

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

Memorandum of Understanding



*Between South Gippsland Shire Council
and South Gippsland Landcare Network*



South Gippsland
Shire Council

Background

South Gippsland Shire Council and the South Gippsland Landcare Network have enjoyed a strong partnership for many years. This has included supporting each other on the delivery of natural resource management education activities and revegetation events.

South Gippsland Landcare Network and South Gippsland Shire Council share the goals of supporting sustainable land use, managing pest plants and animals, protecting and enhancing native vegetation (habitat), improving water quality, and promoting conservation and biodiversity practices and principles.

In an area where agriculture is the primary industry, South Gippsland Shire Council recognises that the South Gippsland Landcare Network's members are largely made up of farmers and landowners who are keen to do their bit to protect and enhance our natural environment, while balancing a business that relies on the quality of our water and soil.

Shared objectives for both organisations include:

- Protecting the natural resource base of the South Gippsland Shire.
- Promotion and delivery of activities that protect biodiversity and encourage sustainable agriculture.
- Pest and weed management and mitigation, including educational activities and innovative collaborative projects.
- A strategic and planned approach to increasing and improving the native habitat and water quality throughout the Shire.
- Promoting and supporting ecologically sustainable and diverse agricultural practices that prioritise biodiversity.
- Implementing actions of the South Gippsland Biodiversity Protection Plan.

South Gippsland Shire Council's Environment and Sustainability Focus

This Memorandum of Understanding aligns with and supports the *South Gippsland Community Vision 2040*.

Vision Statement

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

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

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

In addition to the Vision Statement, the partnered activities outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding between South Gippsland Shire Council and the South Gippsland Landcare Network, specifically align to the following Vision priorities and outcomes:

- Our activities promote a sense of belonging and fun, and we have plenty to do for people regardless of age and ability.
- Our community is resilient and ready to face future environmental challenges.
- 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 care for our natural environment and waterways encourages generational connections to the natural world around us.
- 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 wildlife connectivity is encouraged through extensive tree canopies, healthy waterways and habitat corridors.

There is also strong alignment with many of the priorities and objectives in the Council Plan 2022 to 2026, including:

Economy and Industry

- Support agriculture, food and fibre production to remain a competitive and significant contributor to our local and national economy.

Healthy and Engaged Communities

- Foster a sense of belonging and connectedness through involvement in community groups, fostering community leadership and engaging with our creative industries.

Protecting and Enhancing Our Environment

- Educate and empower our communities to reduce and control weeds and pests.
- Plan and implement bio-link corridors to increase the percentage of tree cover and habitat in our Shire and support our community, including landowners, to partner with us in implementing bio-links.
- Number of partnered revegetation activities with Landcare each year.
- Partner with land managers, farmers and Landcare to develop and implement weed and pest mitigation programs.
- Continue to deliver South Gippsland's indigenous native vegetation planting program and explore partnership opportunities to expand the program.

This Memorandum of Understanding also connects with the goals and strategic themes of South Gippsland Shire Council's *Economic Development Strategy 2021 to 2031*, specifically in supporting industries that rely on our natural resources and land such as agriculture and visitor economy. For example:

To build a sustainable and growing economy that:

- *Broadens, builds and strengthens industry sectors;*
- *Utilises the natural environment and improves liveability in the Shire;*
- *Establishes the Shire as a food hub that feeds our State and beyond; and*
- *Builds partnerships in order to achieve these goals.*

About the South Gippsland Landcare Network

The South Gippsland Landcare Network was formed in 1995, and in 2025 celebrates 30 years of community-led care for the South Gippsland landscape.

The South Gippsland Landcare Network has 16 member groups (Landcare and Friends groups), 500+ member families and 1,000+ subscribers to their eNews.

The South Gippsland Landcare Network operates over an area of 3,296 square kilometres, over landscapes including the Strzelecki Ranges, foothills and coastal plains. The area largely mirrors that of the South Gippsland Shire, with the exclusion of Wilsons Promontory and a small portion of the Baw Baw Shire.

It is a not-for-profit incorporated organisation, currently employing four part-time staff, two Landcare Group Facilitators, a Project Coordinator and Project Officer. It is overseen by a multi-skilled volunteer board, and its accounts are audited annually by a professional auditor for presentation to the membership at the Annual General Meeting.

In 2020, the South Gippsland Landcare Network developed its 2020 to 2030 Strategy with members, which guides its activities. The three main pillars are:

- Sustainable Agriculture;
- Biodiversity; and
- Pest, Plant and Animal Control.

In 2024, the South Gippsland Landcare Network delivered a 10-Year Biodiversity Protection Plan for South Gippsland. This was developed in conjunction with key stakeholders who manage land in South Gippsland, including South Gippsland Shire Council.

Purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding

Both organisations share the view that a partnership is mutually beneficial for both parties and promotes improved outcomes for the South Gippsland community and the environment.

A partnership will ensure continuity and integration of programs and projects, and increase the potential for both organisations to achieve their agricultural sustainability and environmental objectives.

This Memorandum of Understanding's intention is to:

- Describe and confirm the supporting activities and actions of mutual benefit to both parties in achieving their strategic direction and goals.
- Confirm the support to be provided by the South Gippsland Shire Council to the South Gippsland Landcare Network.
- Confirm the support to be provided by the South Gippsland Landcare Network to South Gippsland Shire Council.
- Confirm the future work to be undertaken by both organisations which meets the strategic direction of both organisations.

