

Administrators' Message



It has been another extraordinary week as we continue to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak. It is our intention to bring you a united message from all Administrators each week for the time being. All levels of government have a responsibility to serve their citizens, particularly in times of crisis. Our responsibility to you is to provide the support and services that will help South Gippsland respond and bounce back from this.

Council is rising to this challenge as it evolves. We have been taking measures to keep both the public and our staff safe, starting with closing our customer service centre to face-to-face interactions indefinitely. Despite these measures, Council is still very committed to serving our community. While staff are predominately working off-site now they are still available via phone, email and online.

We do however ask for your patience if there is a delay in getting to your calls straight away. All our Customer Service Officers are working away from the office and are doing their very best to keep up with the increased call demand at this time. As always, they are endeavouring to provide the services our community requires.

Consistent with the medical advice upon which the Prime Minister and State Premiers are making their decisions, many Council-run facilities have also been closed to help protect the community. This has meant the closure of Council's halls, Coal Creek Community Park and Museum, SPLASH, Long Jetty and Yanakie caravan parks, Franklin River Reserve and some recreation reserves. In line with advice from the State and Federal Government these closures do still allow for casual use – particularly at recreation reserves – for those getting in their daily essential exercise and doing maintenance jobs while practicing social distancing.

While this virus has forced us all to adapt the way in which we work and live, we are proud to see our services continue in this time of need – whether that is rubbish collection or roadside maintenance or help with a lost dog. We would like to thank all our staff for their adaptability during this time; crisis and change can bring moments of high stress but we have been proud to see our staff doing the best they can in the current circumstances. This is particularly true for our Environmental Health Officers who have rarely been more important than right now.

We are also focusing our efforts on providing community support during this time, starting with our business sector who are no doubt doing it tough. We have been contacting as many of our local entrepreneurs as possible to help them get through these times. As part of our support we have started a webpage that lists hospitality businesses that are finding innovative ways to trade despite current limitations. We hope that residents will continue to support local businesses in whatever way they can right now – from buying takeaway, getting home deliveries or purchasing gift vouchers for future use.

Similarly, we have been working with community groups to make sure they have all the information and advice they need to comply with the government directives that keep everyone safe.

We understand that this is a challenging time as we all try our best to adapt. Please continue to check in with and support each other in ways that are safe such as online communication. Over the coming days we will start to use Council's Facebook page to share ways to stay connected in a time where we may feel isolated in our own homes.

Our thoughts are with you all during this crisis – please stay safe, take the precautions seriously and we will all get through this together.

**Julie Eisenbise, Christian Zahra AM and Rick Brown
Administrators**