Connectivity: NBN upgrades, minimise telephone black spots and increase community transport options

South Gippsland has telecommunications challenges due to highly undulating topography, heavy vegetation and a large number of small and dispersed communities. As a result, many households have unreliable internet connections and sporadic mobile coverage.

With increasing numbers of people now working and studying from home, the need for secure and stable telecommunications in South Gippsland is more important than ever. Connectivity issues also impact our local industry, in particular our agricultural sector who are unable to access innovative new technologies, and small businesses who need reliable connectivity for simple essential business needs like EFTPOS machines and point of sale systems.

Reliable connectivity is also critical in an emergency. Telecommunications must be recognised as an essential service and providers should be required to meet service continuity standards. This is required to prevent significant, prolonged and widespread outages during natural disasters.

Over recent years South Gippsland has welcomed Federal investment in NBN and mobile upgrades, however additional support is still required. Currently 5G is not available anywhere in South Gippsland and many of our large towns are still reliant on Fibre to the Node and Fixed Wireless technology.

Our region needs the certainty of committed, ongoing, funding programs to build our community capacity and connectivity.

Public Transport

People without a vehicle and driver's licence are significantly disadvantaged in South Gippsland. The low level of community transport and limited public transport connections with Melbourne and across our region, make it almost impossible for these people to independently access work, education and social opportunities as well as essential services like health, shopping, and public services. This low level of community transport paired with inconsistent telecommunications and internet connectivity create significant vulnerabilities in our community.

Our Request

South Gippsland Shire Council is seeking:

- A commitment to continue the Federal Government's Regional Connectivity Program and the Mobile Black Spot Program and explore innovative technology solutions.

- Funding support to increase community transport options across South Gippsland, particularly linking people to essential services such as health, education and social services.

- To fund fibre to premises technology in Foster, which has not yet been identified for upgrade.