrowing!

**Bryan Sword**

**Acting CEO**