

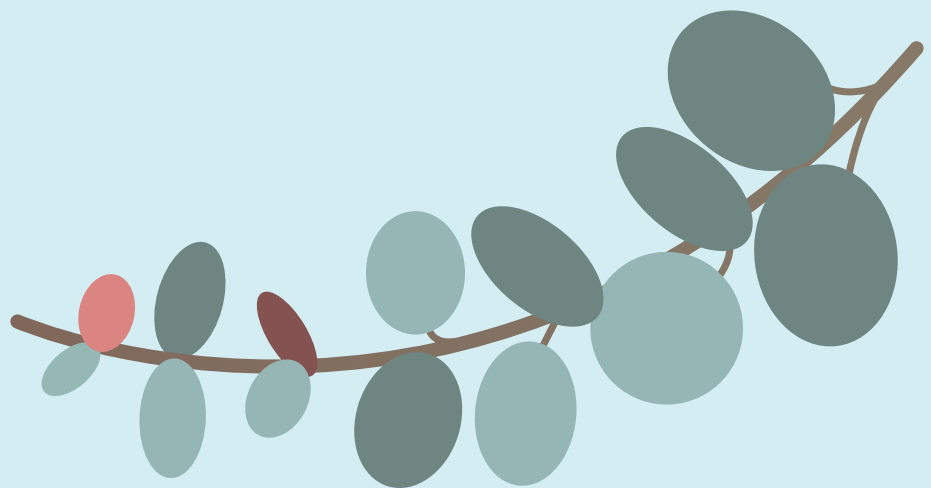
SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

# Advocacy Strategy 2022



## *Acknowledgment of Country*

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



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## Mayor's Message

**Councillor Mohya Davies**

Mayor

South Gippsland Shire Council



During our extensive Shaping South Gippsland community engagement campaign from December 2021 to May 2022, many key themes emerged. One thing that was abundantly clear was the community's expectation for Council to play an active role in advocating for improved State and Federal services and infrastructure in our community.

Our community spoke up about the most relevant issues to them and expressed their expectation that Council advocate for change and improvements, particularly in regards to the following matters:

- Roads;
- Health;
- Education;
- Public Transport;
- Connectivity (phone and internet); and
- Sustainability and Climate Change.

This strategy identifies our commitment to engaging with our community to better understand what our top advocacy projects should be. It outlines how we will take an active and planned approach to achieving these key priority projects. We have also identified how we will support and encourage community-led advocacy projects and how we will ensure the best use of our resources.

Importantly, we understand that the most successful advocacy projects are achieved through strong partnerships between Council, the community and our key stakeholders. This will be a focus into the future.

We look forward to working alongside the community to achieve the projects that matter most to them.

## Our Vision

We will partner with and lead our community to protect and celebrate what is most important to us: our environment, our heritage, our agriculture and industries and most importantly – the incredible people and volunteers that make up South Gippsland.

*“Businesses working together and supported by local Council or community discussions to advocate.”*

Quote during the ‘Shaping South Gippsland’ Community Engagement.



Sunset in Bena



# About South Gippsland

## Our Region



## Our Economic Base

South Gippsland has a thriving economy with over 7,000 businesses contributing to an annual output of over \$2.9 billion. South Gippsland has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Australia.

Key industry sectors contributing to this output are:

Manufacturing	Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	Property Services
<b>\$688M</b>	<b>\$470M</b>	<b>\$290M</b>
Construction	Wholesale Trade	Health Care and Social Assistance
<b>\$257M</b>	<b>\$144M</b>	<b>\$119M</b>
Retail Trade	Utilities	
<b>\$118M</b>	<b>\$116M</b>	

## Community Statistics

The official population of South Gippsland 28,936 (ABS estimated resident population). Our five most populated towns are:



Leongatha  
5,654



Korumburra  
4,469



Mirboo North  
2,324



Foster  
1,842



Nyora  
1,527

- 47 per cent of the population are aged 50 or over.
- Average of 2.4 people per household.
- 47 is the median age of people residing in the Shire.
- 5 per cent of the population speak a language other than English at home.
- 30 per cent of households are 'couples without children'.
- 25 per cent of households are 'couples with children'.
- 27 per cent are lone-person households.

# Advocacy: What, Why and How

## What?

Advocacy for South Gippsland Shire Council is a process of deliberately understanding, prioritising and socialising the needs of our community. Advocacy aims to create improved outcomes for the community by influencing decision makers.

## Why?

The aim of this strategy is to provide Council with a framework and system to confidently represent the views and needs of the South Gippsland community.

