


Shaping South Gippsland



Engagement Report

June 2025

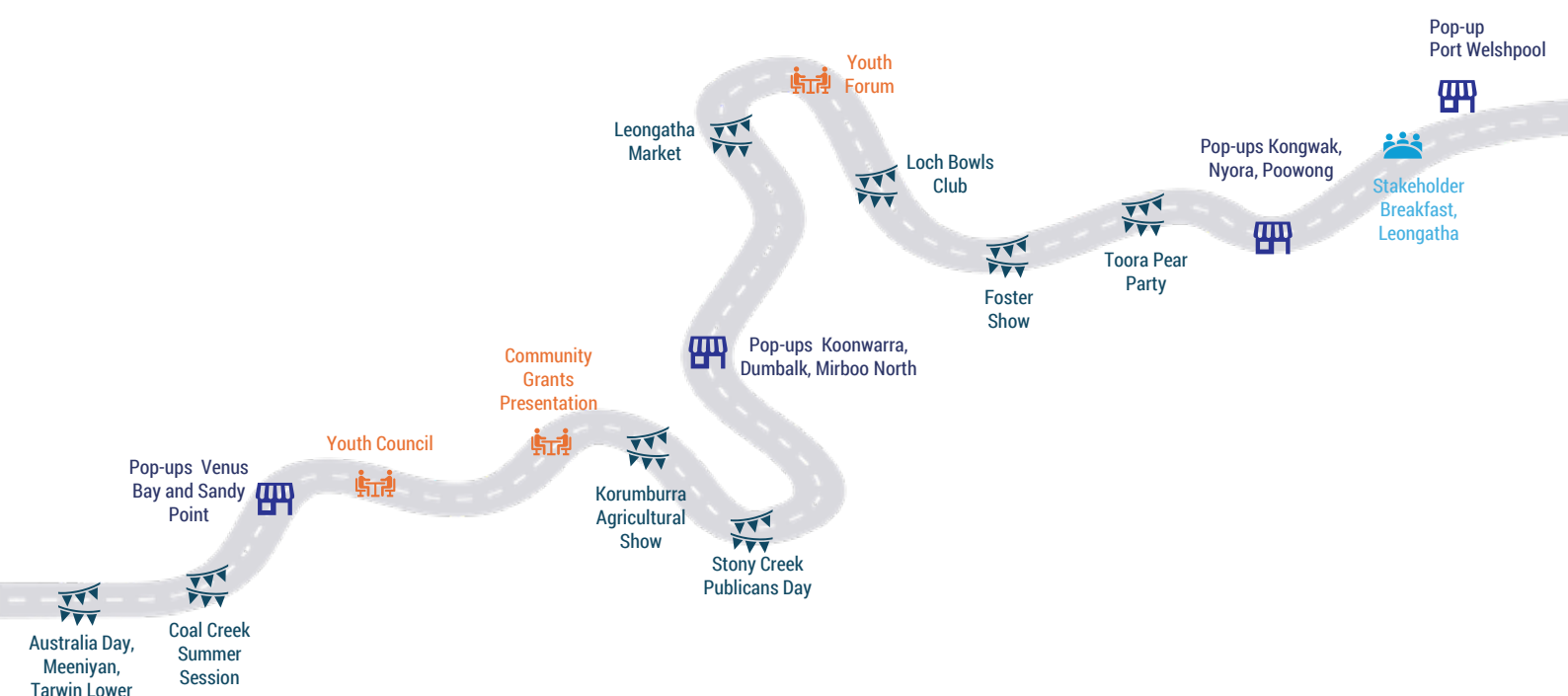
Thank you

Council would like to acknowledge and thank the South Gippsland community for providing valuable feedback during recent community engagement processes. Your input has played an important role in shaping the development of key strategic documents for the region.

Acknowledgement 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.





Background

To inform the development of key documents that will support and guide the direction of South Gippsland, Council embarked on a significant community engagement, branded *Shaping South Gippsland*.

The engagement comprised 22 in-person events held across South Gippsland and an online survey that was widely promoted. The engagement commenced late January and ended at the end of February.

Feedback collected during this period informed development of the:

- *Council Plan 2025 – 2029*
- *Financial Plan 2025/26 – 2034/35*
- *Revenue and Rating Plan 2025 – 2029*
- *Budget 2025/26 – 2028/29*
- *Asset Plan 2025 – 2035*
- *Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2025 – 2029*

These documents were then placed on public exhibition for a second round of community engagement from 17 April to 7 May 2025.

The engagement also provided an opportunity to check that the *2040 Community Vision* still reflect our community's aspirations for the future of South Gippsland.

This report provides an overview of the key feedback received during both engagement phases, along with responses to the most commonly raised issues.

Engagement Overview

Engagement #1: Shaping South Gippsland

- 23 engagement events:
 - 9 events
 - 9 Councillor 'pop-ups'
 - 3 stakeholder events
 - 2 Stakeholder Deliberative Engagement (in-person and online)
- 17 townships visited
- 946 survey responses provided
- 1241 suggestions for the Council Plan were provided.

Engagement #2: Key Plans for South Gippsland

- 48 survey responses provided including:
 - 29 Budget submissions
 - 1 Asset Plan submission
 - 10 Council Plan submissions
 - 6 Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan submissions
 - 2 submissions provided feedback on the complete integrated planning suite.

PART A: Shaping South Gippsland Most requested



Top Engagement Themes

As outlined in the engagement summary, Council received a substantial amount of feedback—particularly regarding what the community would like to see included in the 2025–2029 Council Plan. The most frequently raised topics included:

- Roads, footpaths and drainage
- Weed management
- Waste and rubbish
- Advocacy
- Performing arts space
- Rates
- Animal management
- Tourism
- Business support
- Asset improvement
- Environment
- Volunteer support

Additional information is provided for each engagement theme, including an overview of the actions Council is taking to support them. In the second section, key feedback from each town is presented alongside Council's response.

Roads, Footpaths and Drainage

Perhaps unsurprisingly, roads were the most frequently raised topic during community engagement for the development of the *2025–2029 Council Plan*.

Key issues included:

- Increased funding for road maintenance
- Upgrade of state-owned roads
- Road safety improvements
- Requests for sealing roads in urban areas
- General road quality concerns
- More frequent grading
- Pothole repairs
- Applying hard surfaces to high-use unsealed roads.

Specific requests highlighted:

- Dust reduction measures for roads in Venus Bay
- Road widening (e.g. Grundy Avenue, Nyora; Juno Road, Venus Bay)
- Road sealing (e.g. Clancys Road, Korumburra; various urban townships)
- Intersection upgrades

Drainage was another significant concern, with many community members calling for improved maintenance and more regular clearing of drains.

Footpaths also featured prominently in feedback, with numerous requests for additional footpaths in various townships to improve connectivity.

Specific requests were received for:

- Nyora Road, Poowong (pool to Bryson Street)
- Bent Street, Leongatha (Yarragon Road to Turner Street)
- Keane Street & Albert Streets, Port Welshpool
- Brown Street to Joel Court and the Cemetery in Leongatha
- Loch Lap: create footpath from Roy Street to Speight Street
- Old Waratah Road, Fish Creek
- Trails in Venus Bay and Sandy Point.



Deliberative Engagement Leongatha

Roads, Footpaths and Drainage

Council response:

Council acknowledges the community's concerns about the condition of the road network and is actively advocating for additional funding support from both the Australian and Victorian Governments. In fact, *Increasing Funding for Rural Roads* is one of Council's top ten advocacy priorities.

Maintaining a vast road network is one of the most significant challenges facing regional councils. Compared to metropolitan councils, South Gippsland has a relatively small population (30,680 people) spread across a large geographic area (3,296 km²). To illustrate the scale of the task, the length of our sealed road network is comparable to the distance from Melbourne to Sydney, while our unsealed road network stretches the equivalent of a journey from Melbourne to the Flinders Ranges.

With a smaller population comes a smaller ratepayer base, which limits the funding available for road maintenance and upgrades. In South Gippsland, 36 cents of every dollar paid in rates is allocated to roads, footpaths, and drainage.

Council receives numerous requests each year to seal unsealed roads. However, the cost of doing so is significant—approximately \$1 million to seal one kilometre of road.

Given these financial constraints, Council must carefully prioritise where road funding is directed to ensure the most effective use of available resources.

Footpath and drainage requests must also be carefully assessed and prioritised, as adding new infrastructure increases the demand on Council's already substantial maintenance schedule. The cost to install a footpath is approximately \$450,000 per kilometre.

In the 2025/26 budget, capital expenditure on roads is projected at \$11.962 million (including grant funding) with an additional \$10 million allocated for the ongoing maintenance of roads and related infrastructure. Together, these represent a significant investment—particularly when compared to the projected total revenue from general rates, which stands at \$48.251 million.



Weed Management

Weed management was a key theme in the community feedback, with concerns raised across several areas, including:

- The need for increased weed control along Council-managed roads
- Concerns about weed growth on roads managed by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP).
- Calls for the eradication of both environmental and noxious weeds
- Questions around enforcement of noxious weed control on private property and what actions are available
- Requests for increased funding to support weed control efforts.

Specific locations highlighted in the feedback included:

- Inverloch–Venus Bay Road, Venus Bay
- Dollar
- Wild Dog Valley Road, Leongatha
- Hammans Bush Reserve, Leongatha
- Patersons Road, Nyora
- Silcocks Hill Road, Toora

There was also some commentary regarding Council's weed-spraying practices, with a few respondents encouraging a reduction in chemical use and the exploration of alternative control methods.

Council response:

Closely linked to road management, Council is actively advocating for improved roadside weed control as part of its broader advocacy priorities.

Council acknowledges that roadside weeds continue to pose significant challenges to both environmental sustainability and local agriculture. To help address this growing issue, \$50,000 has been allocated in the 2025/26 budget to support weed management initiatives, with a particular focus on education and support programs for the agricultural sector.

Waste and rubbish

Community responses in the waste and rubbish category were broad and varied, with suggestions focused on improving waste management and reducing environmental impact. Key requests included:

- Greater efforts by Council to reduce overall waste
- Provision of free tip vouchers for ratepayers
- Placement of volunteers at waste facilities to provide guidance on waste disposal
- Installation of a rubbish bin on Doyles Road, Venus Bay
- Implementation of a Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection service
- Review and improvement of hard rubbish collection services
- More efficient bottle and can recycling systems
- Incentive programs to encourage the collection and delivery of rubbish to centralised depots.

Council response:

The *Waste and Resource Recovery Plan 2024–2034* outlines Council's long-term approach to waste management in South Gippsland. As part of this plan, a Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection service will be introduced across the region by the end of 2026, in line with Victorian Government requirements.

The full strategy is available for download at: www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/strategies

Advocacy

While many of the community's requests were not explicitly framed as advocacy issues, a significant number fall within this category. Key areas where advocacy was requested include:

Governance and Boundaries

- Inclusion of Inverloch within South Gippsland Shire.

Roads and Transport (Department of Transport and Planning):

- Roadside weed control on Department of Transport and Planning managed roads
- Improvements to major roads, including the South Gippsland Highway
- Traffic safety and control measures, such as:
 - Intersection upgrades in Leongatha and Meenian
 - A bypass for Korumburra
 - A roundabout near Leongatha Primary and Secondary Schools
 - Speed limit reviews on Department-managed roads
 - Increased public transport services
 - Allowing bicycles on V/Line buses to and from South Gippsland
 - Community Infrastructure (DEECA and Other Agencies).

Upgrades at Recreation Reserves under Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) control, including:

- Toilets at Tarwin Lower Recreation Reserve
- Sealing the access road at Meenian Recreation Reserve
- Tennis court improvements at Meenian Recreation Reserve
- Upgrades at Nyora Recreation Reserve and Mirboo North.

Community Services and Wellbeing

- Kindergarten and childcare services for Nyora
- Expansion of day care options
- Improved access to medical services, including more doctors
- School crossing upgrades (Leongatha)
- Support for volunteers (e.g. reducing red tape, addressing insurance issues)

Upgrades for assets under VicTrack or Parks Vic control:

- Renovation of Leongatha and Nyora Railway Stations
- Funding for the Korumburra Railway Precinct to complete outstanding item
- Improved car parking at beaches
- Improved signage for dogs on beaches (Parks Victoria).

Environment and Land Use

- Opposition to wind farms in specific areas
- Shade infrastructure for livestock
- Improved dog signage at beaches (Parks Victoria responsibility).

These items reflect a wide range of community priorities, of which many fall outside Council's direct responsibility but remain important areas for ongoing advocacy and partnership with other levels of government and relevant agencies.

Council response:

Each year, Council identifies its key advocacy priorities—the issues it will actively pursue with both the Australian and Victorian governments. These priorities reflect the most pressing needs of the South Gippsland community and guide Council's advocacy efforts.

Council's current advocacy priorities include:

- Increased road funding for rural councils
- Leongatha Heavy Vehicle Alternative Route
- Disaster recovery infrastructure funding and community energy hubs
- Renewable energy investment, including the Barry Beach Marine Terminal and Port Anthony
- Early years infrastructure
- Sporting facility upgrades, including the Leongatha Grandstand
- Building resilient coastal communities
- Improving connectivity and community transport
- Supporting volunteers and community groups

In addition to these core priorities, Council also responds to emerging advocacy issues throughout the year by engaging directly with relevant government agencies.

