

Administrators' Message



What a wonderful opportunity we have had with Gardening Australia showcasing our region and in particular the street plantings in Foster. We were very proud to have Gardening Australia visit South Gippsland and share with the rest of the country our beautiful edible gardens that are strongly valued by the local community.

The program clearly demonstrated the commitment of our staff who work tirelessly to keep these gardens in great condition. With each bed taking almost two weeks to prepare, another two weeks for planting and then ongoing maintenance it is no wonder our team are always busy.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank our Parks and Gardens team for all that they do, our gardens have always been a drawcard for our region and it would not be possible without their dedication. A special mention is also needed for their Team Leader Paul Robinson who took the time to conduct this interview with Gardening Australia and help put our region on the map nationally.

If you missed the program you can watch the snippet anytime at www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/streeteats

In other news at Council we continue to work hard to support our communities through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite our own rapid adjustment to the Victorian Government's emergency directions we have continued to provide essential services necessary for the health, amenity and safety of our communities.

Councils play a critical role in emergency relief and recovery and this has been no different during this pandemic. When confirmed COVID-19 cases started to climb in Victoria, we were quick to activate our municipal emergency management and pandemic plans alongside other councils across Victoria. We've been working with State agencies and a number of local services to coordinate activities including relief services for community members most in need.

All this work has only been the beginning and we are still working on providing further support for our community, particularly in the way of the proposed \$2M COVID-19 support package. At the heart of this package will be support for individuals and businesses who are having difficulty paying their rates. From there we hope to see an expanded grants program that will include business grants, subsidised flu shots, waiving of some business permit fees and the development of a community outreach program in partnership with key agencies to provide community support.

This package is currently out for community consultation as part of the Draft 2020/21 Annual Budget and is supported by the Proposed Council Plan 2020-24. If you haven't yet, you still have until 28 May to review these vital documents and make a submission. For more details you can visit www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/budgetandplan

While there has been a lot of talk surrounding our Annual Budget as of late we fully believe that for our region to recover from these difficult times we must invest. We believe that by preparing shovel-ready projects we can secure government funding and strengthen investment and jobs in our municipality.

We simply cannot achieve this by cutting rates and the long-term consequences of us doing so would be disastrous for Council's financial sustainability. Rather we see the best way forward as targeting our support to the people and businesses who need it while keeping local investment at the forefront.

In light of the impacts of COVID-19 we are also extending the closing date for applications to the Community Leadership Program by two weeks. With restrictions easing a little as we head into June this will give us an opportunity to reach more members of the community who may be interested in the program.

We hope that everyone is continuing to stay well and enjoying the new relaxed restrictions responsibly. Remember we owe it to one another to stay safe, keep a high level of personal hygiene and look out for one another.

Julie Eisenbise, Christian Zahra AM and Rick Brown - Administrators