This Memorandum of Understanding describes the relationships, responsibilities and funding commitment that supports the collaborative working arrangements between both organisations.

Scope

South Gippsland Landcare Network and South Gippsland Shire Council understand:

- This Memorandum of Understanding provides a formal, mutually beneficial framework to work collaboratively.
- This Memorandum of Understanding aims to strengthen the relationship and enhance existing activities between South Gippsland Shire Council and the South Gippsland Landcare Network.
- This Memorandum of Understanding does not create a legal relationship between South Gippsland Shire Council and the South Gippsland Landcare Network. Nothing in this agreement constitutes a contractual arrangement.
- South Gippsland Shire Council and the South Gippsland Landcare Network will nominate a management representative as the principal contact for discussion in relation to the activities under the Memorandum of Understanding.

Commitments

South Gippsland Shire Council undertakes to:

- Commit to fund the South Gippsland Landcare Network for the amount of \$50,000 per annum for three financial years ending in 2027/28.
- Partner with Landcare of pest, animal and plant projects in Council-managed reserves.
- Support the South Gippsland Landcare Network procurement of a pest, plants and animals resource that could:
 - » Provide outreach support to South Gippsland residents, landowners and farmers.
 - » Provide consistent support for landowners and intensive support for new landowners in the area.
 - » Strategically plan and implement works and programs designed to mitigate and minimise the impacts of pests, plants and animals in South Gippsland. This would include partnering with South Gippsland Shire Council, particularly in coordinated efforts relating to Council's roadside weed management and Council-managed land (bush reserves and Rail Trail's).
 - » Apply for and attract grant funding for pest, plant and animal projects.
 - » Facilitate community education workshops and programs, in partnership with South Gippsland Shire Council.
- Support the South Gippsland Landcare Network through providing free access to meeting rooms and bookable spaces at South Gippsland Shire Council-managed facilities including Leongatha Memorial Hall, Korumburra Community Hub and South Gippsland Shire Council offices. Bookings will be for Landcare-coordinated events such as community education forums, stakeholder meetings and workshops.
- Provide in-kind support through staff availability for assistance with community events including education events, forums and workshops.
- Provide in-kind support through preparation works for planting sites on Council-managed land, such as the Great Southern Rail Trail.
- Provide in-kind support for signage and small materials (tree guards, jute matting etc.) for planting sites on Council-managed land, such as the Great Southern Rail Trail, and ongoing maintenance at these sites.
- Provide advice, input and guidance into the preparation of the South Gippsland Landcare Network's strategic planning and major projects.
- Commit to partner with the South Gippsland Landcare Network on a minimum of two planting events (or similar) and two education events (or similar) each year.

The South Gippsland Landcare Network undertakes to:

- Provide an annual report, including a value statement demonstrating funds/projects leveraged from South Gippsland Shire Council's contribution to the South Gippsland Landcare Network, works undertaken to build ongoing social capital in Landcare activities, demonstrated partnered activities with Council, and demonstrating solvency.
- Present an annual Council Briefing on the achievements of the year, particularly relating to what was achieved through the Memorandum of Understanding and annual funding.
- Provide technical expertise, advice and input to South Gippsland Shire Council to assist with responding to public enquiries and planning for events and strategic plans.
- Provide support to South Gippsland Shire Council in engaging with Landcare members, leveraging the South Gippsland Landcare Network's social capital to engage the community and private landowners.
- Promote and encourage landowners and members to actively participate in revegetation and vegetation protection aligning with South Gippsland Shire Council's strategic plans and Vision.
- Commit to partnering with South Gippsland Shire Council on a minimum of two planting events (or similar) and two education events (or similar) each year.
- Utilise the funding provided towards agreed activities.

Ongoing works between both parties will include:

- Identifying opportunities for cross promotional media in relevant publications and social media platforms.
- Promotion of the partnership between both organisations.
- Appropriate use of organisation logos, seeking permission when required.
- Establishing annual joint work plans, including a minimum of two planting events (or similar) and two education events (or similar) each year.
- Measure and monitor on-ground works and projects annually to report against.

Governance

South Gippsland Shire Council and the South Gippsland Landcare Network will agree on an Annual Action Plan by 1 July each year, that will outline the intended joint activities and use of annual funding for the following financial year.

This Annual Action Plan will be shared with Councillors by 1 August each year after the initial year.

South Gippsland Shire Council and the South Gippsland Landcare Network will have regular meetings to support the implementation of the Annual Plan.

The South Gippsland Landcare Network will:

- Measure and monitor the works undertaken with the annual \$50,000 contribution and report on these in the Annual Report;
- Provide updates to Council through bi-monthly meetings; and
- Provide a mid- and end-of-year review update to Councillors.

South Gippsland Shire Council and the South Gippsland Landcare Network will work together towards continuous improvement of the partnership, including a mid- and end-of-year review process between both parties to discuss opportunities for improvement.

Commencement and Review

The Memorandum of Understanding will commence on the date signed and remain valid until 30 June 2028. A formal review of the Memorandum of Understanding will be conducted prior to its expiration.

Amendments to this Memorandum of Understanding require agreement from both parties. Changes are to be in the format of an addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding and signed by both parties.

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

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