Performing Art Space

A significant number of responses were received for a new performing art space for South Gippsland, with many respondents requesting a Leongatha location and refurbishment of Memorial Hall.

Council response:

Council is currently undertaking a feasibility study for Memorial Hall, Leongatha. This study will explore future uses of the heritage facility, including the potential for a performance space and the co-location of other community services within the precinct. It will also assess how a multi-use Memorial Hall could work and help to inform indicative costings.

Rates

A number of responses called for Council to:

- Reduce rates
- Restructure rates (support for farmers, sliding scale for rates)
- Budget without borrowing
- Cut costs
- Distribute rates more equitably between townships, with some respondents believing their town does not receive its fair share.

Council response:

Council is not currently in a financial position to reduce overall rates, as a short-term decline in revenue would impact Council's long-term financial sustainability.

South Gippsland is a geographically large Shire with a relatively small population, which presents unique challenges not typically faced by metropolitan councils. As outlined in our response regarding roads, a significant portion of Council's budget is dedicated to maintaining an extensive and costly road network. In addition, the Shire's size means that many services—such as pools, recreation reserves, and parks—must be replicated across multiple townships to ensure equitable access.

That said, Council recognises the impact current drought conditions are having on our farming community. In an effort to provide some relief, Council is reducing the farm differential from 70% to 65% for the 2025/26 financial year, resulting in a modest reduction in agricultural rates.

Animal Management

Responses under this theme were diverse, covering topics such as compliance, animal welfare, and recreational spaces for pets. Key community requests included:

- Greater focus on animal re-homing initiatives
- Off-leash dog parks with seating
- Consideration of an off-leash dog park at the former Leongatha Primary School site, identified as an underutilised space
- Improved beach access for dogs
- Better enforcement of signage regarding dogs on beaches
- Increased limits on the number of animals permitted.
- Strengthened local laws to address roaming cats and dogs
- Conservation of wildlife and habitat
- Development of wildlife corridors.

Council response:

Council is about to commence the process of updating its Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP), which will review several of the matters listed above. Based on previous community engagement—where strong support was shown for additional regulations in urban areas—a dog leash order is expected to be introduced as part of the updated plan. As part of this, designated off-leash areas are also likely to be identified.

Tourism

A number of tourism-related responses were received during the engagement process, although many were broad in nature. Specific suggestions included calls for Council to:

- Enhance and grow the tourism sector
- Expand free camping options
- Increase investment in tourism marketing and promotion
- Improve signage for local attractions
- Strengthen the connection between local businesses and the Great Southern Rail Trail
- Attract and support more events within the Shire
- Collaborate with businesses promoting a strong Gippsland brand beyond the Shire
- Explore new initiatives at Coal Creek, such as school camps, a platypus enclosure, postcards, live music, and animal attractions
- Support the development of suitable motel-style accommodation
- Facilitate more community events, including festivals and markets
- Encourage additional tourism accommodation options, with a preference for alternatives to short-stay rentals such as Airbnb.

These suggestions reflect the community's interest in growing South Gippsland's tourism appeal while maintaining a balanced approach that supports local businesses and communities.

Council response:

Council continues to support tourism in South Gippsland through the implementation of actions outlined in the *Visitor Economy Strategy*, which addresses several of the themes raised in community feedback. The Strategy can be viewed at: www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/strategies

In relation to Coal Creek, Council completed a strategic review in 2024 to help determine the site's future direction. A detailed business case is now underway.

Business Support

Council received a number of responses encouraging increased support for local businesses. Suggestions focused on reducing barriers, promoting growth, and strengthening partnerships. Key requests included:

- Making it easier for existing businesses to operate
- Supporting businesses that host private events
- Promoting economic growth in smaller towns through initiatives such as start-up grants
- Attracting new businesses to the region
- Taking a more balanced, partnership-based approach to retail business compliance in Loch
- Hosting business conferences and networking events
- Reviewing internal resource allocation to better support local business needs
- Assisting business growth in Tarwin Lower
- Attracting businesses to South Gippsland from neighbouring areas, including Wonthaggi.

These suggestions reflect a strong community interest in fostering a thriving local economy and creating more opportunities for business development across the Shire.

Council response:

Council's Economic Development Strategy guides how Council supports businesses to establish, grow, and thrive in South Gippsland. To further assist, Council offers a dedicated Business Concierge service, providing tailored support to new businesses setting up in the region. A range of business development resources are also available, including a monthly newsletter, regular workshops, and a mentoring program. The Strategy can be viewed at: www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/strategies

Asset Improvement

As part of the Shaping South Gippsland engagement process, Council received numerous requests for new or upgraded community assets—ranging from large-scale infrastructure such as buildings and public toilets to smaller items like bins, benches, and shade sails. Notably, over 70 per cent of community suggestions related to the acquisition or improvement of community assets.

Council response:

Community requests for additional or improved assets present a significant challenge, as Council already manages an extensive asset portfolio of over 440 structures, many of which are rapidly deteriorating or have reached the end of their useful life.

To address this, the 2025–2029 Council Plan includes a key initiative:

“Implement strategic reviews of Council’s asset portfolio to strengthen community connections.”

This initiative will enable Council to develop a clearer understanding of its future asset maintenance and funding requirements.

Volunteer Support

There were several responses calling for greater support and recognition of volunteers. Some community members suggested this support could include assistance with insurance costs or access to maintenance grants to help sustain volunteer-led initiatives.

Council response:

Support for volunteers and community groups is currently one of Council’s top 10 advocacy priorities. Council recognises the growing challenges faced by volunteer groups, particularly the increasing administrative burden, which can hinder volunteer recruitment and retention.

In addition to advocacy efforts, Council provides direct support to community groups through its Community Grants Program, helping to strengthen local initiatives and foster community participation.

Environment

Environmental issues were a recurring theme in community responses, with suggestions spanning sustainability, conservation, land management, and climate resilience. Specific suggestions included:

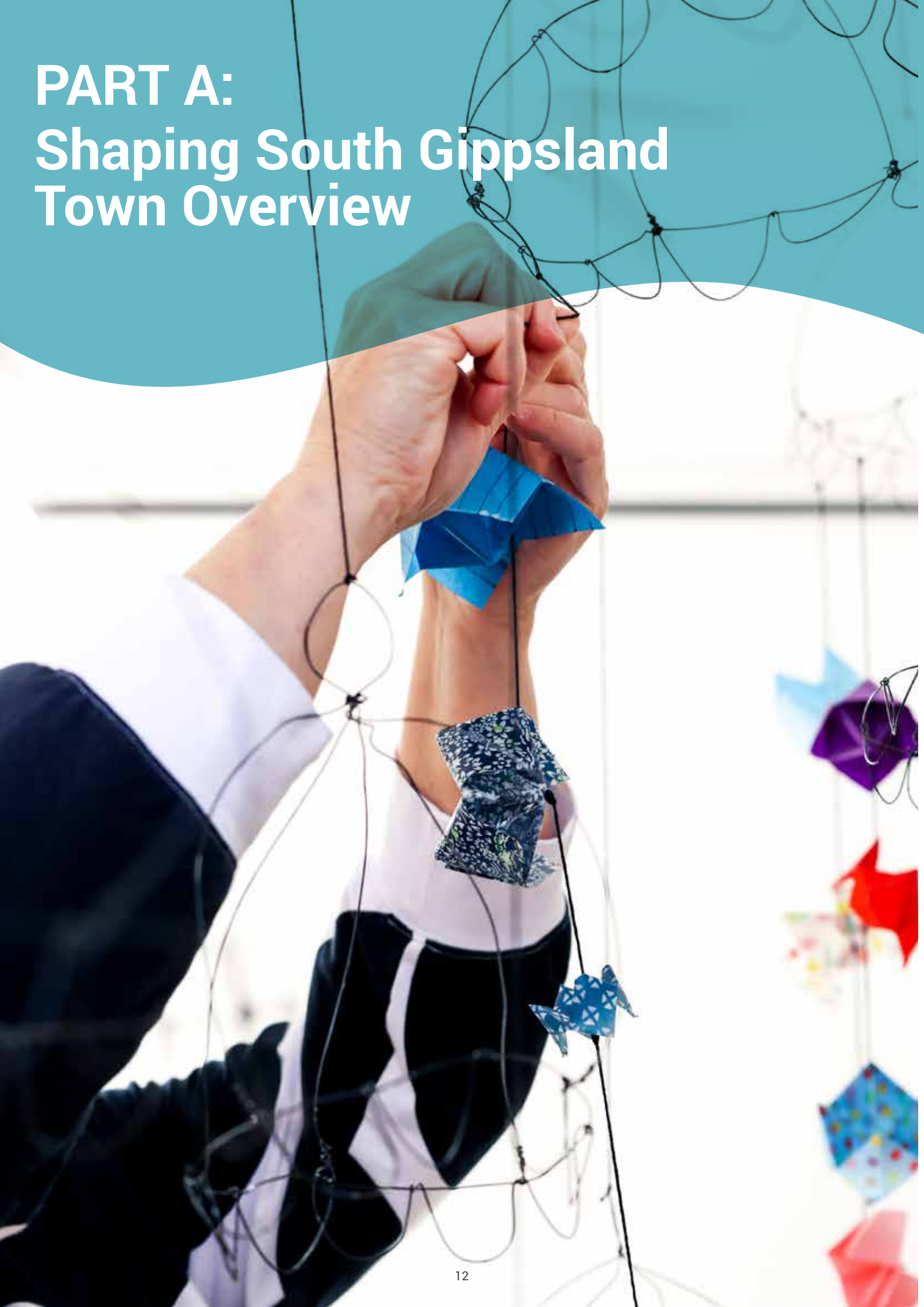
- Increase biodiversity
- Conserve wildlife and natural habitats
- Develop wildlife corridors
- Implement broader environmental protection measures
- Plant more trees, including food-producing species in Council-managed areas
- Use more recyclable materials in Council operations and infrastructure
- Invest in coastal and climate activation/resilience initiatives
- Provide assistance to farmers managing seawalls on their properties.

Council response:

Council is demonstrating its commitment to the environment through key initiatives outlined in the Council Plan, supported by targeted actions:

- Preserve, protect, and enhance the natural environment across South Gippsland.
- Develop an integrated land management approach, including improved weed control on Council-managed roads and the exploration of non-chemical treatment alternatives.
- Support community-led initiatives that focus on the protection of native wildlife.

PART A: Shaping South Gippsland Town Overview





Nyora - What we heard

Road and Footpaths

- Better footpaths and upgraded driveway crossovers in Nyora.
- Connect the new housing estate to the township in Nyora.
- Grundy Avenue needs to be widened, sides sealed and drain filled in.
- Mitchell Street drainage need attention. Water from laneway drains into properties. This has also impacted footpath.
- More footpaths and underground drains for Nyora.

Council response:

Please see page six for information regarding roads and footpaths in South Gippsland. Please note that the responsibility for driveway crossovers rests with the property owner.

Connection of the new housing estate with the Nyora township is currently being considered as part of Council's strategic planning for the area. Recognising Nyora as a designated growth area, Council acknowledges the need for additional planning to support future community needs. To initiate this process, \$150,000 has been allocated in the annual budget to begin development of a Developer Contribution Plan overlay, which will require developers to contribute toward the township's long-term infrastructure needs.

Children and Family Services

- Additional kindergarten and childcare required.

Council response:

Council recognises the need for additional early years services in Nyora. While the responsibility for these services lies with the Department of Education, Council is actively advocating for Nyora to be considered in future planning. Early Years Infrastructure is one of Council's current top ten advocacy priorities.

Nyora Station Repairs

Station is neglected and needs urgent repairs.

Council response:

Council has been advocating to the Victorian Government and VicTrack—the owners of the building—for station improvements and increased maintenance. Correspondence received late last year indicates that VicTrack is actively seeking a tenant for the building; however, these efforts have so far been unsuccessful. Council will continue to advocate for the proper maintenance of this important community asset.



Nyora

Nyora - What we heard continued

Planning

- Create a town centre in Nyora

Council response:

The *Nyora Development Strategy* outlines how a town centre can be developed in Nyora. The strategy can be viewed on [Council's website](#). Town centre works are aligned with Nyora growth planning strategies.

Vegetation

- Paterson Road - weeds.
- Weeds in general area.

Council response:

Request logged. Please see page seven for information on weed control.

Recreation

- Female facilities (change rooms) needed at the Nyora Recreation Reserve.

Council response:

Council recognises the need for change room upgrades at the Nyora Recreation Reserve and is actively advocating for funding to support these improvements. Upgrading sporting facilities is a top ten advocacy priority for Council. The Nyora Recreation Reserve is located on Crown Land and is managed by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action.

Community Development

- Seeking support for new town committee to help represent the needs and future ambitions Nyora.

Council response:

Council's Community Development team can support the Nyora community through this process. The team can be contacted on 5662 9200.

Assets

- Formal signage needed at the beginning of Rail Trail.

Council response:

This has recently been installed.



Poowong Engagement

Poowong - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- Footpath required on north side of Nyora Road from swimming pool to at least Bryson street.
- Footpaths needed in residential areas in Poowong.

Council response:

Please see page six for information regarding roads and footpaths in South Gippsland.

Recreation

- Exercise stations along the walking track or between the two estates.
- Need more activities for kids (bike / pump track).
- Better maintenance of Poowong Rec Centre.

