

# Administrators' Message



*South Gippsland*  
Shire Council

As part of managing the COVID-19 crisis Julie and our CEO Kerryn Ellis attended the Gippsland Local Government Network last week to hear how our neighbouring councils are managing during this time. Each council is unique and therefore is facing slightly different challenges as they begin to prepare for recovery. It was great to learn how they have been coping during this time and to know that our recovery efforts are complimentary.

Speaking of recovery efforts, further announcements by the Victorian Premier that camping is now allowed and accommodation businesses can operate (both with some restrictions on communal spaces) is welcome news for our local business sector – not only for direct businesses but also for the positive flow-on affects this will have for food and other service traders.

Wilsons Promontory, one of our key drawcards, will no doubt be ready to welcome in visitors from far and wide but there will of course be some limitations still. Shared cooking facilities remain closed and there are restrictions on numbers in the cabins, but there will be much to enjoy for those heading down.

With the further easing of restrictions, we are excited to start welcoming back visitors in a safe manner. Our tourism sector is a great economic driver for our region and we know that many local businesses will be ready to welcome visitors with open doors.

While this is exciting we do still have to remain mindful of everyone's safety, so the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee has been preparing for the long weekend and our expected influx of tourists. It is certainly a delicate balancing act between community safety and a slow return to 'normal'.

On the topic of business, we must mention the decision for Target Country in Leongatha to transition to a Kmart. We know that this will be happy news for many in the community who have been wanting a full-service major retailer in town and it is pleasing to hear that this change will be made by 2021. The commitment to redeploy existing staff into the updated Kmart store is wonderful and we are thankful that such consideration has been taken.

Some other exciting news has been the Prime Minister's announcement of a \$1.8 billion boost to local government for road and community infrastructure projects. This certainly is a welcome investment in the sector and we thank the Prime Minister for the opportunity to generate more activity in our regions for projects that were not in our current budget.

We are currently working with staff to see what might be possible in South Gippsland, but we do understand that we will need to demonstrate that nominated projects are additional to our pre-COVID-19 work program for 2020/21. It may mean we bring forward projects from our future capital works program but we will keep the community informed as this develops further.

There certainly has been a lot of developments as of late with COVID-19 and our everyday lives. While it can be a whirlwind for many to keep up with the evolving changes we hope that it is bringing with it some excitement and things to look forward to for the future.

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