

Mayor's Message



*South Gippsland
Shire Council*

I often speak about advocacy in this column, and for good reason. It is an important part of what local councils do.

As part of consultation for the recently adopted 2026/27 Budget, we asked our community to tell us what mattered most. We received many suggestions and ideas, but many also came with a significant price tag. The reality is that, while Council works hard to make every dollar count, we simply cannot deliver many of the desired projects without support from other levels of government.

That's why advocacy matters.

Over the past few years, we've had some significant advocacy successes that have delivered real benefits for South Gippsland. Most recently, we welcomed funding for planning for the next stage of the Leongatha Heavy Vehicle Alternate Route. We've also secured funding for mobile black spot improvements, early years infrastructure, road safety projects, bridges and upgrades to community facilities.

Last week I attended the National General Assembly in Canberra along with Deputy Mayor Brad Snell and Cr Sarah Gilligan, where we had another opportunity to advocate directly on behalf of our community. We met with the Hon. Julie Collins, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Dan Goodman, Adviser to the Minister for Communications and Minister for Sport; Mary Aldred MP, Member for Monash; and representatives from the National Emergency Management Agency.

These meetings gave us the opportunity to raise issues that matter to South Gippsland, including protecting prime agricultural land and Australia's long-term food security, local telecommunications issues, road priorities, community and local sporting infrastructure and the pressing need to simplify Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements.

The current system around disaster funding is complex and often results in delays to both infrastructure repairs and reimbursement to councils following natural disasters, which for a rural community like ours, can have a significant negative impact.

Just as importantly, these discussions gave us valuable insight into the Federal Government's priorities and future direction. Understanding where governments are



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heading helps us strengthen our advocacy and focus our efforts where they will have the greatest impact and success.

Ideally, councils wouldn't need to spend so much time seeking funding and support from other levels of government. However, that's the reality we face, particularly as councils continue to balance growing community expectations with increasing financial pressures.

We have a proven record of securing funding and support through these very engagements with Ministers and Departments and Council will continue to advocate to ensure South Gippsland's voice is heard, and that we are a priority for investment.