Council response:

Council is facing increasing challenges in maintaining its existing asset portfolio, with a significant proportion of infrastructure approaching end-of-life. Before committing to new infrastructure, Council is undertaking a comprehensive review of its current assets. A key strategy in the *Council Plan 2025–29* is to “implement strategic reviews of Council’s asset portfolio to strengthen community connections”.

Vegetation

- Need nicer gardens in Poowong.

Council response:

A customer request for this has been entered and will be reviewed by the Open Space and Environment team.

Community Development

- Implement priorities from the Poowong Community Plan.

Council response:

Council values the significant effort involved in developing town and community plans and is committed to working with relevant groups to progress these initiatives where possible. However, due to current financial constraints, the level of direct funding support Council can provide is limited. As noted in the recreation response, a comprehensive review of all existing Council infrastructure is also underway.

Business

- Shopfronts/facades require improvement to increase street appeal. A program to work with shop owners to improve facades would be beneficial.

Council response:

Council does not currently offer a program of this type but is aware of similar grant-funded initiatives in other Shires. This feedback has been referred to Council’s Economic Development team for consideration during the development of the next Economic Development Strategy.



Loch Engagement

Loch - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- Advocate for South Gippsland Highway improvements at Loch.
- Implement traffic safety improvements coming out of the traffic safety study.
- Seal unmade roads
- Finish drainage on Naylor Lane
- Seal up open drains on Victoria Street (inc Sunnyside Park
- Improve pedestrian crossing

Council response:

Please see page six for information regarding roads, footpaths and drainage in South Gippsland.

Council has advocated to the Department of Transport and Planning for improvements to the South Gippsland Highway and will continue to lobby for further upgrades.

Council is currently seeking funding opportunities to implement improvements from the recent traffic study.

Parks and Playgrounds

- Shade sails for park in Loch

Council response:

Shade for playgrounds was a recurring theme throughout the engagement period and will be considered in future open space planning. A key strategy in the 2025–2029 Council Plan is to “sustainably plan and design our open spaces to enable healthy lifestyles.”

Vegetation

- Trees on Smith Street would benefit from pollarding.

Council response:

Customer request submitted.

Business

- Seeking a more balanced ‘partnership’ approach when ensuring business compliance in Loch.

Council response:

Council appreciates this feedback and will explore opportunities for proactive education to ensure businesses have the information they need to support compliance.

Recreation

- Seeking horse corral for horse riders who use the rail trail.
- Complete Loch Lap

Council response:

Please refer to page 11 regarding asset management.

The Loch Lap is listed in Council's *Paths and Trails Strategy* but is currently unfunded.

Building/Assets

- Empty site on Roy Street needs attention.
- Damaged heritage lamp post at tunnel entry.
- Rail Trail signage - seeking update.

Council response:

Customer requests submitted.

Rail Trail signage has now been installed.



Kongwak

Kongwak - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- Advocate to Department of Transport and Planning to fix pothole in intersection. Keeps failing after it rains.

Council response:

Please see page six for information regarding roads, footpaths and drainage in South Gippsland.

Council continues to advocate to the Department of Transport and Planning for improvements to arterial roads in South Gippsland.

Building and Vegetation

- Additional support sought for the Kongwak Hall including mowing, upgrades and car park maintenance.

Council response:

Council recognises the valuable work of the Kongwak Hall Committee and supports the hall — which is not owned or operated by Council — through a small annual halls grant. Additional funding opportunities are available through Council's Community Grants Program. However, further financial support cannot be considered at this time while a review of Council's asset portfolio is pending.

Community Safety

- Concern that air ambulance access to Kongwak obstructed by trees.

Council response:

Enquiry lodged with Ambulance Victoria.

Outtrim - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- Outtrim - Inverloch Road intersection with Outtrim - Leongatha Road needs widening due to poor visibility and other concerns.

Council response:

For more information on road-related matters, please refer to page six. Please note that this work is not currently included in Council's capital works budget.



Korumburra

Korumburra - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- Seal Korumburra South Road.
- Seal and widen the remainder of Clancy's Road.

Council response:

Please see page six for information regarding roads, footpaths and drainage in South Gippsland.

Recreation

- Repair the Korumburra Pool.
- Provide additional investment in Korumburra Showgrounds.

Council response:

Council is undertaking a comprehensive review of its current assets. A key strategy in the *Council Plan 2025–29* is to “implement strategic reviews of Council’s asset portfolio to strengthen community connections”. This will help to determine asset priorities, including upgrades, moving forward.

Council recently supported a successful grant application for new netball changerooms and upgraded football changerooms at the Korumburra Showgrounds. This support included preparing the grant application, coordinating the project, and contributing \$400,000 in funding.

The Korumburra Showgrounds is not owned or managed by Council.

Korumburra Supermarket

- Please provide an update on the status of the new supermarket.

Council response:

Council has issued permits for the supermarket development. Please seek further updates directly from the developer, IGA Korumburra.

Korumburra Senior Citizens

- Restore the old building and give it to the Korumburra Seniors for their use.

Council response:

Following a lengthy and considered discussion at the April 2024 Council Meeting, a recommendation to proceed with the land sale at 14 Radovick Street was endorsed. Co-locating different service groups is a key priority of Council when it comes to cost-effective asset management and the need for a centralised community hub was identified in the *Korumburra Town Centre Framework Plan*.

Accommodation

- Need for additional accommodation in town.

Council response:

Council recognises the need for additional accommodation in South Gippsland and encourages and advocates for private investment in this area.



Korumburra - What we heard continued

Coal Creek

- More live music and events.
- Postcards and improved visitor information.
- Wildlife displays (platypus).
- Train restoration.
- Additional photo displays and information on coal mining days.
- Improved signage from highway.
- Cafe.

Council response:

Council completed a strategy in 2024 to help determine a future direction for Coal Creek. A business case for the site is currently underway.



Leongatha Engagement

Leongatha - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- Improve main intersection in Leongatha. Suggestions included traffic lights, roundabout, under/overpass.
- Better traffic control at the intersection of Bruce Street and Church Street
- Fix parking in Bair Street
- Footpath needed on Brown Street to Joel Court and cemetery.
- Safe crossing needed on corner of Young and McCartin streets.

Council response:

Please see page six for information regarding roads, footpaths and drainage in South Gippsland.

The Leongatha Alternative Route is one of Council's top ten advocacy priorities. Council is actively seeking funding from the Victorian Government to advance planning for the project.

Leongatha offers a range of parking options. In addition to Bair and McCartin Streets, the recently revitalised Leongatha Railway Precinct has added approximately 50 new parking spaces, including all-day and long-vehicle parking.

Events

- Bring back the Leongatha Show.

Council response:

The Show was not a Council-run event.

Buildings

- Develop a performance space for Leongatha.
- Repair the Leongatha station and protect from vandalism. Lease for business ventures (e.g. cafe).

Council response:

Council is currently undertaking a feasibility study for Memorial Hall. This study will explore future uses of the heritage facility, including the potential for a performance space and the co-location of other community services within the precinct. It will also assess how a multi-use Memorial Hall could function and provide a concept design to inform indicative costings.

The Leongatha Station building is owned and maintained by VicTrack, which is responsible for the building's upkeep and leasing. Council is aware of recent vandalism at the site, has reported these concerns to VicTrack and advocated for additional repairs. Council also appreciates the support of Melina Bath MP, Member for Eastern Victoria Region, who is also advocating for improved security measures at the station.

Art

- Complete the Koonwarra end of the mural in the Leongatha Railway Precinct.

Council response:

Council has no plans to expand or change the existing mural from what is there currently.

Leongatha - What we heard continued

Toilets

- Additional toilets needed in Aldi/IGA area.

Council response:

Before committing to new infrastructure, Council is undertaking a comprehensive review of its current assets. A key strategy in the *Council Plan 2025–29* is to “implement strategic reviews of Council’s asset portfolio to strengthen community connections”.

Business

- Increase weekend trade in Leongatha.

Council response:

Council’s redevelopment of Bair Street has contributed to increased activity in the Leongatha shopping precinct. While Council cannot typically influence the opening hours of private businesses, it acknowledges that trading decisions may be affected by a range of economic or personal factors. That said, Council recognises the value of weekend trade for the vibrancy and economic health of local townships.

Community Safety

- Extra school crossings outside Leongatha Primary School and Tafe.
- Parking enforcement near medical hub.
- Fenced (off leash) dog area needed.

Council response:

School crossings in this location would be a responsibility of the Education Department and the Department of Transport and Planning.

Council conducts spot checks in identified problem areas; however, limited resources restrict the ability to carry out regular parking enforcement. A customer request for this location has been logged.

Fenced off-leash dog areas will be considered during the development of the next Domestic Animal Management Plan.

Vegetation

- GSRT Parr Street to Simons Road - vegetation blocking drains to when it rains it overflows.
- Blackberries on Wild Dog Road and Ragwort around Hammons Reserve.

Council response:

Please see page seven for information on weed control. A customer request has been logged for the issue identified in Parr Street.

Customer Service

- Increase opening hours / days at main Council Office.

Council response:

Following a review of Council’s customer service operations, changes were made to improve community access to Council services across multiple locations. Customer service staff now rotate between the main office in Leongatha and a second service counter at the Korumburra Community Hub. Council will continue to review and monitor its customer service offerings.

Parks and Playgrounds

- Shade sails for parks
- A partially waterproof, undercover, play area in Leongatha (or Korumburra), This could be a bike/scooter track/fenced area.

Council response:

Shade and covered play areas will be considered in future open space planning for Council’s playgrounds. A key strategy in the 2025–2029 Council Plan is to “sustainably plan and design our open spaces to enable healthy lifestyles.”



Koonwarra Engagement

Koonwarra - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- No parking sign needed for footpath in Koonwarra near toilets on GSRT. People keep parking in the space needed to access toilet facilities.

Council response:

Customer request logged.

Buildings and Assets

- Rotunda needed near the Koonwarra toilets to house display and to provide shelter for Park Run participants.

Council response:

Council has been supporting community efforts to install a rotunda at this location, and planning is well advanced.



Dumbalk Engagement

Dumbalk - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- Advocacy for arterial road into Dumbalk (signage, line marking).
- Cross roads could be safe via speed reduction.

Council response:

Please see page six for information regarding roads, footpaths and drainage in South Gippsland.

Council is advocating for increased support for regional roads, including the arterial roads referenced. Responsibility for the arterial and cross roads mentioned during the engagement lies with the Department of Transport and Planning.

Recreation

- Exercise stations would be good at the Dumbalk Recreation Reserve.

Council response:

Council is facing increasing challenges in maintaining its existing asset portfolio, with a significant proportion of infrastructure approaching end-of-life. Before committing to new infrastructure, Council is undertaking a comprehensive review of its current assets. A key strategy in the *Council Plan 2025–29* is to “implement strategic reviews of Council’s asset portfolio to strengthen community connections”.

Buildings and Assets

- Dumbalk Community Centre would like to investigate taking over the entire lease of the L shaped land on the next renewal.
- Back of hall gets very muddy and corrugated when wet, repair needed.
- Drinking fountain needed near rotunda.

Council response:

Requests related to the Hall and Community Centre will be considered as part of the upcoming Building Asset Management review.

Installing a drinking fountain at this location is considered a low priority at this time. Due to their surprisingly high cost, drinking fountains are installed selectively across the Shire.

Vegetation

- Gum tree near Dumbalk Hall needs to be trimmed back.

Council response:

Customer request logged.

Community Development

- Dumbalk Hall Committee is keen to remain and continue operating. Keen for update on progress of hall and hall committee.

Council response:

Customer request logged. Officers will be in contact with the Committee.



Mirboo North

Mirboo North / Mirboo / Mount Eccles - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- Mirboo roads require additional maintenance.
- Barriers needed in dangerous sections of road between Mirboo to Dumbalk.
- A white line is needed in the middle of the road on Mount Eccles Roads and near Hamann's Bush Reserve on Wild Dog Valley Road. Guard rail would also be helpful on some corners on hilly roads.

Council response:

Please see page six for information regarding roads, footpaths and drainage in South Gippsland.

Council is advocating for increased support for arterial roads across South Gippsland.