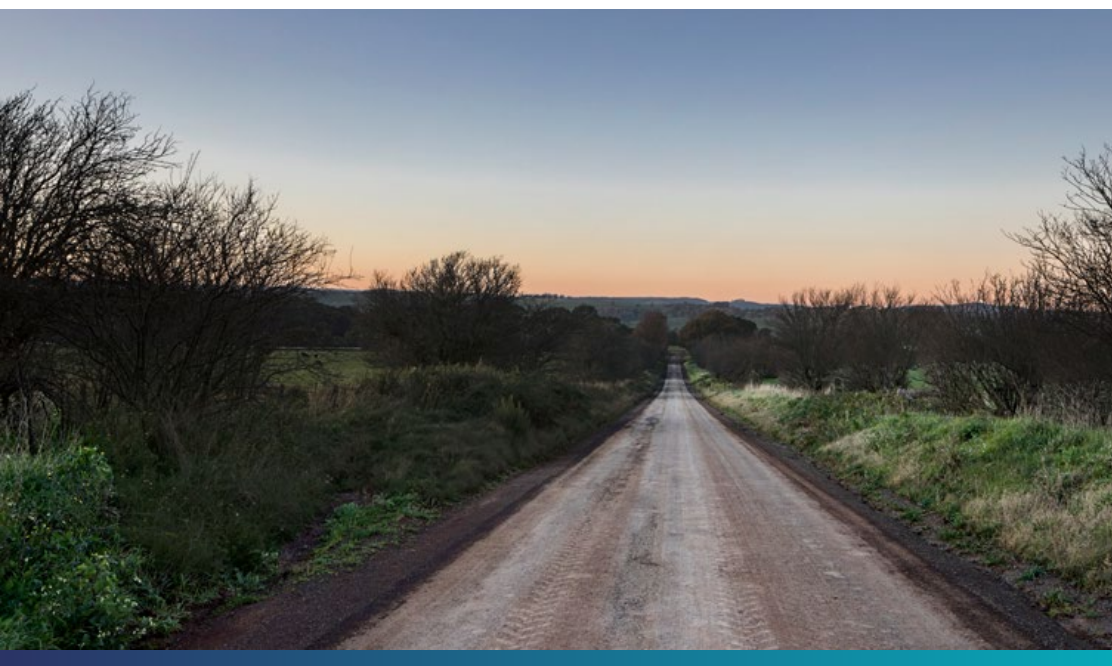
Council will advocate on projects which sit outside of Local Government's control, including important community services such as Health, Education, Transport, Social Services and much more.

This framework will help Council to be as efficient as possible when prioritising and allocating time, funds and skills towards advocacy.

## How?

Council will advocate and influence in many different ways, and will always strive to:

- Advocate on issues and opportunities which align with our *Council Plan 2022 - 2026*.
- Ensure our Priority Projects are informed by community feedback and represent the community as a whole.
- Advocate with confidence, research and respect.
- Advocate in partnership with our community and key stakeholders.
- Be flexible and adapt to changing circumstances, to maximise opportunities and minimise risk and wasted efforts.



Crighions Road, Leongatha

## Our Advocacy Goals

- Pursue opportunities for funding and support to achieve improved community outcomes including partnerships and collaboration at all levels of public, private and philanthropic sectors.
- Ask, listen and understand our community so that our advocacy is an extension of their voice and needs.
- Raise the profile of South Gippsland and improve the understanding of the issues and challenges we face, as well as the opportunities.
- Improve and attract investment or policy change from state and federal governments.
- Develop a living priority document that identifies the key challenges and opportunities for our community.
- Encourage, empower, support and work with our community.
- Build and maintain strong links and relationships with our community, key service providers, stakeholders and all levels of government.



Opening of Great Southern Rail Trail Korumburra - Leongatha Section



# Roles and Responsibilities

## Mayor

The Mayor is the lead and key spokesperson for all advocacy activities. They are the united voice for Council, and will take a lead role in socialising and promoting Council's advocacy priorities.

The Mayor will use their role as a leader in the community and representative in the sector to gather support and feedback, and strengthen our advocacy efforts. They will actively seek ways to build and strengthen networks and partnerships that support key advocacy areas, including at a local, regional, state and national level.

Importantly, the Mayor will ensure that our advocacy is ambitious, achievable and strategic, and will lead with integrity and courage.

## Councillors

Councillors play a key role in listening to and understanding the priorities of the community, informing the community of advocacy pathways and avenues to encourage and support community-led advocacy projects.

