

# Mayor's Message



In my message this week, I would like to focus on the March Council Meeting that was held on Wednesday 16 March. As a Councillor, I represent everyone in South Gippsland, and as Mayor, I am in a unique position in that I get this platform every week to speak to you all. I take that very seriously and believe that the actions taken at Council Meetings are important for everyone to hear about.

One of the topics we discussed this week was changing the Volunteer Policy from being a Council policy to a CEO policy which is in line with the role that our volunteers play as part of Council operations. I understand that policies aren't everyone's cup of tea, however they are vital to the operation of an organisation such as South Gippsland Shire Council. I want to assure everyone that the revocation of this policy does not mean that our Council volunteers will be moved on. Volunteers are highly valued and play a vital role in the operation of Council, as they do in a number of other organisations across South Gippsland. This change reflects the way in which volunteers report within Council; it is operational in nature. It also does not diminish the role of our volunteers and I want to assure the community that volunteers are not being removed from Council as a result of this policy being revoked.

We also decided that work should commence the formal processes to seek a tenant for the Leongatha Early Learning Centre. It is anticipated that the construction phase of the project will be completed in November 2022 which will allow time to prepare the building for lease commencement in January 2023. Initially, the lease will be offered for five years. This new facility will provide an additional 120 registered places and provide long day care, kindergarten, maternal and child health and allied health services. It will be a fantastic asset for our community and I look forward to it being open.

Councillors also considered the proposed road discontinuance and sale of part of Gardner Lane, Poowong. The road discontinuance was endorsed by Council which will allow part of the road to be sold and a new sealed section be constructed. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who made written submissions to this proposal, and to those who attended a submission hearing. These strong community voices assisted us, and Council staff in determining a way forward for this proposal. This shows the power of community voices united as one.

We also deliberated the sale and rezoning of 15 Old Waratah Bay Road, Fish Creek and 6A

Warralong Court, Leongatha. At the meeting, Councillor Gilligan moved a motion to ensure that any surplus funds from the sale of 15 Old Waratah Bay Road, after costs have been deducted, be considered as part of the budget process for reinvestment in open space in Fish Creek. This is a huge win for our community in ensuring that no open space will be lost in this vibrant town.

The final piece of business from this month's meeting that I would like to update you about is regarding the Delegations to the CEO. This change will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the whole organisation. Part of this includes changes to the financial delegation that will increase the CEO expenditure limit, and ensure that services and projects can be progressed in a timely manner, and are not held up unnecessarily. Governance practices include controls to ensure this delegation is used and reported appropriately. The Councillors and I believe that this is a really positive good governance step. We look forward to setting the Budget and Council Plan that then allows the CEO, through this delegation, to enact the adopted decisions of Council.

**Cr Mohya Davies – Mayor**