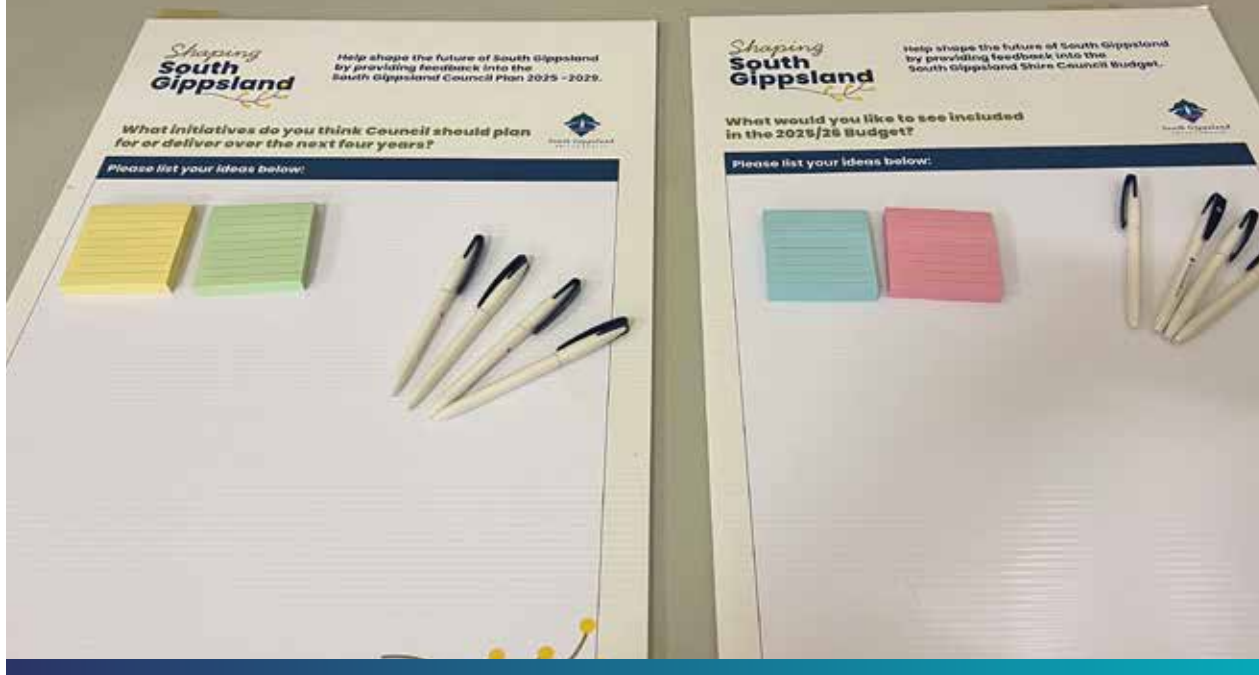
A customer request has been logged for the team to investigate the need for line marking.

Community Development

- Increase support for bands to perform (i.e. Mossvale Park music).

Council response:

Council's Community Grants Program provides funding support to event organisers and community groups. The program runs two rounds each year, with approximately \$80,000 in funding distributed to a variety of community organisation in each round.



Meeniyen Engagement

Meeniyen - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- Roundabout at the Mahob's intersection.
- Increased accessible parking required.
- Install reverse parking in Meeniyen.
- Angle parking not 90 degree parking.

Council response:

Please see page six for information regarding roads, footpaths and drainage in South Gippsland.

Council is advocating for increased support for regional roads, including the arterial roads referenced. There are no plans to alter parking arrangements in Meeniyen at this time.

Recreation

- New tennis courts for Meeniyen.
- Sealing of road around Meeniyen Recreation Reserve.

Council response:

Upgrading sporting facilities is a top ten advocacy priority for Council. The Meeniyen Recreation Reserve is located on Crown Land and is managed by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action.

Buildings and Assets

- Bins for Blokes for Meeniyen Hub.
- Buy old CFA building for community use.
- Additional seating outside Meeniyen Hub.
- Improve stair visibility in new Hub.
- Streetlights for Ross Street.
- Place Australian Flag in town.

Council response:

Requests for minor improvements to the Meeniyen Hub will be considered as part of the upcoming review of the project and its ongoing use over the coming months.

Council is currently working to consolidate its building portfolio (see page 11 for more details). As a result, the acquisition of new assets is unlikely to be considered while the asset review is underway. Council recently completed the new Meeniyen Hub facility which incorporates meeting rooms, upgraded toilets and storage space.

Street lighting on Ross Street is not supported at this time, as the area is classified as semi-rural.

The installation and maintenance of township flags is not currently a service provided by Council.



Fish Creek

Fish Creek - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- More details on Fish Creek Streetscape would be good for those who don't attend town meetings.
- Traffic calming measures in lieu of footpaths on Old Waratah Road.

Council response:

For information on roads, footpaths, and drainage in South Gippsland, please refer to page six.

Council will be creating a dedicated page on its website to share more details about streetscape plans and to provide regular updates.

Traffic calming measures are currently in place on Old Waratah Road, and at this stage, no additional measures are planned. Council will continue to monitor the area.

Assets

- Sewerage for Fish Creek.

Council response:

Council is not the responsible authority for water services; town sewerage falls under the jurisdiction of South Gippsland Water.

Recreation

- Change some of the tennis court area into a basketball (shoot hoops) area for older kids.

Council response:

Council's Recreation team will investigate the tennis courts to determine whether they should be included in Council's Recreation Blueprint.



Sandy Point Engagement

Sandy Point - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- 40kph limit needed on Beach Parade.
- Electronic signage (VMS board) needed to help slow traffic during Christmas holidays.

Council response:

For information on roads, footpaths, and drainage in South Gippsland, please refer to page six. A 40km/h speed limit is in place along Beach Parade. The use of a Variable Message Sign (VMS) board may be possible, subject to availability, and will be reviewed closer to the Christmas period.

Assets

- A toilet block is needed at Ned Neales car park at Sandy Point.
- A walking trail is needed on Sandy Point Road.
- Support the Waratah Way project.
- Dog signage needs review in Sandy Point (some respondents seek more lenient dog hours and others more restrictive).

Council response:

Council is currently working to consolidate its building portfolio (see page 11 for more details). As a result, the acquisition of new assets is unlikely to be considered while the asset review is underway.

An action in the *Council Plan 2025 - 29* is to "commence a review of the Paths and Trails Strategy list and Footpath Programs list." These connecting paths will be considered as part of that review.

Striking the right balance regarding when dogs should or shouldn't be allowed on beaches is challenging. This is reflected in the feedback received by Council, which shows that while some community members support increased access for dogs, others prefer more restrictions. Any proposed changes to dog access will need to be referred to the Sandy Point Foreshore Committee for consideration.

Walkerville - What we heard

Assets

- Have a walkway alongside the road from Prom Views estate to Walkerville North beach.

Council response:

An action in the *Council Plan 2025 - 29* is to "commence a review of the Paths and Trails Strategy list and Footpath Programs list." Walking trails will be considered at this time.

Recreation

- Legal fire pits needed for Walkerville Caravan Park during holidays.

Council response:

The Walkerville Caravan Park is operated by the Walkerville Foreshore Committee.



Tarwin Lower Engagement

Tarwin Lower - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- Path from Tarwin Lower jetty through Tarwin Lower township need to be made and linked.
- Parking along Tarwin Lower river bank needs barriers/posts installed to prevent parking on riverbank.

Council response:

For information on roads, footpaths, and drainage in South Gippsland, please refer to page six.

A customer request has been logged to a investigate parking concerns at this location and to explore remediation options if the concerns are confirmed.

Recreation

- New toilet block at Recreation Reserve.

Council response:

Upgrading sporting facilities is one of Council's top ten advocacy priorities, and the provision of toilets at Tarwin Lower is included within this priority. The Tarwin Lower Recreation Reserve is situated on Crown Land and is managed by the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action.

Buildings / Assets

- Defibrillator needed for Middle Tarwin Hall.

Council response:

Council's Community Grants Program may provide an opportunity to support the installation of a defibrillator at the hall.

Vegetation

- Roadside vegetation clearing between Tarwin Lower and Venus Bay is needed.

Council response:

The section of road in question falls under the responsibility of the Department of Transport and Planning. Council is actively advocating for improved roadside weed control as part of its advocacy priorities. Council recognises that roadside weeds remain a persistent issue, presenting significant challenges to environmental sustainability and local agriculture. To support efforts in addressing this growing concern, Council has allocated \$50,000 in the 2025/26 budget for weed management initiatives, with a focus on education and support programs for the agricultural sector.

Business

- Help businesses to grow in Tarwin Lower.

Council response:

Council offers a range of resources to support businesses looking to establish in South Gippsland, including a dedicated Business Concierge service to assist operators through the permit process. In addition, Council provides business training, mentoring opportunities, and a monthly Business Newsletter, which is a valuable source of information and updates.



Venus Bay Engagement

Venus Bay - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- Seal roads in Venus Bay.
- Keep roads unsealed in Venus Bay.
- Widen roads like Juno Road.

Council response:

For information on roads, footpaths, and drainage in South Gippsland, please refer to page six.

Community feedback on roads in Venus Bay was mixed, with some residents expressing a preference for sealed roads, while others favoured keeping them unsealed.

Vegetation

- Clear weeds on Inverloch - Venus Bay Road.

Council response:

Please refer to response on previous page.

Planning

- No new or big developments in Venus Bay Estates.

Council response:

Council's Coastal Strategy seeks to "explore the strategic justification for Council to restrict or discourage the development of more than one dwelling per lot and the subdivision of land which increases dwelling development potential". This work covers Venus Bay and remains an ongoing advocacy priority of Council.

Assets

- Bike paths needed in Venus Bay (bitumen from Lees Road to Tarwin Lower.
- Need track to connect the second estate to the shopping precinct.
- Shared bike and pedestrian paths needed.
- Build a bridge from Inverloch to Venus Bay.
- EV charging station in Venus Bay.

Council response:

An action in the *Council Plan 2025 - 29* is to "commence a review of the Paths and Trails Strategy list and Footpath Programs list." These connecting paths will be considered as part of that review.

A bridge between Inverloch and Venus Bay has been assessed as financially unfeasible.

Council has installed six electric vehicle (EV) chargers across South Gippsland, supported by funding from Victorian and Australian Government grant programs. In addition, several privately operated chargers are available in various townships. The grant programs that previously supported this infrastructure are now closed.

Community Safety

- Dog on beach hours need to be changed and more enforcement is required.

Council response:

The beaches in Venus Bay are managed by Parks Victoria and do not fall under Council's direct responsibility.



Foster Engagement

Foster - What we heard

Roads / Footpaths

- Asphalt up to Camp Rumbug to help visitors and stop the road being destroyed.
- Repair Powell's Road.
- Harmon Road turn off requires attention.

Council response:

For information on roads, footpaths, and drainage in South Gippsland, please refer to page six. Harmon Road is a Department Transport and Planning responsibility.

Recreation

- The power infrastructure upgrade at Foster Showgrounds may be need for all reserves.

Council response:

Upgrading sporting facilities is one of Council's top ten advocacy priorities. However, at this time, there is a stronger focus on the renewal of existing facilities, which is considered a more immediate need to support community access.

Community Safety

- There are general safety and security concerns in Foster at present.

Council response:

Council acknowledges that anti-social behaviour is a growing concern for many residents. While these issues are primarily the responsibility of Victoria Police, Council is taking steps to help reduce their impact by incorporating design features that discourage vandalism and by installing infrastructure in areas with natural passive surveillance, where appropriate.

Buildings and Assets

- Fund strategic plan for Foster War Memorial Arts Centre, including fixed tier seating.
- Provide recycling bins in town.
- Extend Foster pool hours and keep hours consistent.

Council response:

Council has scheduled some minor internal joinery works at the Foster War Memorial Arts Centre for the 2025/26 financial year. While the Centre includes theatre capabilities, adapting it exclusively for this purpose may limit its flexibility and accessibility for a broader range of community uses.

Council is currently reviewing the operation of pools across South Gippsland, including opening hours, as part of the development of a comprehensive *Aquatic Strategy*.



Toora Engagement

Toora - What we heard

Assets

- Bus stop needed outside Toora Deli.

Council response:

A request for a bus stop in this location would be best addressed to Department of Transport and Planning.

Planning

- Prohibit people living in main street shopfronts in Toora.

Council response:

Some residential uses in main street shopfronts were established historically. Current planning controls prioritise commercial uses in commercial zones, with residential 'shop-top' living considered a secondary use.

Environment

- The creek in Toora is full of rubbish.

Council response:

The creek in question is managed by the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and is not under Council's direct responsibility. A request has been forwarded.

Vegetation

- Action on weed management required on Silcocks Hill Road.

Council response:

Council is actively advocating for improved roadside weed control as part of its advocacy priorities. Council recognises that roadside weeds remain a persistent issue, presenting significant challenges to environmental sustainability and local agriculture. To support efforts in addressing this growing concern, Council has allocated \$50,000 in the 2025/26 budget for weed management initiatives, with a focus on education and support programs for the agricultural sector.



Port Welshpool Engagement

Welshpool and Port Welshpool - What we heard

Roads

- Lower speed limit on the approach to the Long Jetty Caravan Park
- Clean up junk pile on Port Welshpool Road.
- Drainage issues.

Council response:

A customer request has been logged regarding the drainage issues and the rubbish on Port Welshpool Road.

Speed limits fall under the responsibility of the Department of Transport and Planning.

Vegetation

- Access from Stratton Street to the boat ramp has become overgrown.
- Steps and path to beach need clearing.
- Gully trap in Slade Street needs clearing.

Council response:

Customer requests have been logged for these issues.

Buildings and Assets

- Better signage in car parks in Port Welshpool near boat ramp.
- New streetlight needed in Lewis Street at cross section to Keane Street.
- No cross over for people with mobility issues from the jetty
- Toilets for the long jetty.
- Pontoon upgrades required and visitor access to fishing tables at boat ramp.
- More shade and better fishing facilities needed.
- Free BBQ in Welshpool.

Council response:

Council is currently working on funding for the upgrading the pontoon and fishing tables at the boat ramp.

A customer request has also been received for a streetlight to be considered at the site.

While Council is committed to improving community infrastructure, the addition of new assets can be challenging due to the demands of managing an increasingly large and ageing asset portfolio. This is acknowledged in the *2025–2029 Council Plan*, which includes the initiative to: *"Implement strategic reviews of Council's asset portfolio to strengthen community connections."*

For more information on Council's asset management approach, please refer to page 11.

