

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

DRAFT Council Plan 2025 - 2029



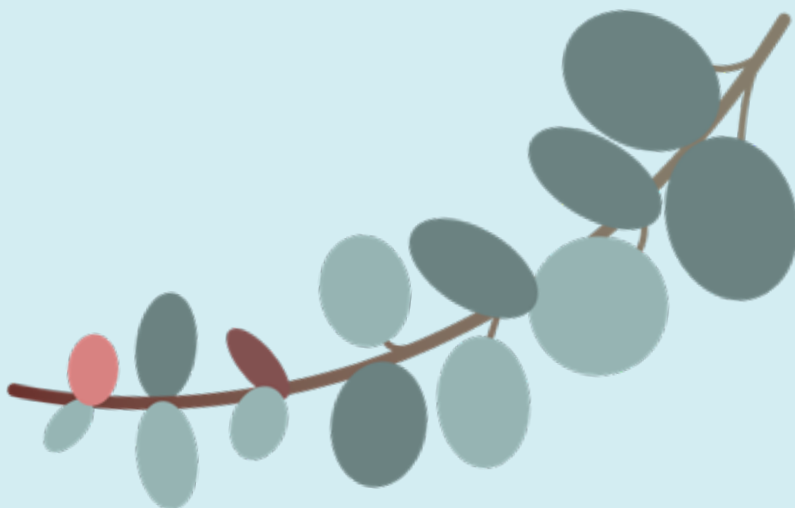
South Gippsland
Shire Council

Thank you

Council would like to acknowledge and thank the South Gippsland community who provided substantial feedback that helped to drive development of this plan.

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Custodians of South Gippsland and pay respect to their Elders, past, present, and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.



Purpose of this document

This Plan is a key strategic document that aligns with Council's Community Vision.

It sets out how Council will work towards achieving the priorities outlined in the Vision during its four-year term, where its efforts will be focussed and how outcomes and success will be measured.



Foster

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Introduction

South Gippsland is a place to love and protect—a varied and spectacular region with unique towns, villages, and hamlets, all supported by passionate communities. We are producers and land managers: practical, entrepreneurial, and creative people who deeply value our environment and way of life.

The purpose of this Council Plan 2025 - 29 is to identify the priorities we aim to achieve and the methods by which we will accomplish them. Central to this Plan is our commitment to supporting community-led solutions. We will work collaboratively and respectfully with our communities to deliver this Plan together.

Priority actions, funded through the Budget, will be developed each year to advance the Plan. We will report on our progress throughout the duration of this Plan and will continuously review our actions to ensure that our efforts remain focused and effective.



Retail, Loch

Council Plan Vision Statement

*"Our South Gippsland community is connected, resilient and empowered.
We value our unique townships, our rural and coastal landscapes, while balancing growth.
A prosperous region, we draw strength from: visitor experience, emerging and
creative industries, our agricultural sector and natural environment.
We lead with purpose, are forward thinking, and deliver consolidated and sustainable services
for our community."*

South Gippsland Shire Councillors 2025-29



A Message from our Mayor and Councillors

"As Councillors who live and work within the South Gippsland community, we are committed to getting it right"

Cr John Schelling

Mayor

South Gippsland Shire Council



Developing a Council Plan is one of the most important tasks we undertake as Councillors, as it outlines our responsibilities and guides our direction over the next four years. As Councillors who live and work within the South Gippsland community, we are committed to getting it right. We want to deliver outcomes that reflect the interests of our community now and into the future.

To help us do this, we embarked on a large community engagement initiative in February, where we spoke to as many people as possible about what they would like to see happen in South Gippsland over the next four years. The response we received was terrific, and in total, we gathered over 1,100 suggestions from people on the actions they would like to see Council deliver.

However, this also presents us with a challenge. Most of the suggestions we received—on the whole well-considered and very reasonable—require additional funding to deliver. While Council's financial position is currently solid, it is the decisions that we make today that will ensure that this continues to be the case. Whilst we will always strive to deliver for our community and work harder to do more with less, we cannot meet all of the aspirations of our community.

