

Continued Advocacy for South Gippsland's Future

Council has continued its strong recent track record of advocacy for a brighter future for South Gippsland.

South Gippsland Shire Council raised two motions at last week's Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) State Council meeting, which were endorsed for advocacy. MAV represents all councils in Victoria and motions adopted by the Association are then discussed, and advocated for, with the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments.

The motions raised by Council were:

Road Betterment with Disaster Funding

- 1. Simplify the methodology and data inputs required in Victoria to prove Council's eligibility for Disaster Recovery Funding, bringing it in line with other States and ahead of any national unification of claims processes.*
- 2. Financially support Local Government to ensure post-disaster funding programs enable betterment to improve assets beyond the 'previous condition' to provide resilience against future damage resulting from disaster events.*
- 3. Financially support Local Government with an ongoing betterment program to upgrade existing public infrastructure in readiness for increased exposure to future disaster events.*

Current funding arrangements through Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA) permit roads and related infrastructure that have been damaged due to natural disaster to be repaired, but only to their previous state. Road improvements cannot be undertaken using this funding. This means that councils are unable to build more resilient roads that could help to prevent, or reduce, damage during future natural disasters.

This motion was unanimously endorsed by the member councils.

Guidelines outlining minimum consultation requirements

That the MAV advocates to the Commonwealth Government to develop in partnership with state and territory governments, a community engagement framework which includes local

government authorities and minimum consultation requirements to be imposed on proponents of projects that achieve 'Major Project' status.

This motion specifically relates to South Gippsland's Shire Council's experiences and concerns relating to Offshore Wind development, which has received 'Major Project' status from the Commonwealth Government as well as being a focus of the Victorian State Government, including achieving renewable energy targets and transition planning for Latrobe Valley and surrounds.

Projects achieving Major Project status almost always have significant impacts on the communities they are located in. It is important that these communities feel Major Projects are happening with them, rather than to them.

There is an opportunity to improve and stipulate the requirements of consultation and engagement with these communities. This community connection also has the potential to improve and support these projects, potentially saving time and money.

Council's successful motion will mean we have the support of the MAV to advocate to ensure that the Commonwealth Government, in partnership with States and Territories, will develop a community engagement framework which would be imposed on the developers of projects which receive Major Project status. The framework should detail expectations for all three levels of government (Federal, State and Local) to collaborate and participate in this engagement in a meaningful way.

This motion was supported by 96 per cent of councils.

The successful motions topped off a productive advocacy week for South Gippsland Shire Council with a meeting also held with the Honourable Ingrid Stitt – Minister for Early Childhood and Pre-Prep. This meeting provided an opportunity to advocate for funding to support the renewal of aging early years infrastructure. Council will have an important role to play in partnership with the state and commonwealth governments to ensure the roll out of new early years education programs are successful across all South Gippsland communities. Funding to support Council to build new and upgrade existing early years facilities is a vital element of this work. The conversation South Gippsland Mayor Cr Nathan Hersey and Chief Executive Officer Kerryn Ellis had with Minister Stitt was very positive, with a clear commitment to continue to work closely together in this area.

Quote attributable to Cr Nathan Hersey, Mayor South Gippsland Shire Council:

"We are appreciative that our motions were accepted by the other councils and that they will now be advocated for by the MAV.

One of the strongest advocacy tools available at local government's disposal is the MAV, with representation of the collective voice of councils from across Victoria. We look forward to seeing how these motions progress now they are in the capable hands of the MAV."

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