PART B: Integrated Plan Submissions



Yanakie Weather Station

Request: Continuation of the Yanakie Automated Weather Station (AWS)

Seven budget submissions were received regarding the Yanakie Weather Station, outlining the following key reasons in support of continuing the service:

High Demand:

The Yanakie AWS is uniquely located, leading to frequent use, with Willy Weather alone estimating 8,000 to 16,000 data requests per week.

Wide Usage: Its data is crucial for the CFA, agricultural industry, commercial fishers, amateur boaters, and the Coast Guard.

No nearby equivalent:

If the Yanakie AWS stops operating, nearby stations (Pound Creek, Wilsons Promontory Lighthouse, Yarram) are too distant to provide relevant data.

Proven Value:

Over 13 years, the AWS has proven its worth, prompting a request for the Council to negotiate with the Bureau of Meteorology to keep it open.

Fishing Industry Dependence:

The Corner Inlet Fishery, with 18 licensed businesses, relies heavily on the AWS for weather-dependent planning and monitoring.

Maritime Safety:

The AWS plays a crucial role in preventing boating incidents by providing essential weather data for trip planning and vigilance.



Council response:

The construction of the automatic weather station in Yanakie was originally funded in 2012 through an Advancing Country Towns grant from the Australian Government. The total project cost was approximately \$200,000.

As part of the funding agreement, Council entered into a 10-year lease on private land in Yanakie to host the weather station. This lease has now expired, along with the service agreement with the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM). The BoM has advised that they will not enter into a new agreement to maintain or service the station.

In addition, the BoM has informed Council that the station requires a \$20,000 upgrade. Ongoing annual maintenance costs are estimated at \$25,000, rising to \$30,000 over the life of a new agreement. Given the current financial constraints, Council is unable to fund the required upgrade and ongoing maintenance.

While Council supports retaining a weather station at Yanakie, we believe that responsibility for funding its upgrade and maintenance should rest with the Australian Government, consistent with the approach taken for other weather stations across the country.

To this end, Council has written to Federal Government Ministers and key officials, seeking support to continue this important service. These efforts align with the position of the newly elected Member for Monash, Mary Aldred, who has also expressed strong support for the station's continuation.

Council will continue to actively advocate for the ongoing operation of the Yanakie automated weather station.

Walter J Tuck Recreation Reserve Changerooms

Request: That Council support planning for a new changeroom facility at the Walter J Tuck Recreation Reserve in accordance with the Female Friendly Sport Infrastructure Guidelines.

Letters of support were received from:

- Walter J Tuck CAC
- Walter J Tuck Masterplan
- Latrobe Umpires Association
- BooFIIT
- Forest Fire Management
- Mirboo North Pony Club
- Mirboo North Junior Football Association
- Mirboo North Cricket Club
- Mirboo North Football Netball Club
- Mirboo North United Football Club

The submissions cited (in summary) the following reasons for seeking the proposed upgrade:

Alignment with Guidelines:

The proposed facility will comply with the Female Friendly Sport Infrastructure Guidelines by Sport and Recreation Victoria and meet the Masterplan objectives for a single, shared-use facility.

Community Hub: The Walter J Tuck Recreation Reserve serves around 2,400 people, offering facilities for cricket, tennis, netball, AFL, and soccer across two ovals and four hard courts. There is now a unified commitment from user groups to build an equitable, inclusive facility for all users.

Outdated Facilities: The current facilities, built over 40 years ago, lack privacy for changing and showering.

Need for Female Facilities:

There is a significant lack of female changeroom facilities, which limits female participation in sports, impacts club viability due to insufficient player numbers and affects overall community inclusion and equity.

Multi-use and Community Benefit:

The proposed facility would serve multiple sports and community groups, be adaptable for use during emergencies (e.g., bushfires, storms) and promote health, wellbeing, and inclusive access.

Council response:

The proposal for upgrades at the Walter J. Tuck Recreation Reserve was well-researched, clearly articulated, and supported by numerous letters of endorsement from the community.

Council is pleased to confirm that funding has been allocated in the 2025/26 Budget to begin planning for the renewal of the changerooms at the reserve. It is intended that any future upgrades will be designed to align with the Female Friendly Sport Infrastructure Guidelines

The completion of agreed changeroom plans with all users and project costing will strengthen Council's advocacy efforts to secure external funding for the next stages of the project. Council recognises the need for these upgrades and is actively advocating for support to help bring them to fruition.

Upgrading sporting facilities remains one of Council's top ten advocacy priorities. It is important to note that the Walter J. Tuck Recreation Reserve is located on Crown Land and managed by a Council appointed Community Asset Committee.

Mirboo North Indoor Recreation Facility

Request: Funding for a feasibility study and concept design for an Indoor multi-use facility in Mirboo North. The feasibility study and concept design would incorporate a purpose-built, shared use fitness and wellbeing facility in future planning in Mirboo North. Submissions refer to the Mirboo North Community Gymnasium on the school grounds.

Letters of support were received from:

- BooFIIT
- Mirboo North & District Community Foundation
- Mirboo North Junior Basketball Association
- Mirboo North Netball Club
- Mirboo North Primary School
- Mirboo North Secondary College
- Mirboo North Football Netball Club
- Mirboo North United Football Club

The submissions cited the following (summarised) reasons for the proposed upgrade:

Job Creation: Redevelopment would support new local jobs, including gym staff and specialist trainers.

Current Issues: The building is below health and safety standards, has low structural integrity, and offers limited privacy.

Unique Utility: It is the only building available for large groups in poor weather.

Community Impact: Relied on by many community groups including the Mirboo North United Football Club that has 109 members and a wide supporter base.

Council response:

Similar to the Walter J. Tuck submission, the Gymnasium proposal was well-researched and supported by multiple community groups.

Council recognises the Mirboo North Community Gymnasium as a valued community asset, demonstrated by the community funding 50 per cent of the initial construction costs. It is also acknowledged that the existing facility no longer meets current or future community needs.

In the upcoming budget, Council has prioritised planning for the renewal of the change facilities at the Mirboo North Recreation Reserve (Walter J. Tuck), as this is a facility for which Council holds asset management responsibility.

However, Council is currently updating its annual advocacy priorities, and there is an opportunity to include the Mirboo North Stadium as an advocacy item under the "Upgrade of Sporting Facilities" category. This would allow Council to engage in further discussions with the Department of Education to help secure funding support for the proposal.

It is important to note that the Stadium is not a Council asset; it is located on Crown land managed by the Department of Education.

Korumburra Amateur Swimming and Life Saving Club

Request: The club would like to see the pool included in the Asset Plan, as it has been excluded from the Aquatic Strategy in the past.

The Korumburra Amateur Swimming and Life Saving Club leases the Korumburra Heated Pool from South Gippsland Shire, with the lease expiring in January 2027 after 20 years. The voluntary committee operates the pool for community benefit, with the pool essential for swimming lessons, water awareness sessions, rehabilitation, and general health benefits. It is the only hydrotherapy pool in the Shire.

Council response:

Council acknowledges the important and unique service the Club provides to the South Gippsland community, being one of only two indoor pool facilities in the region and the only one offering hydrotherapy services.

As the current lease arrangement specifies that Council is not responsible for the facility's maintenance or renewal, it has not been included in Council's asset management portfolio or previous Aquatic Strategies.

Council Officers will continue to work collaboratively with the Swimming Club Committee in the lead-up to the lease renewal, with the aim of reaching a shared understanding of future responsibilities and opportunities.



Terrill Park

Request: Seeking clarification on the line item on page 45. It contains reference to SEPTIC \$25,000 Renewal. What does this mean?

Council response:

The budget line item is an allocation to prepare a design to address the failing waste water system at the Park and is related to the Fish Creek Football Netball Club clubroom proposal.

Sandy Point Masterplan

Request: That Council support the development of a funded Masterplan for Sandy Point and a facilitated workshop.

Joint submission from:

- Sandy Point Community Group
- Waratah Beach Surf Life Saving Club
- Sandy Point Community Centre Committee of Asset Management
- Sandy Point Men's Shed
- Sandy Point Waratah Bay Foreshore Committee of Management.

The submission cited (in summary) the following reasons as to why the Masterplan should be supported:

Masterplan Advocacy:

Over the past four years, there has been significant advocacy for a properly funded Masterplan to address infrastructure and community facility limitations in Sandy Point.

Council Support:

The concept of a Masterplan has been supported by Council and its officers, reinforced by a positive reception at a Council Meeting in February 2025.

Capital Projects:

A Masterplan would help identify capital projects for Council's budgeting cycles and align with a longer-term Financial Plan, allowing for grant applications.

Growing Population and Tourism:

The permanent population and tourism numbers are increasing, necessitating a Masterplan to accommodate these changes.

Climate Change Uncertainty:

While the impact of climate change is uncertain, it is noted that these impacts are beyond normal capital investment cycles.

Council's Social Contract:

The community believes Council has a social contract to support them, given the reliance on property owners for revenue.



Council response:

Council recognises the joint submission from the Sandy Point community and would like to thank them for their united contribution.

Council will be arranging a meeting with representatives from the Sandy Point community, including the organisations referenced in the submission, to discuss coastal issues, associated challenges and next steps.

Capital projects are difficult at present as Council investigates its large and ageing asset portfolio. To address this, the 2025–2029 Council Plan includes a key initiative:

"Implement strategic reviews of Council's asset portfolio to strengthen community connections."

This initiative will enable help Council to develop a clearer understanding of its future asset maintenance and funding requirements.

Prom Views Estate Road Upgrades

Request: That Council consider construction of bituminous seal bell entry at key Prom Views estate intersection points.

The submission cited the following reasons as to why the road upgrades should be supported.

Safety Concerns:

Three access points to Prom Views Estate from Acacia Road (Melaleuca Avenue, Roscrea Crescent, Panoramic Drive) are of inferior quality, lack adequate drainage, and are considered unsafe.

High Vehicle Movement:

These intersections experience significant vehicle movements, especially during holidays and long weekends.

Recent Upgrades:

Grevillea Street and McNeil Court received bituminous seal upgrades, despite McNeil Court having fewer daily vehicle movements.

Request for Improvement:

The resident requests the construction of bituminous seal bell entries at the three mentioned intersections to improve safety and seeks a response from the Council.



Council response:

The roads in question are situated in relatively low-speed areas and, as such, are not currently prioritised for bellmouth sealing. Locations with higher traffic speeds and greater safety risks are given precedence. While Council does not currently have dedicated funding for a bellmouth sealing program, there may be opportunities to explore minor extensions to the sealed surface as part of future road maintenance works.

Venus Bay Multi-Use Space

Request: That the Council owned land at the corner of Jupiter Boulevard and Centre Road become an enduring community space - that can be used by community members, organisations and visitors as a multi-use space.

Venus Bay Community Centre

This is to support the overall categories of the Council Plan. Particular support for the Empowering Community.

As the Manager of the Venus Bay Community Centre I can provide a direct example of how this has been done in Venus Bay with the Art Cubes Project at a Council owned piece of land that created a community and creative precinct for months - engaging and intriguing locals and visitors alike as well as connecting people with each other. This model can easily be replicated and/or continued. In particular in Venus Bay - we would like to see the land at the Corner of Jupiter Boulevard and Centre Road become an enduring community space - that can be used by community members, organisations, visitors as a multi-use space - at times being a creative precinct, public information area for CFA sessions, fun evening market or just a place to hang out together under the lovely banksia trees. The site was originally purchased as a car park. For the last two years before this - it was a construction site for the redevelopment of Venus Bay precinct. It hasn't been used for car parking during peak periods for over three years.

This is not just a romantic idea - we can make this happen in Venus Bay and the model is there to use other community spaces for and by community.

I think it is reasonable to expect Council to work with community organisations like the Venus Bay Community Centre to achieve and activate these places and spaces.



Council response:

Council has reviewed the request and believes that additional minor landscaping works could be appropriate to enhance the site's visual appeal. The intention is for the space to serve a dual purpose—functioning as a community outdoor area when needed, while also remaining available for informal overflow parking.

It is important to acknowledge that Council received some negative feedback regarding the unavailability of the car park during the busy holiday period. This feedback needs to be balanced against the positive outcomes highlighted in the submission. While the site was originally intended for parking and may be required for that purpose again in the future, its interim use as a flexible, multi-purpose space is considered appropriate and supported.

Leongatha Business Association

The Leongatha Business Association (LBA) have provided a submission into the integrated planning suite. Key points (summarised) are as follows:

Economic Confidence: The Council Plan focuses heavily on social initiatives but lacks emphasis on economic confidence, employment, infrastructure, and private sector investment, which are crucial for future prosperity.

Council Plan Vision: The current Vision lacks a focus on economic needs, rendering it a wish list without a clear path to prosperity. It should be revised to emphasise economic self-sufficiency, infrastructure investment, support for business and agriculture, and highlight enterprise, opportunity, and prosperity, underscoring the importance of business, agriculture, and tourism.

Economic Priorities: Council should focus on enabling infrastructure, responsive planning, and investment-ready land rather than discretionary grants and cultural programs.

Economic Reality: While agriculture and food manufacturing are crucial to South Gippsland's economy, over-reliance on these sectors poses risks.

Action Plan: The Council needs to attract private investment, fast-track approvals, and enable industry growth to ensure economic sustainability.