One of the key themes that emerged as we worked to develop the Council Plan was the need to make some tough, strategic decisions to ensure Council remains financially sustainable. We need to make changes.

One area we will focus on over the next four years is how we can prevent, or mitigate the impacts of, Victorian government cost-shifting. This is a challenge because we don't want to say no to a new building that we know we will eventually have to maintain, or cease a service that we know is valued by our community. However, we can't keep taking on more and more. At the end of the day, something has to give.

Another area we need to address is Council's large asset portfolio, which is rapidly aging. We need to explore different ways to manage this portfolio and to share and maintain the assets more effectively. Importantly, we need to also look at the assets that we are maintaining that belong to the Victorian Government.

There is much we can do, and the changes we make at Council will be made only after a genuine engagement with our community. The next four years are exciting, and I'd hate for anyone to think that we don't have plenty planned. There are many achievements and outcomes ahead. However, this period will also be one for honest conversations—where we discuss not just where we want Council to be for this four-year period, but for many years to come.

A Message from the Interim CEOs

“A Council Plan isn’t built by one person, it is a collaborative effort between Council and community.”

Allison Jones and Tony Peterson

Interim Chief Executive Officers
South Gippsland Shire Council



We are excited to present the new South Gippsland Council Plan, marking the beginning of an important new chapter for our community. A Council Plan is not the work of one individual but a collective effort, shaped by collaboration between the Council and the community. For this plan to succeed, it must reflect community sentiment while also being practical and achievable. We are confident that this document meets this strategic challenge.

It has been beyond a privilege to support the new Councillor group in developing this plan. With a blend of new and returning Councillors, we have seen the exchange of innovative ideas and knowledge, creating a strong strategic foundation and infusing fresh approach in all that we do. Developed with great care over an extended period, this plan places the community at the heart of every strategy.

Community Engagement

To ensure the Council Plan accurately represents the needs of our residents, we conducted extensive community consultation. We engaged with 688 individuals through 22 separate events across 17 townships. We commend our Councillors for their enthusiasm and dedication during this process, which facilitated meaningful feedback and genuine conversations.

What Will This Plan Deliver?

The Council Plan sets out concrete actions that will drive positive changes for South Gippsland. It will involve the creation of Strategies that will provide a framework for future decision making, it will get some runs on the board in areas where we heard our community say “do more” and it will provide us with justification to be bold in our efforts to deliver better outcomes for South Gippsland.

At its core, this plan focuses on financial sustainability. We are committed to avoiding unrealistic promises with hefty price tags that could compromise our long-term financial goals. Our Councillors recognise that we are working in a financially constrained environment, and this plan reflects that reality. At the same time, it is not without investment in key areas. For example, the plan includes new funding allocations for key areas identified through our community engagement such as additional support for volunteering through community grants, support for young people and emergency recovery.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the South Gippsland community for your enthusiasm and valuable contributions throughout this process. A special thank you to our Councillors and staff for your commitment and collaborative efforts. Together, we look forward to seeing this plan come to life over the next four years, driving positive change for our community.

Our region

South Gippsland encompasses 3,308 square kilometres including extensive coastal areas and the spectacular Wilsons Promontory National Park.

South Gippsland Shire Council is located in coastal south-eastern Victoria, approximately 100 kilometres south-east of Melbourne. It is comprised of three wards: Tarwin Valley, Strzelecki and Coastal Promontory.

The original inhabitants of the South Gippsland area were the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people.

Much of the rural area is used for forestry and agriculture; with dairy, beef, sheep and horticulture being the main agricultural pursuits. Fishing, viticulture and tourism are also important industries that contribute economic diversity to the region.





Rugged Coastline, South Gippsland

Quick Facts - South Gippsland



30,823 residents live in South Gippsland.