## Chief Executive Officer and Leadership Team

The Chief Executive Officer will work closely with the Mayor to follow this advocacy strategy. They will support the Mayor and Councillors to deliver on their roles as outlined above.

In particular, the Chief Executive Officer and Leadership Team will provide expert guidance relating to existing policy, strategy and legislation to maximise our advocacy efforts.

As the organisation's spokesperson and lead representative, the Chief Executive Officer has an important role to play in building relationships and participating in opportunities that support Council's advocacy. The Chief Executive Officer is involved in many networks of local, regional and state significance and through these has many opportunities to socialise and highlight Council's advocacy priorities. The Chief Executive Officer also brings information from these forums to inform, shape and strengthen Council's advocacy efforts.

The Leadership Team will provide technical information, research and advice to support advocacy projects and decision making. They will also support advocacy through planning and facilitating community engagement, promoting Council's advocacy priorities with the community and stakeholders and facilitating networking and promotional opportunities including letters, submissions and meetings.

The Leadership Team will use their networks, relationships and regular meetings as platforms to support Council's advocacy.

## The Community

Advocacy is at its strongest when Council and the community work together.

The community play an important role in the implementation of the strategy and in successful advocacy campaigns. Our understanding of the community's needs and aspirations relies on honest feedback, and on participation in consultation and engagement.

We hope that the community will join us when we celebrate our advocacy achievements and when we confidently and unashamedly campaign.

## Three Levels of Advocacy

The South Gippsland community will always have many different and competing priority projects. In order to have the greatest impact when approaching and lobbying decision makers, it is important that we have a defined list of top, 'level one' or priority projects.

This priority project list will provide clarity, strategy and structure to Council's advocacy approach.

The below diagram explains the three levels of advocacy and the difference in the three approaches.

### Level One: Proactive

Our top advocacy projects which we actively campaign on.

### Level Two: Opportunistic

When there is an opportunity to advocate (speak to a Minister, write a letter, socialise the issue etc.) we won't hold back.

### Level Three: Reactive

If approached for support and we have strategic direction to guide us, we will respond and work with the community leading the project.

### Level One: Proactive

Council will choose and endorse up to 10 of the top advocacy opportunities and key projects for Council to focus on. Led by the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer, Council will proactively advocate on these. They will be listed in Council's adopted 'Advocacy Priority List', which will be promoted and shared with key stakeholders and decision makers including Members of Parliament.

The top projects will be determined by the Council and the decision will be based on:

- Community consultation: Understanding what the most popular and important projects are for the community.
- Research: Understanding through an evidence-based approach where the greatest need is, and where we can have the highest impact.
- Policy and Strategy: Projects which are aligned with *Council Plan 2022 - 2026* as well as existing policy and strategy at all levels of government.

Council will also consider the geographical spread and diversity of projects, as well as their achievability and any financial implications (such as a funding contribution) when determining what the top priority projects will be.

*Example: Mirboo North Outdoor Pool Redevelopment*

#### **What could we do?**

Communications and Marketing campaign including printed collateral, a video and social media campaign, meetings with Ministers and key stakeholders in the community, budget submissions and letters, facilitate community meetings for discussion and promotion.

### **Level Two: Opportunistic**

Led by the Administration – in particular the Leadership Team – with support, guidance and direction from Councillors. These priorities are underpinned by a position of Council, or a Council Strategy.

They have a clear link to the *Council Plan 2022 - 2026* and support its outcomes, and they are also relevant to and reflected strongly in the community consultation and feedback.

*Example: Wilsons Promontory Revitalisation*

#### **What could we do?**

Ensure that the project is referenced, pursued and supported in relevant submissions, position papers or correspondence. Highlight through the media and promote where appropriate. Reference in established discussions with Federal and State Ministers, local members, strategic partners and our community.

### **Level Three: Responsive**

Lead by the community, businesses and/or associations and supported by Councillors and the Administration, these projects are linked to our *Council Plan 2022 - 2026* or another specific Council Strategy or Policy. They may not be as aligned with State or Federal policy or agenda and therefore receive less attention from the media and wider community.

