

# Administrators' Message



As we pass another important date while we continue to battle the COVID-19 crisis we hope that everyone in South Gippsland was able to recognise ANZAC Day their own way this year. Even though we were unable to attend the services and commemorate in the way we usually would, each of us took the time to honour our servicemen and women for their service and sacrifice.

Many held their own private remembrance at their front gates by conducting a 'stand to' as a sign of respect. It certainly is a wonderful sentiment and demonstrates our ongoing ability to adapt to the current times. We do however look forward to the future when we will all be able to come together again for these important events.

This week we've made significant decisions at the April Council Meeting which included endorsing the proposed Annual Budget with a proposed \$2 million support package for COVID-19. As Administrators we are proud that our team has been able to come together within a matter of weeks with a package that will support our community in such uncertain times now and into recovery.

The \$2 million COVID-19 support package includes a COVID-19 Hardship Policy to support residents having trouble making rate repayments, the option of interest-free rate deferrals for local businesses and an expanded grants program that will allow for more grant recipients and the introduction of a new business grants stream.

We've also included subsidised flu shots, waiving of some business permit fees and the development of a community outreach program in partnership with other key agencies to provide community support.

Both the Annual Budget and the \$2 million COVID-19 support package are proposed at this stage and we are now asking for our community's input to ensure that what we are offering is exactly what our community members need.

Similarly, the Draft Council Plan 2020-24 is also out for the community to review. The Council Plan is fundamental to Council's function as it determines the priorities and actions required over the next four years which are supported by the Council Budget. For more information on how to review and make a submission on both the Council Plan and Annual Budget please visit Council's website [www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au](http://www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au). Submissions will be accepted until 28 May.

We would like to take the time to acknowledge all our emergency service people who have been working so hard over the last couple of months. We wish them all the best and we thank them for their service. This includes all our emergency services, health care providers, cleaners and should be extended to our supermarkets and stores which continue to remain open and our farmers who are working hard to feed our nation at the moment.

We'd like to recognise the businesses in our community who are not only working hard to keep their own operations going, but also supporting others at this challenging time. One example of this is the generous donation from ViPlus of 100,000 face masks for the use of health and community

agencies. Distribution of these masks is currently being planned through our Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee and we are ever so grateful for the contribution.

We want to continue to say thank you to our community who have been exceptional at adhering to and understanding the importance of the current 'Stay at Home' measures which are keeping everyone safe. We know this is difficult but with the reduced infection rates of Coronavirus across the State it is heartening to see that our actions are making a difference. Stay strong and keep it up!

Thank you to everyone who has taken it upon themselves to check in on others and support their neighbours – you all understand the true meaning behind community. You are all the unsung heroes in this situation and we want to ensure you know your generosity is appreciated. The many phone calls, picking up of groceries and cooking meals to provide others has been wonderful to hear of and it really does bring us together as a community – even stronger than we already are.

These gestures of kindness can make all the difference to those who may be isolated and vulnerable in these circumstances. We owe it to each other to do all that we can to look after one another and we thank everyone in South Gippsland who has been doing just that.

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