Accommodation Gap: Address the shortage of short-term accommodation by partnering with national caravan park operators to develop high-quality parks for tourists and workforce housing.

Tourism Development: Launch a Fast-Track Tourism Development Program to cut red tape for wineries, brewers, distilleries, restaurants, and farmgate operators, with guaranteed 60-day approvals and reduced fees.

Economic Diversification: Attract high-value horticulture, small livestock, and organics, and support local processing hubs to add value before produce leaves the region.

Planning Reform: Implement measurable, enforceable reforms to streamline the planning approvals process, achieve industry benchmarks, invest in digital tools, and establish clear communication protocols.



Financial Discipline: Rebalance the budget towards capital works that unlock growth, set staffing expenditure caps, redeploy internal roles to support approvals and planning, and enhance transparency through mandatory reporting measures.

Council response:

Council appreciates the comprehensive and well-considered submission. It is encouraging to note that a number of the suggestions are already in place. This includes initiatives such as the Business Friendly Councils program, led by Council's Economic Development team, which aims to streamline and fast-track approval processes.

Council also offers a dedicated Business Concierge service to support businesses through the application process. In addition, Council has established performance measures as part of its reporting requirements, including annual reporting to Local Government Victoria. The outcomes of this reporting are published in Council's Annual Report.

Officers also acknowledge the growing need for additional accommodation in the region and continue to address this through targeted advocacy and investment attraction efforts.

Strzelecki Ward Community Assembly

The Strzelecki Ward Community Assembly provided a submission and addendum into the integrated planning suite. Key points (summarised) are as follows:

Transparency and Accountability:

- Restore open Question Time and non-confidential briefing sessions.
- Provide a detailed 10-year capital works program.
- Improve Freedom of Information request handling.
- Hold regular open meetings with communities.
- Reduce decisions made behind closed doors.
- Use collaborative planning methods like workshops and advisory committees.

Advocacy:

Advocate for local bus services, public housing, youth services, mental health services, and educational opportunities.

Cost-of-Living and Rates:

Address the cost-of-living crisis and reduce rates, which are higher than comparable rural shires.

Community Engagement:

Increase genuine community engagement through collaborative workshops and citizen juries to build trust and satisfaction. Council's efforts to improve community consultation have seen engagement drop with only 47% satisfaction. Effective democracies require high trust and participation, which decline when governments only inform and consult rather than collaborate and empower. The Draft Plan shows a retreat from genuine consultation with low public participation and limited opportunities for detailed feedback or collaboration.

Sustainability and Environmental Protection:

Prioritise sustainability, reduce emissions, support renewable energy initiatives, and develop strategies for sea level rise and flooding.

Housing Strategy:

Develop a diverse housing strategy to support affordable housing and the tourist industry, partnering with the Victorian Government and local businesses.

Coal Creek Issues: Council has wasted significant funds without proper maintenance or a clear strategy. The plan lacks key performance indicators (KPIs) and a budget, which are essential for accountability and success.



Draft Plan Analysis:

The Draft Plan covers key areas but lacks concrete actions and detailed budgets, making it hard to assess its effectiveness. The absence of a detailed budget for the next three years and a 10-year plan undermines transparency and accountability. The plan's commitment to improving transparency is not substantiated with clear strategies.

Expectations for a Good Council:

- Proactive, open, honest, and transparent actions.
- Improved community consultation and engagement.
- Better two-way communication.
- Fair allocation of discretionary funds.
- A shared vision for the Shire.
- Linking community plans to the Council's vision, draft plan, and budget.
- Addressing the cost of living and ensuring affordable rates.

Additional Considerations:

Rationalising Services and Infrastructure:

- Rationalise services to ensure affordability.
- Cut back capital works to the long-term average.

Community Vision:

- Listen to and act on the community's vision for the Shire.
- Access for Non-Tech Savvy Residents:
- Provide information through community notice boards.

Strzelecki Ward Community Assembly

Partnership Approach:

- Foster bottom-up leadership and collaborative governance.

Commercial and Management Competencies:

- Enhance commercial skills and ensure genuinely open question time in Council.

Focus on Public Lands:

- Focus on public land management and ensure value for rates paid.

Representation for the Western End of the Shire:

- Improve representation and listen to the needs of Nyora and Korumburra.

Independence from State Government:

- Act independently of State Government.

Basic Services:

- Focus on providing essential services like rates, roads, and rubbish.

Goals:

Collaborative Governance: Foster strong partnerships with the community, using citizens' juries and assemblies for decision-making.

Climate-Secure Farming: Develop a premier climate-secure farming district with diverse agricultural activities.

Housing Options: Provide a variety of housing options, including public housing and affordable rentals.

Affordable Living: Achieve affordable rates and reduce the cost of living.

Sustainability: Ensure environmental sustainability and resilience.

Significant Infrastructure: Preserve key infrastructure like Coal Creek and the Korumburra railway station.

Public Transport: Advocate for accessible local public transport.

Sustainable Planning: Improve planning performance for sustainable development.

Community Resilience: Promote well-connected, resilient communities.



Council response:

Council acknowledges the time and effort that has gone into preparing this detailed submission, which raises a wide range of important discussion points. Many of the matters highlighted have been previously considered by Council and continue to be part of ongoing discussions.

It is noted that some elements of the submission present competing priorities—for example, a request for a rate reduction alongside proposals that would require increased funding or expanded services..

Public Transport

James M

Please prioritise accessible and affordable community transport in the 2025–2029 Council Plan. Lack of transport is a major barrier for vulnerable residents—including low-income families, single parents, and those without vehicles—especially in isolated areas like Port Welshpool. This aligns with the Empowering Communities and Sustainable Future themes. I urge Council to explore solutions such as trial programs, partnerships, or funding advocacy to ensure equitable access and strengthen community wellbeing.

New Wave Gippsland

A regular public bus loop connecting Wonthaggi, Inverloch, Leongatha, and Korumburra would greatly benefit people with disabilities and others who can't drive, helping them access shops, jobs, appointments, and community life. With existing PTV buses in Wonthaggi, this could be trialled in collaboration with the Shire. Running the service multiple times daily, seven days a week, could make it highly successful.



Council response:

Public and community transport remains a key advocacy priority for Council, reflecting its importance in supporting accessibility, social connection, and equitable mobility across our region. Council continues to actively pursue improvements in this area through discussions with state and federal partners, and by highlighting local needs in relevant planning and funding opportunities.

This priority is also embedded in the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (Item 3.8) under the objective of Increasing Active Travel, recognising the important role that accessible and reliable transport plays in supporting healthier, more connected communities.

Other Budget Feedback

Anonymous

Feedback: There are some great inclusions in this budget — especially the \$1.2 million weather emergency reserve, extra support for volunteers, and investment in mental health via Live4Life. These are smart, community-first decisions.

Requests:

- No funding for Korumburra Pool again, despite years of community feedback and its inclusion in past strategic plans. The pool is deteriorating and needs investment now — even if it's just design work or partial upgrades, it must be in the next budget.
- Foster is the fastest-growing town in the Shire, yet there are no clear projects allocated to it in this budget. Foster deserves drainage upgrades, community space investment, and inclusion in open space planning.
- The \$150,000 for a Developer Contribution Plan in Nyora is a good long-term step, but the town still needs footpaths, drainage, and public infrastructure now — waiting for developers to pay for it years from now isn't enough.
- Korumburra's streetscape, now mostly complete, has caused traffic issues, congestion, and safety concerns. There is no allowance for reviewing or mitigating these problems in the budget. At the very least, traffic assessments and safety audits should be funded now that the project is nearly finished.
- The Coal Creek Community Assembly was a great initiative, but there's very little funding (\$88k) to act on any of its outcomes. This risks becoming another consultation exercise with no follow-through.



Council response:

Korumburra Pool

The development of the Aquatic Strategy will provide important guidance for the future of the Korumburra Pool.

Foster

Council has a number of positive initiatives planned for Foster, including the development of a new skate park. Community consultation on the proposed facility has recently concluded, and the feedback received will play an important role in shaping the next phase of the project.

Korumburra Streetscape

Council remains confident that the Korumburra Streetscape project will deliver lasting benefits by improving safety, accessibility, and the overall appeal of the commercial precinct. While no additional works are currently proposed, Council acknowledges that it may take time for the community to fully adapt to the new traffic arrangements.

Coal Creek

A Business case is currently being developed for Coal Creek,

Other Budget Feedback

Martin Carlson Foundation

We are a major financial supporter of organisations in the region and would like to know when outcomes and initiatives will be discussed, specifically regarding:

- Asset sell-off or reduction
- Environmental initiatives
- Additional training within the region
- Allocation of funding moving forward
- Business growth within towns
- Involvement in new technologies

Loch Community Development Association

The Loch Community Development Association requests that the Plan enforce the Commercial Zone in Loch, as the lack of enforcement has led to a significant reduction in commercial offerings over the past two decades. Key examples include the Victoria Street Gallery and the Royal Hotel, which have been converted to residential use without any commercial activity.

The association notes that using commercially zoned properties for purely residential purposes reduces the commercial appeal of Loch, impacting both residents and visitors. They also highlight other commercially zoned properties that have not operated as businesses for some time, potentially losing their 'existing rights.'

In contrast, Loch business owners face over regulation, with frequent Council visits for minor compliance issues. This has caused frustration and, in some cases, led businesses to limit their operations, as seen during the Christmas In The Village event in December 2024.

Mirboo North Cricket Club

Empowering communities should address the struggling recreation reserves, especially in Mirboo North. These reserves are crucial for community empowerment but currently receive inadequate support, making sport and recreation inaccessible for many ratepayers in the shire. More support is needed to make these facilities available to everyone.

Anonymous

The draft plans are wordy and repetitive, lacking specific projects or solutions for South Gippsland.



Council response:

Martin Carlson

Council is committed to keeping the community informed on the progress of the Council Plan. Regular updates will continue to be shared through local media and Council's communication channels. Community members are warmly encouraged to subscribe to the In the Know newsletter for the latest news and updates.

Loch Community Development Association

Council has carefully considered the concerns raised. While we appreciate the desire to see certain properties activated for commercial use, it is important to note that there are currently no regulatory mechanisms in place to require private property owners to use their properties for specific commercial purposes.

Mirboo North Cricket Club

Council recognises the vital role that recreation reserves play in our communities and currently invests over \$280,000 annually to support them. Of this, more than \$28,000 is allocated directly to the Mirboo North Recreation Reserve each year. In addition, the reserve receives ongoing building maintenance support, and local clubs regularly access community grants to assist with equipment and facility improvements. The 2025/26 budget also includes funding to commence planning for the renewal of the change rooms at this reserve.

Other Budget Feedback

Gippsland Public Health Unit

Language: Recommend replacing terms like “Support” with stronger, more collaborative language such as “Work with” or “Co-design”. Use action-oriented wording consistently (e.g., “Improve” vs. “Improving”, “Reduce stigma”).

Health Literacy & Digital Access: Include a goal and actions to improve health literacy, especially through better digital access and skills.

Presentation: Improve visibility and readability of the strategic framework (p.3).

Equity and Inclusion: Broaden reference to inclusion by removing limited identity categories and recognising others such as age, disability, and neurodiversity (p.13).

Public Health: Strengthen focus on issues like vaping, gambling, alcohol, tobacco, and e-cigarettes (p.14), using evidence like Breathe Easy survey results.

Active Living: Clarify and better position the concept of social prescribing (suggested for Wellbeing section); make references to reducing sedentary time more explicit; align actions with Fair Access policy.

Active Transport: Use stronger terms than “advocate” (e.g., “enable” or “facilitate”) to promote safe, accessible infrastructure.

Healthy Eating: Expand and strengthen this section to match others in depth (p.16), ensuring alignment with regional health strategies. Focus more on public health outcomes rather than economic development when discussing local food systems. Include sustainability, access, and equity in food-related actions.



Council response:

The points raised are reasonable and thoughtfully presented. Council is happy to largely incorporate these suggestions, as they align well with our current objectives and community priorities.

Other Budget Feedback

SunSmart Council Victoria

Congratulations on the impressive draft MPHWP 2025–2029. It clearly reflects strong consultation and expertise. Given that over 95% of skin cancers are caused by UV exposure, we encourage the inclusion of UV-protective, cool shade in the plan. This would support equitable, safe use of outdoor spaces and reduce skin cancer risk. Thoughtful shade design is essential to avoid unintended increases in UV exposure.

South Coast Prevention Team

Please consider adding vaping to the strategy addressing harm from gambling, alcohol, tobacco, and drugs under the “Improving Wellbeing” priority. Also, in the Healthy Eating section, we suggest replacing references to “healthy choices” with terms like “healthy food environments” or “healthy options,” to better reflect the impact of external factors on behaviour, as supported by VicHealth and Common Cause.

Flying Doctor Service

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) Victoria provides low-cost health and wellbeing services, including the Flying Doctor Community Transport Service based in Foster—a unique and vital service for South Gippsland.

We propose strengthening Theme 3: Empowering Communities, particularly strategies 3.7 and 3.9, by formally recognising and financially supporting community transport. This service supports vulnerable residents—such as older adults, low-income individuals, and those with limited mobility—by enabling access to essential health and social services.

RFDS Victoria seeks a financial partnership with Council to ensure the sustainability of this service, aligning with your health and wellbeing priorities and promoting equitable transport access across the region.