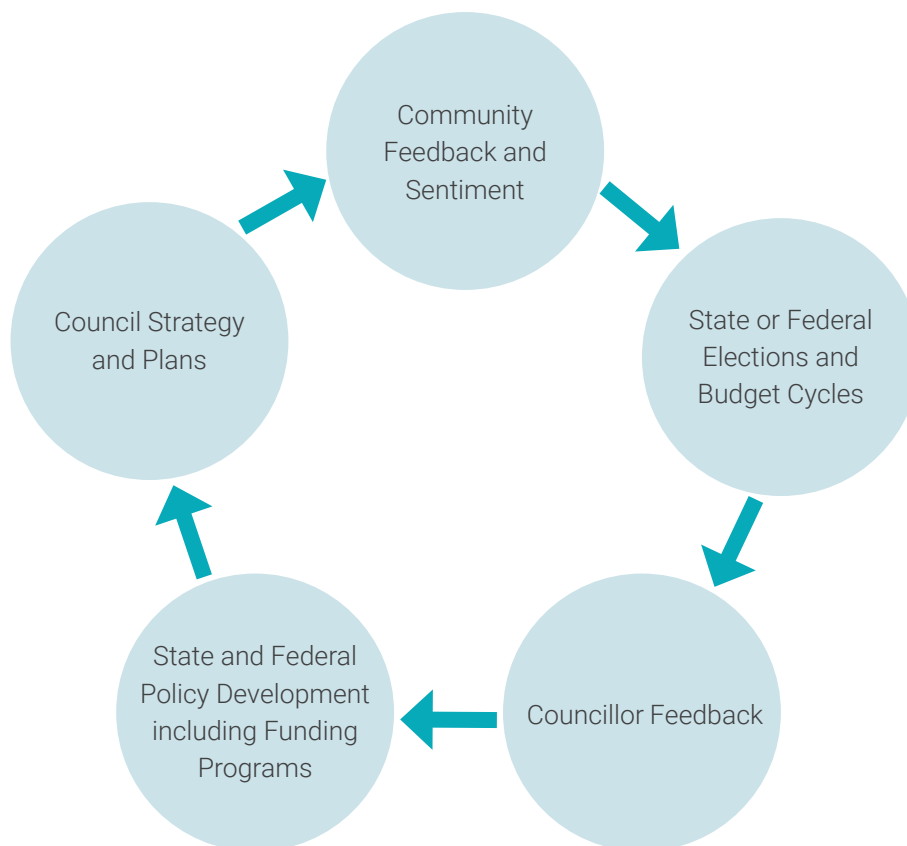
*Example: Landcare-led program of trained sniffer dogs for fox control*

#### **What could we do?**

Support Landcare's advocacy as it aligns with our Council Plan objectives, provide a letter of support for funding submission, reference when appropriate in relevant meeting. For example, if we are already meeting with the Minister for Environment, conservation groups, Victorian Farmers Federation etc. Consider highlighting our support through our communication channels.

## Review, Monitoring and Evaluation

Our advocacy approach needs to be flexible to make the most of opportunities as they arise and also to respond to a changing community. We are constantly using new information (see below) to review and monitor our advocacy priorities and efforts. Factors of influence that impact and shape what Council advocates on are:



*Figure: Advocacy Priority List is a 'live' document that is constantly influenced by many factors.*

To support this flexibility, Council's advocacy priority list does not have an expiry date. While the list of projects is adopted formally by Council, the document is 'alive' and under constant review. Examples of events that would catalyse a review are:

- Top priority projects being achieved and therefore removed from the list, making way for new priorities.
- Significant change in political leadership or policy.
- State or Federal election campaigns. For example, if a Federal election was called and there were few priorities of federal importance, Council may choose to add some.

Significant changes to the list, like adding or removing a priority, would require Council resolution. However, changes to make projects more likely to be successful could be made without resolution, with approval from the Manager Communications, Customer and Advocacy.



Gathering and responding to feedback to ensure that Council's top priorities is a true and accurate reflection of the community's needs is an important review process. This is outlined as a responsibility for the Mayor and Councillors, Council staff and the community on page 9, and includes but is not limited to:

- Online polls and surveys promoted by Council.
- Stakeholder meetings and discussions.
- The promotion and socialising of Council's top priorities.
- Councillor community engagement including attending events, meetings and open drop-in style opportunities like 'Coffee with a Councillor'.

The Advocacy team will be responsible for reviewing and reporting on:

- Updates and outcomes from community engagement.
- Advocacy activities such as campaigns, meeting with Ministers and political announcements.
- What has been achieved.
- New opportunities.
- Limitations and barriers.
- Potential new level one, two or three projects.



Integrated Plans Engagement 'Coffee with a Councillor' – Tarwin Lower



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**South Gippsland**  
Shire Council

Council Meeting No. 472 - 29 June 2022