12,234 people work in South Gippsland.



35,869 forecast population by 2036 in South Gippsland.



Population density of 9.22 people per square kilometre.



Almost half, or 49.2 per cent of the population is aged 50 or over.



824 kilometres of sealed roads.



1,275 kilometres of unsealed roads.

Main Attractions

- Wilsons Promontory National Park
- Port Welshpool Long Jetty
- Cape Liptrap Coastal Park
- Strzelecki Ranges
- Coal Creek Community Park and Museum
- Great Southern Rail Trail
- Grand Ridge Rail Trail
- Nyora Speedway
- Sporting Events
- Agnes Falls
- Events and Festivals
- Art Galleries
- Villages and Towns
- Specialist wineries, gin distilleries and breweries.



South Gippsland Shire Council 2025 - 2029

The current Council was elected in November 2024 on a four-year term. The Council is made up of nine councillors, including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. South Gippsland Shire Council is divided into three geographic wards. Each ward is represented by three Councillors.

Local councils are responsible for supporting their local community through the delivery of services including waste management, community safety, planning, environmental health, maternal and child health, infrastructure maintenance, planning and delivery, economic development, recreation facilities and more.

Elected by the South Gippsland community strong engagement is critical for ongoing success.

Coastal Promontory Ward



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Strzelecki Ward



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Tarwin Valley Ward



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COUNCIL PLAN 2025 - 2029

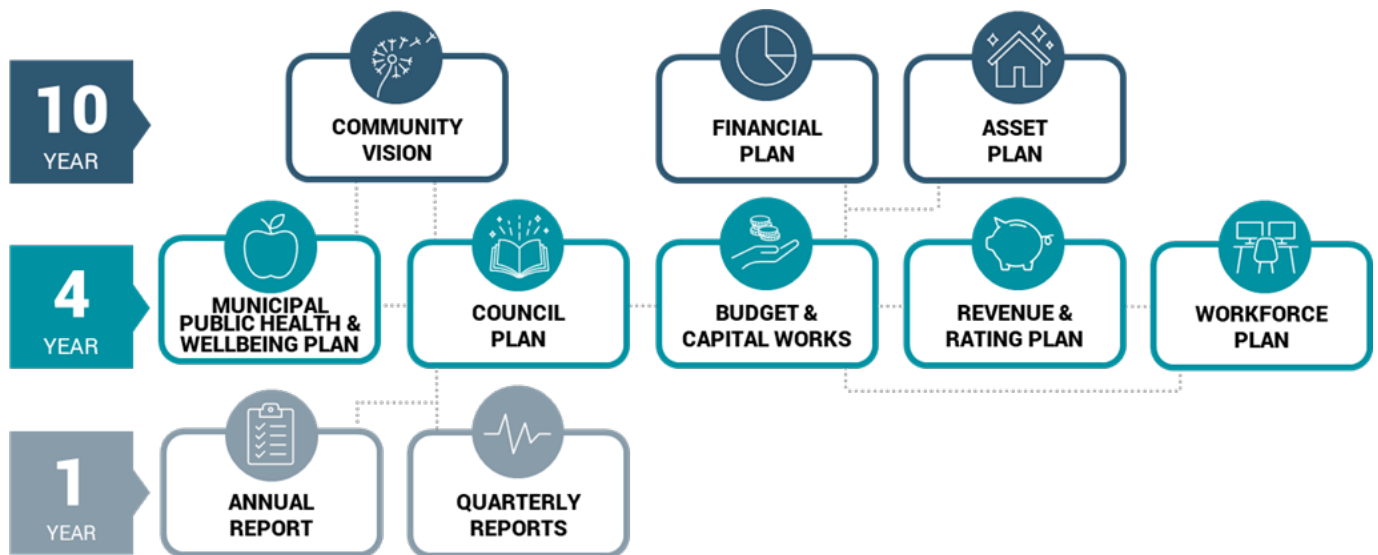


About this Plan

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework guides Council in identifying community needs and aspirations over:

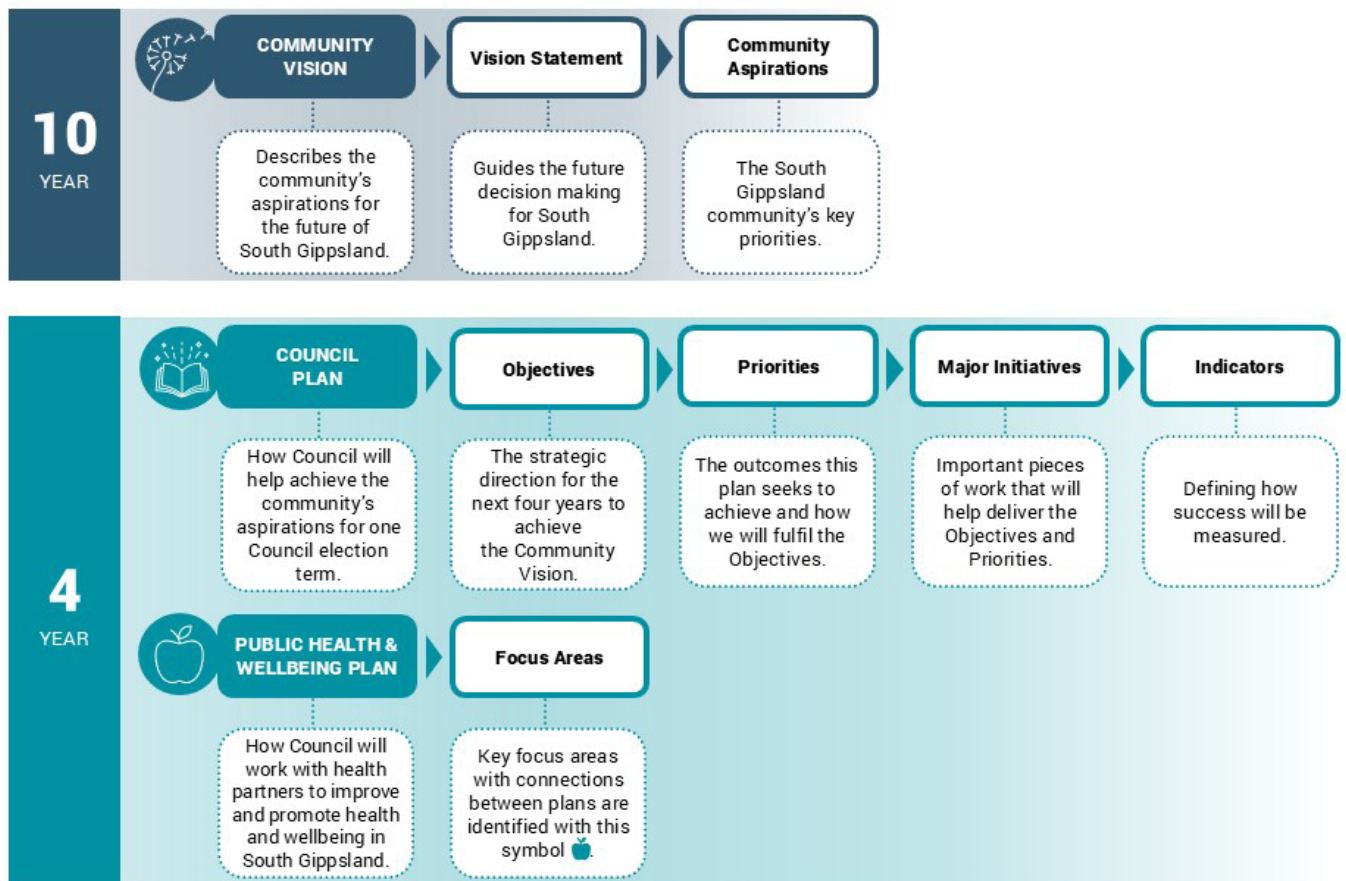
- The long-term through the Community Vision and Financial Plan
- The medium-term through the Council Plan, Workforce Plan, and Revenue and Rating Plan; and
- The short-term through the Department Plans and Budget.