Council response:

The points raised are reasonable and thoughtfully presented. Council is happy to largely incorporate these suggestions, as they align well with our current objectives and community priorities.

Other Budget Feedback

South Gippsland Shire Access and Inclusion Committee

The Access and Inclusion Committee provided a submission into the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plan. Key points (summarised) are as follows:

Format

- Add labels before images for screen reader compatibility.
- Increase font size on “Plan on a Page” for readability.

Overarching Comments

- Highlight primary health care access.
- Use more Plain English.
- Extend consultation periods and improve accessibility (e.g. summaries, drop-ins, recordings).
- Engage advisory committees in future.

Improving Wellbeing

- Add “how” actions to reduce stigma.
- Support community connection to reduce isolation.
- Consider shift workers as an at-risk group.
- Strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal communities.

Active Living

- Ensure inclusive, engaging public spaces.
- Promote social prescribing and reduce sedentary time.
- Support inclusion in sport and active travel.
- Encourage family participation and free activities.

Healthy Eating

- Rename to Healthy Eating.
- Focus on wellbeing, not weight.
- Support local food access and address food insecurity.

Climate Change & Health

- Raise awareness of health risks.
- Support resilience, sustainability, and clarify future-proofing.
- Recognise volunteer reliance in emergencies.

Preventing Violence

- Promote respectful relationships and diversity.
- Tailor messaging to different communities.
- Link inclusion goals to future action planning.



Council response:

The Access and Inclusion Committee's submission includes many valuable suggestions, and Council appreciates the thought behind the feedback. Several of the proposed changes have been incorporated into the updated plan, while others will be considered in future planning and engagement activities. Council looks forward to continued collaboration with the Committee to ensure ongoing improvement in access and inclusion across the region.

PART C: 2040 Community Vision Feedback





Sandy Point Engagement

Background

The South Gippsland Community Vision was created in 2021 following extensive community engagement. The Vision expresses community aspirations for South Gippsland from 2021 until 2040. It is reviewed with each incoming Council.

To help us Shape South Gippsland, we asked our community if the current Vision still reflects our community's hopes for the future of our region.

Respondents were asked to tell us how much they supported - or opposed - each of the current Vision priorities. The outcomes are listed on the following pages.

Vision Overview

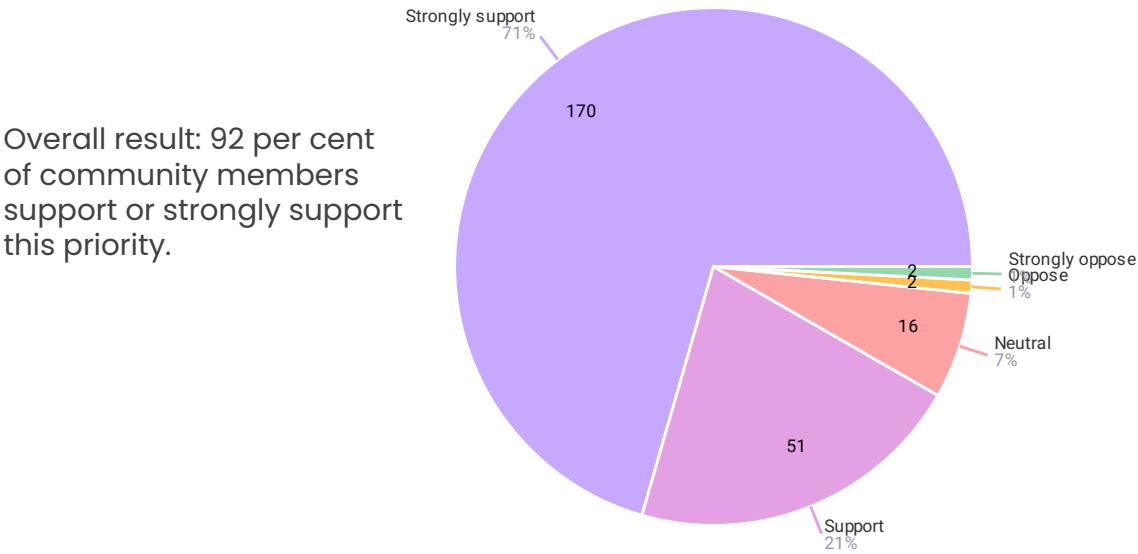
- 257 people provided Community Vision feedback.
- 119 people provided in-person Vision feedback at a community event or Councillor pop-up. This number includes the 31 students who provided feedback at the Youth Forum on Wednesday 19 February.



Some events were not suited to the in-person Vision engagement due to unfavourable weather conditions.

Priority: A Healthy, Connected and Engaged Community

- Our community is engaged, informed and there are opportunities for all.
- Our health services and professionals are well-supported, with physical and mental health services being accessible to all.
- Our community has equal access to healthy lifestyle opportunities, social supports and health prevention initiatives.
- Our community shows care and respect towards every member, listening and looking out for the safety, wellbeing and equality of all.
- Our community has a strong sense of unity and cooperation, and there are social supports in place for our vulnerable.
- Our community embraces diversity and accessibility, and is welcoming of newcomers.
- Our neighbourhoods offer affordable housing options and we advocate for housing access for all.
- Our volunteers are supported and applauded, with succession planning to ensure the longevity of our community groups.
- Our activities promote a sense of belonging and fun, and we have plenty to do for all people regardless of age and ability



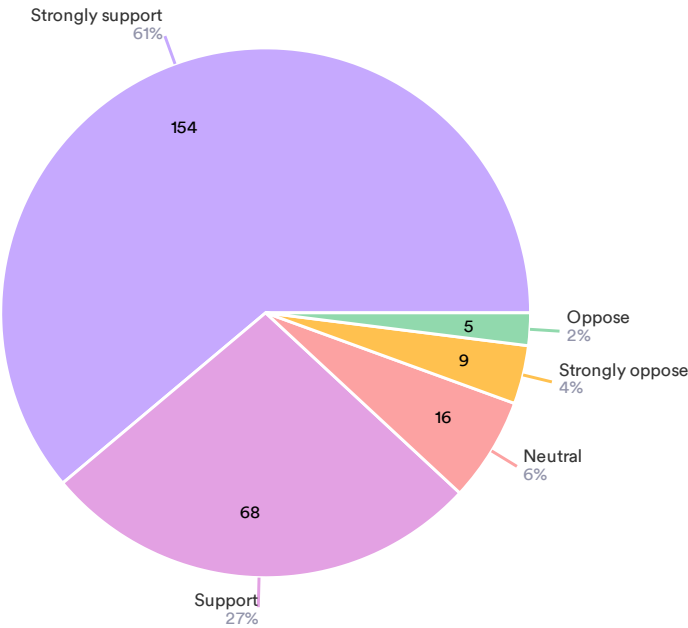
Data	Response	%
Strongly support	170	71%
Support	51	21%
Neutral	16	7%
Oppose	2	1%
Strongly oppose	2	1%

Priority: Sustainability and Climate Change

- Our community is resilient and ready to face future environmental challenges.
- Our farmland is a leading food bowl of Victoria; our high quality produce is sustainably grown and creates food security.
- Our agricultural industries use regenerative land management practices to ensure the long-term viability of our land.
- Our natural resources are used sustainably with a long-term timeframe in mind.
- Our industries are innovative, diverse and sustainable, and bring clear benefits to our community.
- To become carbon positive, our community has reduced its carbon footprint through a range of practices including clean energy choices and sustainable technology infrastructure.
- Our economy has robust waste reduction and diversion practices. We support our community to become resilient and better prepared for climatic and extreme weather events.

Please indicate how much you support or oppose this priority:

Overall result: 88 per cent of community members support or strongly support this priority.

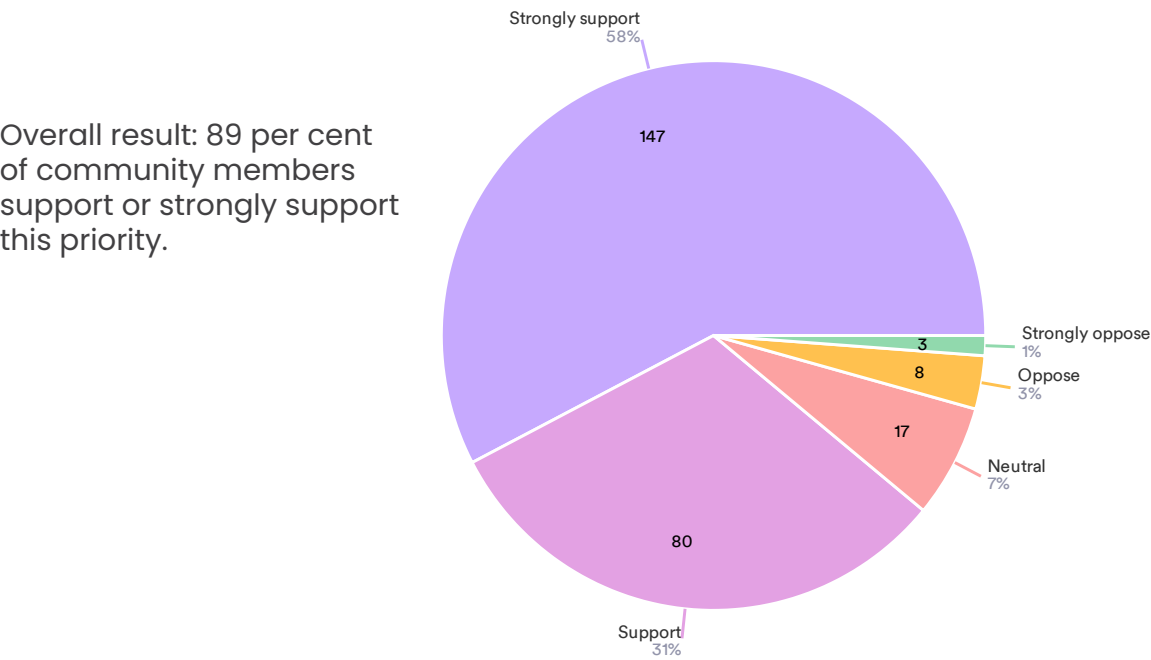


Data	Response	%
Strongly support	154	61%
Support	68	27%
Neutral	16	6%
Strongly oppose	9	4%
Oppose	5	2%

Priority: Shaping our Future

- Our population and housing growth is sustainable, well-planned and is supported by appropriate infrastructure.
- Our unique lifestyle is maintained through planning schemes that promote sensitive development and allotment of spaces for affordable housing, along with preserving and increasing native vegetation.
- Our open spaces, multi-purpose ‘hubs’ and creative spaces encourage our community to congregate and connect.
- Our economic development makes sustainable use of existing and local resources.
- Our transport systems and roads have been carefully planned, are safe and well maintained and have appropriate speed limits to minimise injury to our people and wildlife.
- Our well-planned and connected walking and cycling tracks and convenient public transport options get us where we need to go.
- Our decision making is transparent and we welcome participation, collaboration and consultation in decisions that affect the community.
- We preserve and acknowledge our unique and diverse cultural heritage of people and place with reconciliation in mind.

Please indicate how much you support or oppose this priority:



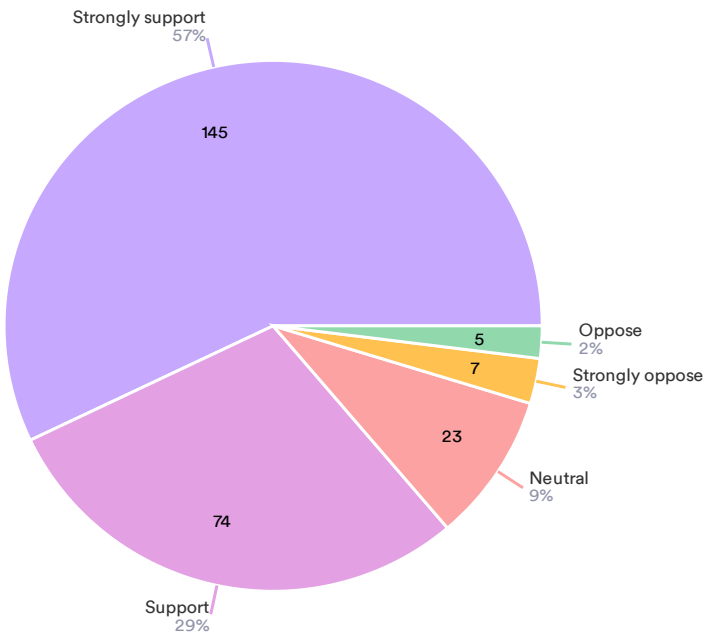
Data	Response	%
Strongly support	147	58%
Support	80	31%
Neutral	17	7%
Oppose	8	3%
Strongly oppose	3	1%

Priority: Enhanced Natural Environment and Cultural Heritage

- Our care for our natural environment and waterways encourages generational connections to the natural world around us.
- The story of our Indigenous heritage is owned and led by our First Peoples, and is proudly embraced across South Gippsland.
- Our native bushland is protected and strengthened through initiatives such as rate relief for bush areas, covenants and a Shire-wide approach to revegetation.
- Our community is educated and informed about weed and pest management.
- Our coastal landscapes are sustainably developed and protected.
- Our wildlife connectivity is encouraged through extensive tree canopies, healthy waterways and habitat corridors.
- Our historic buildings and features are enhanced and protected, adding to our unique character.

