

# Message from the Administrator



Last week we reconvened to consider three key strategic documents that we held over from the adjourned Council Meeting on 24 July. With Administrator Zahra and myself only joining Administrator Eisenbise the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup>, it was important for us to take the extra week to study and understand the Rating Strategy, Budget and Revised Council Plan.

We made a couple of changes to the Rating Strategy: phasing out the Rural Residential zone for the 39 grazing properties that sit between 18.3 and 20 hectares; and bringing the Vacant Rural Land rate back in line with the Farm rate.

After much consideration we decided to adopt a rate increase of 2.5 per cent, which is in line with the State Government's rate cap. While we appreciate that a number of people had called for a zero rate rise, on balance we thought that for the sake of savings of a dollar or two a week for the average ratepayer, the cumulative impact on services and facilities was too great a risk.

Looking back at the Long Term Financial Plans for 2015/16 and comparing them to this year's it is apparent that the rate cap has already effectively reduced rates by 7.6 per cent. While there is no disputing the pressures on household budgets, Council has to balance that with the need to deliver facilities and services to enable the residents of South Gippsland to enjoy the lifestyle that they seek and desire.

If we are to increase the population of South Gippsland and encourage investment and growth, then South Gippsland has to be an attractive place to live and work. That means that Council has to provide the sorts of services and facilities that will attract people to come here.

That's a serious and critical challenge that faces South Gippsland and every other rural shire in Victoria. The challenge is not to depend on constantly finding ways to keep cutting costs, but to grow revenue. Growing revenue occurs when we encourage more people to live and work here. It was on that basis that I endorsed the budget for 2019/20.

Anyone interested in these key strategic documents can find them on Council's website.

**Rick Brown**  
**Administrator**