Council holds itself accountable through the Organisational and Financial Performance Reports and the Annual Report.



How to read this document

The Council Plan is linked to the Community Vision 2040 and the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing 2025 - 2029 Plan. The diagram below describes how these documents integrate.



Community Vision

The Shaping South Gippsland Community Vision 2040 was developed in collaboration with the community and sets out the goals, opportunities and aspirations for the future of the Shire. The Vision belongs to Council and the people of South Gippsland and sets out a Vision Statement and five Vision Priorities. These were developed by the Vision Community Panel in 2021/22 and represent what our community members most value.

Vision Priorities

Following extensive engagement, five priorities were developed by the Vision Community Panel to represent what our community members most value about our community.

Community Vision Statement

"South Gippsland: celebrating our First Peoples, diverse populations, culture, heritage, environment, agriculture and industries. We support and empower positive change through education and action.

We sustainably adapt to protect and enhance our unique natural environment, towns and villages through community-led planning and initiatives.

We're an inclusive community, a place where people come to visit and want to stay."



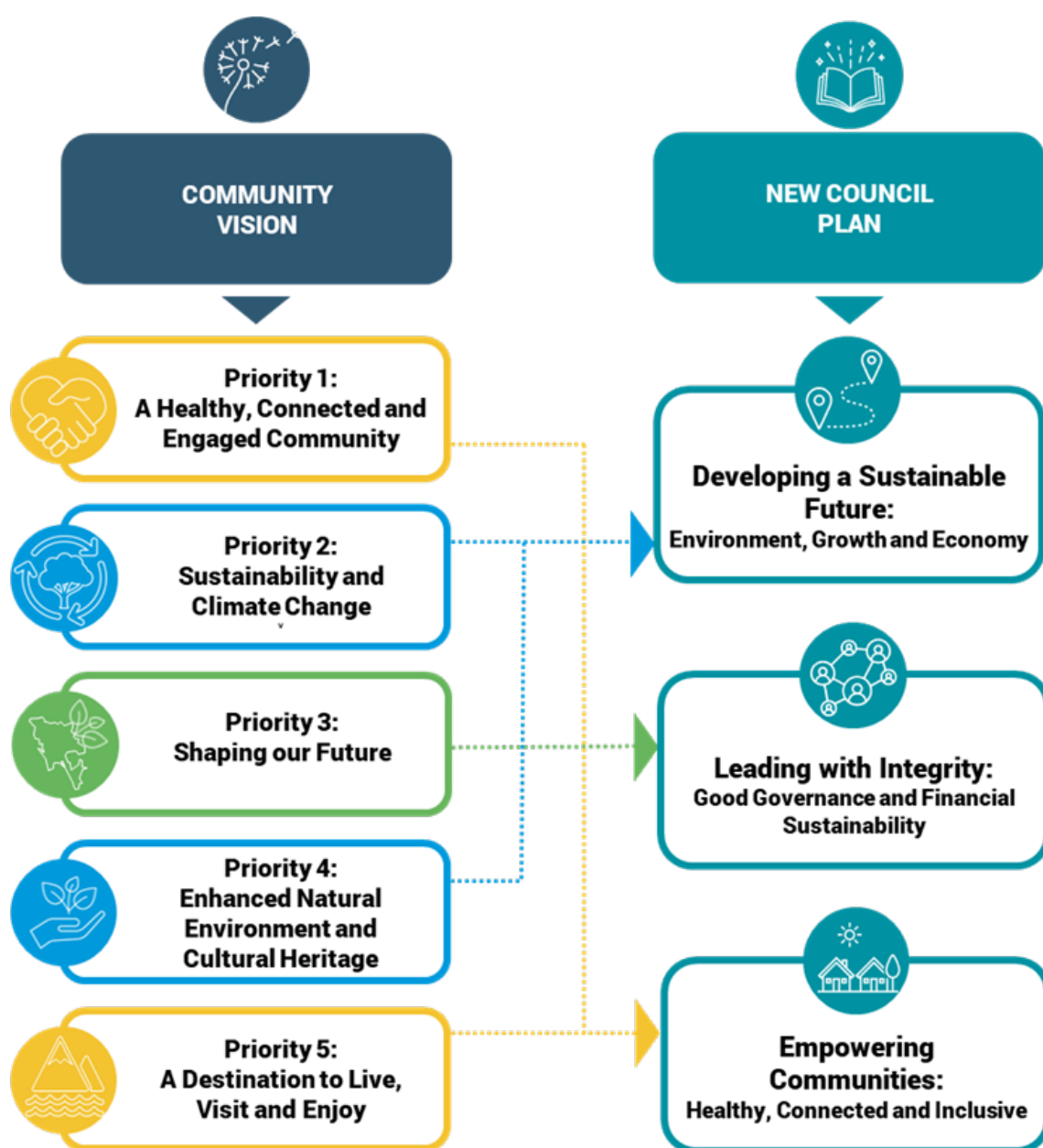
Dickies Hill, Mirboo North

How do the Vision and Plan connect?

The Council Plan contains three themes and connected objectives that will direct Council activity and assist in meeting the aspirations outlined in the Community Vision 2040 priorities.

These themes are:

- Leading with Integrity
- Developing a Sustainable Future
- Empowering Communities



Council's Strategic Objectives

The Council Plan 2025-2029 is structured around three key themes that guide the Council's activities and ensure alignment with the priorities set out in the Community Vision 2040. These themes are:

