

South Gippsland COVID-19 Community Support Package Update

At yesterday's Council meeting an update on the \$2M COVID-19 Community Support Package was provided. Eight initiatives, including two stages of business grants, are now complete and further nine are currently in progress. Council also endorsed funding for recreation reserve maintenance, a new grant stream for home-based businesses and funding to encourage people to shop local in South Gippsland.

The update noted that;

- 829 free flu vaccinations had been provided.
- \$83,000 in community grants had been awarded. This includes support for 30 community groups and 14 service providers. Community Grant applications are still being accepted.
- \$133,000 in business grants had been awarded. This included support for businesses with a shop front and tourism businesses.
- 366 businesses are benefiting from credited or refunded business registration fees.
- Street trading permits are being waived until 31 July 2021.

South Gippsland Shire Council's Chair Administrator, Julie Eisenbise is pleased with how the package is progressing.

"The aim of the Community Support Package is to provide meaningful assistance to our community. We understand that COVID-19 has affected everyone in our community in some way but we also acknowledge that the impacts have been disproportionate.

"Some people and some businesses will be doing it tougher than others. What we have been doing - and what we will continue to do - is work with the resources we have to try and help those that need it most and be flexible with how we respond," said Ms. Eisenbise.

The new initiatives endorsed at yesterday's meeting included annual maintenance grants for recreation reserve committees with a total funding allocation of \$126,000 and a Shop Local campaign costing \$40,000.

Under the COVID-19 restrictions, all community sport was cancelled during the winter season which has resulted in financial challenges for recreation reserve committees. The committees were faced with the possibility of having to charge clubs for facilities that they were unable to use or drastically reduce maintenance works. The one-off increase to the existing maintenance grants provided by Council to recreation reserve committees will help to ensure sporting facilities can continue to be maintained to their usual high standard and that sporting clubs are not adversely affected.

The Shop Local initiatives includes a commercial that will be featured on Gippsland television to encourage people to continue to shop locally. Updated advertising will continue into the new year.

“Council is determined to do what we can to match the enthusiasm of the local community for supporting local businesses at this difficult time. Many local residents are doing what they can to support local traders through what they purchase and how they direct their expenditure. We want to encourage this to continue both in the lead up to Christmas, which will be vitally important for local traders, and beyond.

A balance of \$504,390 remains in the Support Package. For more information on the COVID-19 Community Support Package, please visit www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/covidsupport

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