

Message from the Administrator



Ten Victorian municipalities have been declared drought areas. Three of them – East Gippsland, Wellington and Latrobe are in our region and two of them are neighbours of South Gippsland Shire. The challenges these municipalities are facing and the hardship they are experiencing are a reminder of how blessed this Shire is.

It is necessary only to cross the Strzeleckis to appreciate how green South Gippsland is compared with other parts of Victoria, let alone the states to our north and west. It is very easy to forget the advantages the Shire has because of its climate and soil.

To these a third advantage can be added and that is the Shire's closeness to Melbourne. Agriculture already plays a critical role in South Gippsland's economy. However the lack of water north of the Great Divide provides an opportunity for agriculture to play an even greater role in South Gippsland than it does already. South Gippsland could become the food bowl of Victoria and one of Australia's leading food bowls.

This region already plays a major role in Australia's dairy industry. Burra Foods, Saputo and ViPlus are major employers in the Shire. The advantages this Shire enjoys could make it Australia's major dairy region.

There are good reasons for the dairy industry to grow and expand. Beef also is a mainstay of the Shire. Again, as the demand for high quality meat in Asia, the Middle East and other parts of the world continues to grow, the possibilities for South Gippsland are significant. The Shire's proximity to Melbourne also provides an opportunity to expand our horizons beyond dairy and beef. Fruit and vegetables are one possibility. The Shire has major growers of snowpeas and celery. The demand for fruit and vegetables will continue to grow and this growth provides the Shire with an opportunity to develop horticulture in South Gippsland.

However we cannot assume that the Shire will grow and prosper simply because it has these advantages. There is plenty of competition for investment and new industries. Attracting it requires long-term planning and thinking, patience and dedication. It is important that the Shire does whatever is necessary to make it happen.

Rick Brown - Administrator