Leading with Integrity

This theme focuses on fostering transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership within the Council. It aims to build trust within the community through clear, responsible decision-making and the upholding of high standards in governance. Key initiatives under this theme may include promoting civic engagement, strengthening public accountability, and ensuring ethical practices in all aspects of Council operations.

Developing a Sustainable Future

A commitment to long-term sustainability is at the heart of this theme, which focuses on preserving resources, protecting and enhancing our environment, and promoting responsible economic and social development.

The goal is to ensure a balanced approach to growth that supports our economy, environmental stewardship, innovation, and resilience in the face of future challenges. Initiatives could include attracting new investment, advancing renewable energy solutions, and fostering sustainable planning.

Empowering Communities

This theme emphasises strengthening local communities by providing the tools, resources, and support needed for individuals and groups to thrive. It focuses on fostering inclusion, enhancing access to services, and encouraging active community participation. The aim is to empower residents to take part in decision-making processes and create positive change within their neighbourhoods. Key actions may involve promoting volunteerism, and investing in local programs and services that support well-being and equity.



Meeniyah, South Gippsland

Leading with Integrity

Good Governance and Financial Sustainability

Our community told us they want:

- *Strong advocacy for South Gippsland is needed, particularly around:*
 - road and traffic improvements
 - roadside weed control
 - recreation improvements
 - playgrounds and open space area
 - volunteers support.
- *Careful financial management*
- *Equitable consideration for towns across South Gippsland.*