Please indicate how much you support or oppose this priority:

Overall result: 86 per cent of community members support or strongly support this priority.

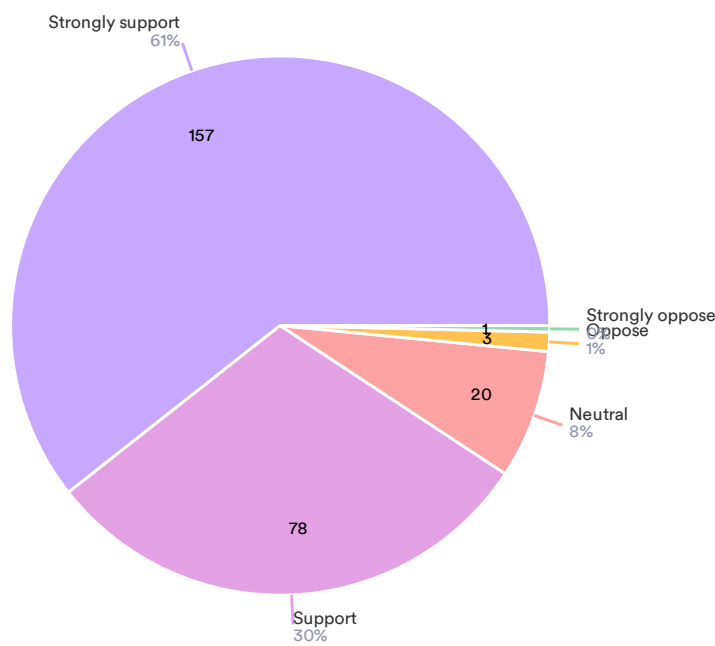


Data	Response	%
Strongly support	145	57%
Support	74	29%
Neutral	23	9%
Strongly oppose	7	3%
Oppose	5	2%

Priority: A Destination to Live, Visit and Enjoy

- Our public spaces, facilities and amenities are multipurpose and support community connection.
- Our thriving businesses are adding to the uniqueness of our towns and adapting to changing conditions.
- Our education opportunities attract and retain skills in our community.
- Our diverse local economy and industry is strong, with jobs for youth, connected to education pathways locally and a reason for young people to want to stay.
- Our vibrant arts scene welcomes, connects, and inspires.
- Our community is digitally connected through reliable internet and mobile phone coverage, and is supported to access technology.
- Our ecotourism is sought after and encourages an appreciation of our natural features.
- Our town centres are vibrant and lively places that are friendly, inclusive, clean and safe.

Overall result: 91 per cent of community members support or strongly support this priority.



Data	Response	%
Strongly support	157	61%
Support	78	30%
Neutral	20	8%
Oppose	3	1%
Strongly oppose	1	0%

PART D: Deliberative Engagement



Community Dialogue Report

Prepared by i.e. community for South Gippsland Shire Council

Shaping South Gippsland

April 2025

Acknowledgement of Country

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

Privacy

i.e. community and any person(s) acting on our behalf collects, manages and holds personal information in accordance with the Victorian Privacy Act 1988 and the Australian Privacy Principles 2014.

Personal information collected from individuals, such as e-mail addresses, contact details, demographic data and feedback enable us to facilitate participation in, and report on, engagement activities. We follow a strict procedure for the collection, use, disclosure, storage and destruction of personal information. Any information we collect is stored securely and only disclosed to our client or the program team. Written notes from consultation activities are recorded digitally and disposed of securely.

We make every effort to ensure we capture participant feedback accurately, however, we cannot guarantee that every contribution is represented in this report. We are confident this report captures the breadth of views we heard through the dialogue.

i.e. community takes all reasonable steps to ensure that personal information will only be used or disclosed for the purposes outlined in this statement. We will not use or disclose personal information for another purpose without first obtaining further consent or unless required or authorised by law.

For more information about how we protect privacy, please visit www.ie.community.

Summary

South Gippsland Shire Council convened the Shaping South Gippsland Community Dialogue as part of the engagement process to inform the development of the Council Plan 2025-2029. The dialogue brought together around 30 stakeholders and Councillors to work together to address the challenge of delivering essential services and managing community infrastructure sustainably within a revenue-constrained environment.

The dialogue was framed around a key question: *how can Council continue to deliver services, maintain infrastructure, and meet community expectations with pressures like rate capping, inflation, cost-shifting, and ageing assets?* The goal was to build shared understanding and gather practical ideas for future planning.

Participants worked through a structured process to identify priorities for the next Council Plan. Looking at the financial picture, broad community feedback, and Council's services, stakeholders and Councillors discussed and sorted initiatives. This led to a clear agreement on essential focus areas, mainly maintaining core infrastructure, providing vital community support, and encouraging local economic development.

To address the underlying financial pressures, the dialogue also provided strategic guidance on potential approaches. Participants recommended approaches focused on asset rationalisation, exploring alternative service delivery models, and strengthening advocacy efforts and partnerships to mitigate funding gaps and cost-shifting impacts.

Several key themes came up repeatedly in the discussions. These included the tension between funding basic infrastructure and meeting community expectations, the value seen in community-led solutions and volunteers, the importance of strategic asset management, and thinking about economic development as a way to help the budget.

Finally, by working through hypothetical trade-off scenarios, stakeholders identified key factors they believe Council should consider when making difficult choices. These factors cover considerations such as usage levels, costs, potential for multi-use, community impact, safety, compliance, and alignment with Council's overall direction.

The guidance provided in more detail in this report offers valuable input for the Council Plan.

Overview

Planning for the future

South Gippsland Shire Council is currently developing its Council Plan for the 2026-2029 period. This Plan is a critical document, setting the strategic direction and outlining key initiatives for the Shire. Alongside this, Council is reviewing the ongoing relevance of the Community Vision.

Framing the challenge

A significant driver for community engagement was the complex financial environment facing the Council. Operating under constraints such as rate capping, rising inflation, cost-shifting from state and federal governments, and the increasing expense of maintaining community assets and delivering over 100 services, Council recognised the need for focused dialogue.

The central challenge posed was: *In a financially constrained environment... how can South Gippsland Shire Council continue to deliver services, provide and maintain community infrastructure, and meet community expectations?*

The Community Dialogue

As part of the broader 'Shaping South Gippsland' engagement program, a dialogue session was convened on Wednesday, 26 February 2025, in Leongatha. This dialogue brought together approximately 30 representatives from key stakeholder organisations across South Gippsland, including health, education, community services, and local industry.

The primary objective was to leverage their insights to explore the financial challenges, identify community priorities, and develop potential decision-making approaches to directly inform the development of the Council Plan.

Priorities

Participants in the dialogue, with community stakeholders working alongside Councillors, identified a set of priority areas to guide Council's focus for the Council Plan.

To identify these priorities, participants considered the financial and operational context presented by the Mayor and Council officers, an overview of Council services, and feedback from the broader community engagement.

Through facilitated small group discussions, participants undertook a prioritisation activity, sorting services and initiatives into categories: Primary focus (reflecting core, essential areas), Secondary focus (important areas, perhaps less urgent), and Resource dependent (areas where delivery is dependent on available funding).

Key priorities and thinking from the small groups were then shared and discussed as a whole group. After the dialogue, all feedback from this process was synthesised to identify the priorities considered most essential within a financially constrained environment.

Clear consensus emerged around service areas that participants considered essential priorities for the next Council Plan.

Core infrastructure

- Road maintenance (including weeds) and renewal (most frequently mentioned priority across all groups)
- Building maintenance and renewal (focus on maintaining existing assets rather than expansion)
- Waste management services
- Drainage infrastructure (mentioned in connection with road maintenance and flooding concerns)

Community support

- Support for volunteers and community organisations (seen as a high-value, cost-effective approach)
- Youth programs
- Emergency management

Economic development

- Tourism (including economic development potential)
- Industry and investment attraction
- Agricultural and industrial support (to sustain economic viability in the region)

Financial sustainability

Through the prioritisation exercise, stakeholders and Councillors provided guidance on how they believe Council should approach its financial challenges.

Analysis of the priorities feedback and underlying rationale shared during the prioritisation activity identified recurring themes around strategies to address financial constraints.

Asset rationalisation

- Strong emphasis on consolidating buildings and facilities
- Multi-purpose use of facilities to improve utilisation and reduce costs
- Implementing strategic reviews of Council's building portfolio

Service delivery models

- Exploring alternative models, including community-led initiatives
- Reassessing Council's role in service provision (support vs. direct delivery)
- Potential divestment from services that could be delivered by others

Advocacy and partnerships

- Advocacy to state and federal governments regarding funding and cost-shifting
- Collaboration with neighbouring councils on shared services and joint advocacy
- Working with businesses and community organisations to leverage local resources

Key themes

Beyond the specific priorities and strategic guidance, analysis of the feedback and rationale shared during the dialogue revealed several recurring key themes reflecting the perspectives and expectations of stakeholders and Councillors.

Balancing core services and community expectations

A recurring theme was the tension between delivering essential infrastructure services and meeting broader community expectations. Participants recognised that Council has expanded beyond core services in response to community needs, but questioned whether this approach remains sustainable.

Stakeholders emphasised that any new services would require either additional funding or cuts to existing services.

Community-led solutions and volunteerism

- Strong support for empowering volunteers and community organisations
- Highlighted that small council investments in community grants can generate significant returns

Strategic asset management

Asset rationalisation emerged as a central theme, with participants recommending:

- Emphasis on maintaining rather than expanding assets
- Co-location and consolidation of services to improve efficiency
- Decision-making framework for asset maintenance vs. renewal
- Potential divestment of under-utilised assets

Economic development as financial strategy

Tourism and economic development were frequently positioned as strategies for financial sustainability rather than just service areas. Participants emphasised:

- Tourism seen as an economic driver
- The Great Southern Rail Trail is a key tourism asset, but management responsibilities should be clarified
- Encouraging industrial and agricultural investment to strengthen the rate base

Natural assets and environmental management

- Coastal and bushland management featured prominently in discussions
- Participants recognised the role of natural assets in tourism, but also the challenges in managing them sustainably
- Roadside vegetation and weed management identified as an issue requiring greater attention

Decision-making

To explore how difficult choices might be approached in practice, stakeholders worked through several hypothetical scenarios requiring trade-offs between different assets or services.

This exercise aimed to identify key factors participants believe Council should weigh when faced with resource allocation decisions. The following considerations emerged consistently from these discussions, providing practical guidance for evaluating options.

Who uses it and who benefits?

- How many people and groups use the asset or service, how often and what for?
- What types of users or groups benefit most? (e.g., specific demographics, industries, community groups)
- Does the usage level justify the resource allocation (e.g. how many people per capita)?
- Is there a clear community need being met (that can't be met elsewhere)?

Guidance: Decisions should consider the number, type, and usage patterns of those who benefit.

What is the cost and financial sustainability?

- What's the total cost to maintain, operate, and eventually renew or replace it?
- What's the current condition – is it safe, compliant, and fit for purpose?
- Can we afford this long-term within our budget constraints?
- Are there ways to reduce costs or generate revenue?

Guidance: Decisions should weigh financial sustainability, maintenance costs, and long-term feasibility.

Can it serve multiple purposes or be consolidated?

- Could this asset or service be combined or co-located with others to reduce costs?
- Can it be used for multiple purposes or by different groups?
- Does it fit with future plans for growth or changing community needs?
- How does it relate to other similar facilities nearby – is there duplication?

Guidance: Decisions should explore opportunities for maximising resource use through consolidation, multi-purpose design, future-proofing, and considering the network of existing assets.

What is the potential impact on the community?

- How will this decision affect the community? What's the history and local sentiment?
- Is the asset or service accessible for everyone who might need it (considering location, transport, cost, ability)?
- Does it hold special heritage, cultural, or symbolic value for the community?
- Have we properly consulted with and listened to the people who will be most affected?

Guidance: Decisions should consider the broader social impacts, ensure equitable access, respect community values, and be informed by genuine consultation.

Are there specific safety, compliance, or environmental factors?

- Does the asset or service meet current safety standards and compliance regulations? Are there specific risks?
- Are there any significant environmental impacts (positive or negative) associated with it?
- Could changes impact local amenity (e.g., noise, dust, traffic)?
- Are the materials or methods used sustainable or innovative?

Guidance: Decisions must prioritise safety, meet compliance obligations, and consider environmental sustainability and local amenity.

Does it fit the bigger picture and have alternatives been considered?

- How does this align with Council's long-term vision and strategic plans for the Shire?
- Could this service or function be delivered differently, perhaps through partnerships, community management, or new technology?
- Are there privately owned or other alternatives available that could meet the need?
- Does this decision enable future opportunities or lock us into a particular path?

Guidance: Decisions should align with long-term strategies and involve exploration of innovative, efficient, and collaborative alternatives for delivery.

Appendix: Prioritisation summary

Primary focus areas (most frequently mentioned)

1. Road maintenance and renewal
2. Emergency management
3. Building maintenance and renewal
4. Support for volunteers and community organisations
5. Youth programs
6. Tourism (including economic development potential)
7. Agricultural and industrial support

Secondary focus areas

1. Great Southern Rail Trail management
2. Environmental management and biodiversity
3. Coastal and bushland management
4. Waste management improvements
5. Roadside vegetation and weed management
6. Recreation and sporting facilities

Resource dependent areas

1. Coal Creek Community Park
2. Performing arts space
3. New community infrastructure

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