

Administrators' Message



What a week it has been at Council! Last Wednesday was possibly one of the most important Council Meetings of the year as we worked through a number of key issues. These ranged from strategic documents like our Council Plan and Annual Budget to other key community needs such as an integrated children's centre in Leongatha and community submissions for funding through Sport and Recreation Victoria.

Speaking of the Council Plan 2020-2024 and Annual Budget 2020/21, both documents have now been adopted and will help shape the future of the Council over the next twelve months through to the next four years. We are all proud to have such significant documents finalised, and very keen to implement the range of key priorities for the benefit of our community.

The Council Plan includes four new Council Plan objectives which are United Shire, Economic Prosperity, Integrated Services and Infrastructure and Customer Focused Organisation. These objectives set a different focus for the Council over the next four years. We hope that these objectives charter a successful course for South Gippsland for the future as we partner with local community and local business to ensure South Gippsland continues to be a terrific place to live, work and visit.

We are proud to have proceeded with the timely adoption of our Annual Budget to ensure that we can respond effectively to the COVID-19 crisis. The effect of proceeding to endorse the budget in a timely way is to ensure our \$2M COVID-19 Community Support Package will aid those people that are in need. By proceeding with a 2 per cent rate increase rather than rate rebates, we are able to ensure assistance is targeted. It would have been inequitable to provide the same level of support to both those who don't need it and to those that do need it. And that is why we have adopted the approach of the \$2M COVID-19 Community Support Package. We are very excited to begin implementation of the package to support our community to recover through this challenging period.

Difficult decisions also had to be made which included closing camping at Franklin River Reserve to ensure the safety of our community and visitors who attend the beautiful site, and also our staff who maintain the area. The reserve will now be used for day visitation only as the facilities available at the reserve are not adequate to provide for camping, and this was having a damaging impact on the reserve. Health issues were becoming a major concern as the toilets available were not coping with demand. Without kitchen facilities further concerns had been brought to our attention concerning cleaning of dishes and other camping gear at the site. While we are sad that this decision had to be made, the park will still be available for general use and we hope that people will continue to visit for the stunning view and to enjoy other forms of recreation such as picnics and kicking the footy.

Council also took the opportunity to recognise Janie Gordon and acknowledge her wonderful efforts on The Voice, and her active role in our community. Janie performed a wonderful rendition of Songbird for

her blind audition on the show and managed to turn all four judges' chairs. We want to wish Janie all the best and will certainly be watching as she progresses with her mentor Delta Goodrem. We have no doubt that her efforts on the show will match her commitment to her community where she shares her singing skills with her local students. Anyone who missed Janie's audition on The Voice can watch it online at 9Now.

For those that missed the meeting and would like to review some of the discussions surrounding the topics we have touched on you can watch our livestream on demand at

www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/live

Julie Eisenbise, Christian Zahra AM and Rick Brown – Administrators