Leading with Integrity

Objective: Good Governance and Financial Sustainability

STRATEGIES: What we will do	
1.1	Implementing strategic reviews of Council's asset portfolio to strengthen community connections.
1.2	Ensure Council's financial sustainability through prudent management and strategic planning.
1.3	Build community confidence through transparent, inclusive and accountable governance practices.
1.4	Ensure innovative service delivery in line with community aspirations.
1.5	Continue to build trust and listen to our community using multiple communication methods and engagement.
1.6	Partner with our community to advocate for our shared interests to the Victorian and Australian governments.
1.7	Maintain our assets (roads, buildings, recreation facilities, paths and trails) through responsible financial management.
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: What will success look like?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver at least 60 percent of Council's Capital Works Program. • Strong level of community satisfaction with our consultation and engagement. • Strong level of satisfaction with our lobbying on behalf of the community. • Positive trends in the Victorian Auditor General's ratings of Council's financial sustainability. • Maintain high levels of employee engagement at Council. 	
RELEVANT STRATEGIES / PLANS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue and Rating Plan 2025 - 2029 • Community Engagement Strategy 2020 - 2024 • Long Term Financial Plan - 2024/25 - 2033/34 • Workforce Management Strategy 2022 - 2026 • Gender Equality Action Plan 2022 - 2026 	

Developing a Sustainable Future

Environment, Growth and Economy

Our Community told us they want:

- *Reduced waste across the Shire including introduction of a Food and Organic Waste Service and support with waste services.*
- *Attention given to animals, including animal welfare, off leash areas and enforcement. There was also support for conservation of native wildlife, the establishment of wildlife corridors and habitat protection.*
- *Protection for South Gippsland township heritage and identity.*
- *Support for local businesses including:*
 - *making it easier for businesses to do business*
 - *Support for economic growth in smaller townships*
 - *A partner approach for business compliance*
 - *Support for business attraction.*
- *Consideration of the environment, including:*
 - *Eradication of invasive weeds*
 - *Improved biodiversity*
 - *Climate and coastal protection*
 - *Coastal adaptation and disaster mitigation planning.*
- *Playground and park improvements.*
- *Protection of agriculture.*

Developing a Sustainable Future

Objective: Environment, Growth and Economy

STRATEGIES: What we will do	
2.1	Provide clarity through our Planning Scheme in areas such as township boundaries, preservation of township identity and heritage, protection of agricultural land and identify areas for future growth including industrial land.
2.2	Support business and industry in events and activities to drive economic growth in local communities and connect key tourism destinations to drive local spend and investment opportunities.
2.3	Deliver waste management through collaboration with industry and government partners.
2.4	Explore the potential of our path and trails, including the Great Southern Rail Trail, to enhance our visitor experience and increase awareness of this our region.
2.5	Demonstrate Council's commitment to preserve, protect and enhance the natural environment across South Gippsland.
2.6	Develop an integrated land management approach including enhanced weed management on Council roads and explore alternatives to chemical treatments.
2.7	Support domestic animal management through community education and promoting collaboration to enhance responsible pet ownership and community safety.
2.8	Support community initiatives to protect native wildlife.
What will success look like?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased waste diversion from landfill (LGPRF). • Maintained high levels of community satisfaction with Waste Services. • Business support events hosted regularly and well supported. • Increased interaction with local businesses. • Increased visitation to the Great Southern Rail Trail website and social media. • Increased visitation to the Visit South Gippsland website. 	
RELEVANT STRATEGIES / PLANS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Gippsland Planning Scheme • Economic Development Strategy 2021 - 2031 • Visitor Economy Strategy 2021 - 2031 • Great Southern Rail Trail Visitor Experience and Marketing Plan 2022 - 2031 • Domestic Animal Management Plan 2022 - 2025 • South Gippsland Coastal Strategy 	

Empowering Communities

Healthy, Connected and Inclusive

Our community told us they want:

- *More support and recognition for volunteers. Some respondents suggested that support could be delivered via insurance or maintenance grants assistance.*
- *A new performing art space for South Gippsland. Many respondents requesting a Leongatha location and refurbishment of Memorial Hall.*

Empowering Communities:

