

## Candlelight Vigil

On Wednesday evening, South Gippsland Shire Council held a Candlelight Vigil at Leongatha Memorial Hall to honour those whose lives have been taken due to family violence and to stand in solidarity with those affected. Council's main office was gently illuminated in purple (the colour symbolic of peace, courage, survival, honour and dedication to ending violence) as Councillors, Council staff and the South Gippsland community shared a moment of remembrance and reflection.

Mayor Hersey expressed gratitude for our community's support, stating that while it is difficult to gather under the circumstances, the presence of each attendee is deeply appreciated. His speech honoured the memories of those we have lost and recognised the ongoing impact of family violence on individuals, families and our community.

Deputy Mayor Snell acknowledged that many people in the room likely had lived experience of family violence and offered words of hope, emphasising the safe space created at the vigil and the support services available to those in need.

The vigil served as a place to remember, acknowledge loss and stand in solidarity with victim-survivors. Participants held candles and stood for a minute of silence in remembrance of those whose lives have been taken due to family violence.

In 2025 Victoria Police responded to 525 family violence callouts in South Gippsland, including 174 breaches of a family intervention order, 71 assaults and 50 serious assaults. Considering many incidents of family violence are never reported, these numbers are distressing. Already this year, though it is only May, the number of women whose lives have been taken due to family violence across Australia has reached 18.

Behind each of these numbers is a real person - and a circle of family, friends and community who feel their loss or walk alongside them hoping for their safety.

Our greatest hope for change lies in awareness, in listening to and supporting victim-survivors without judgement and in encouraging people who use family violence to seek support to change.

We can do better – and we must. Together, we strive for a future free from domestic and family violence.

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

*“The annual Candlelight Vigil gives our community the opportunity to shine a light on the ongoing issue of domestic and family violence, and its impacts on our community.*

*It also reinforces the importance of continuing to support victim-survivors and work collectively towards a safe community for all.”*

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