Objective: Healthy, Connected and Inclusive

STRATEGIES: What we will do	
3.1	Build a relationship with Traditional Custodians of South Gippsland to support our common environmental, cultural, social and economic objectives.
3.2	Partner, support and encourage volunteerism and celebrate our volunteers ongoing commitment.
3.3	Partner with youth and youth focussed organisation providers and industry to facilitate engagement and connection to community.
3.4	Sustainably plan and design our open spaces to enable healthy lifestyles.
3.5	Improve the customer journey across the organisation.
3.7	Empower our communities to build community resilience in response to environmental challenges.
3.8	Plan for connected communities through improved transport networks, arterial roads, footpaths and public and community transport options.
3.9	Enrich the lives of all community members through community and cultural events, skills development, creative industries, sport, recreation and performance spaces.
3.10	Partner, support and encourage relationships with our community; including the development of community plans.
What will success look like?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong level of community satisfaction. • Strong result for decisions made in the interest of the community. • Youth activities held regularly and well supported (including community events, and meetings attended). • Strong levels of community organisations and groups supported through the delivery of the Community Grants Program. • Live4Life Program well supported. 	
RELEVANT STRATEGIES / PLANS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Strategy 2019 - 2023 • Children and Families Plan 2024 - 2028 • Arts and Creative Industries Strategy 2022 - 2026 • Coal Creek and Museum Strategic Plan 2024 - 2034 • Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025 - 2029 	

ACTIONS 2025 - 2026



Theme: Leading with Integrity

Objective: Good Governance and Financial Sustainability

2025/26 ACTIONS: How we will do it

- Commence development of a *Sustainable Building Asset Management Strategy*.
- Undertake a review of non-Council Assets.
- Develop the 2026/27 Annual Budget.
- Provide strategic support to the Audit and Risk Committee.
- Implement the 2026/27 actions from the *Digital and Technology Roadmap*.
- Develop a program of service reviews to ensure the delivery of quality Council services.
- Review Council's *Community Engagement Policy* and *Community Engagement Strategy*.
- Continue to develop and participate in advocacy campaigns and support Council's annual advocacy priorities.
- Manage Council's road and asset maintenance in-line with Council's *Asset Plan*.
- Deliver Council's Capital Works program.

Theme: Developing a Sustainable Future

Objective: Environment, Growth and Economy

2025/26 ACTIONS: How we will do it

- Commence Heritage Review in select townships.
- Initiate a review of Council's Planning Scheme.
- Commence background reports to support the implementation of a Development Contributions Scheme for South Gippsland's growth areas.
- Implement the annual action plan of the *South Gippsland Coastal Strategy*.
- Commence review of the *Economic Development* and *Visitor Economy Strategies* and deliver initiatives in accordance with the action plan.
- Provide community education in the lead-up to introducing a *Food Organics Garden Organics* waste service.
- Deliver actions from the *Great Southern Rail Trail Visitor Experience and Marketing Plan*.
- Support year 1 actions of the *Landcare Memorandum of Understanding*.
- Increase the focus on the management of roadside weeds and partner with landowners to maximise impact.
- Commence a review of the *Paths and Trails Strategy* list and Footpath Programs list.
- Commence development of the *Domestic Animal Management Plan*.

Theme: Empowering Communities

Objective: Healthy, Connected and Inclusive

2025/26 ACTIONS: How we will do it

- Continue to build relationships with Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people.
- Deliver the Community Grants program to support volunteer organisations, including a one-off stream for 2025/26 that focuses on building community resilience.
- Deliver the Live4Life program 2025/26, which provides mental health education and suicide prevention for young people in rural communities.
- Commence development of the *Youth Strategy 2025 - 2029*.
- Commence development of an Open Space Asset Management Plan that will show how assets will be managed and maintained; including play spaces.
- Continue supporting the development of Community Plans incorporating emergency resilience where applicable.
- Review the amenity, accessibility, safety and connectivity of Council's supporting infrastructure at public transport bus stops.
- Implementation annual actions from the *Arts and Creative Industries Strategy*.
- Implement annual actions from the *Coal Creek Community Park and Museum Strategic Plan*.

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

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South Gippsland
Shire Council