

**AGENDA - OPEN - COUNCIL MEETING - 20 MAY 2026 ATTACHMENTS - PART 1/2**

<b>5.2. ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT - 1 JULY 2025 TO 31 MARCH 2026 .....</b>	<b>2</b>
5.2.1. ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT - 1 JULY 2025 TO 31 MARCH 2026 .....	2
<b>5.3. PROPOSED LEASE - LEWIS STREET PORT WELSHPOOL.....</b>	<b>34</b>
5.3.1. 202524 - LEWIS STREET PORT WELSHPOOL - ENDORSED PLANS .....	34
<b>5.4. DRAFT ACCESS &amp; INCLUSION ACTION PLAN - COMMENCEMENT OF COMMUNITY FEEDBACK PROGRAM .....</b>	<b>37</b>
5.4.1. DRAFT ACCESS AND INCLUSION ACTION PLAN 2026 TO 2030 .....	37
<b>5.5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY.....</b>	<b>61</b>
5.5.1. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY C06.....	61
5.5.2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY - MAY 2026 .....	66
<b>5.6. INSTRUMENT OF APPOINTMENT - S11A PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT ACT 1987 - HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES .....</b>	<b>78</b>
5.6.1. S11A PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT ACT 1987 - HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES - 20 MAY 2026 .....	78

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

# DRAFT Organisational Performance Report 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026



*South Gippsland*  
Shire Council

## Contents

---

About this Report	3
Council Plan Theme: Leading with Integrity	4 - 7
Council Plan Theme: Developing a Sustainable Future	8 - 11
Council Plan Theme: Empowering Communities	12 - 16
Financial Report	

### *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.*



*Eucalyptus, (genus Eucalyptus)*

## About this Report

This Report is prepared as a key component of South Gippsland Shire Council's commitment to transparent reporting and accountability to our community and to meet statutory reporting requirements under the *Local Government Act 2020* and associated regulations.

The *Council Plan 2025-2029* is structured around three key themes that guide Council's activities and ensures alignment with the priorities set out in the *Community Vision 2040*. These themes are:

- Leading with Integrity.
- Developing a Sustainable Future.
- Empowering Communities.

South Gippsland Shire Council measures its performance delivering the Plan through:

- Results achieved against the Strategic Objectives in the *Council Plan*;
- Progress against the actions and the service performance indicators identified in the *Annual Budget*.



# Leading with Integrity

## Good Governance and Financial Sustainability

This theme focuses on fostering transparency, accountability, and ethical leadership within Council. It aims to build trust within the community through clear, responsible decision-making and the upholding of high standards in governance. Key initiatives under this theme may include encouraging engagement, strengthening public accountability, and ensuring ethical practices in all aspects of Council operations.

### Achievements to Date:

- Five budget workshops were undertaken with Councillors to develop Council's *2026/27 Annual Budget and Council Plan Actions*.
- A draft *Community Engagement Policy and Community Engagement Strategy* will be presented for consideration at the May 2026 Council Meeting, following community consultation during October and November 2025.
- Council's 2026 Advocacy Priorities were endorsed at the 15 October 2025 Council Meeting.
- Planning and procurement for key projects and programs is well progressed and Council continues to have success securing external funding.



## Leading with Integrity

Objective: Good Governance and Financial Sustainability

### Major Actions


#### Strategy 1.1:

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

Action	Comment	Progress
Commence development of a <i>Sustainable Building Asset Strategy</i> .	A catalogue of Council's building portfolio has been developed. Work to establish a set of guiding principles for decision-making, along with a review of the services provided, is also well progressed, with a continued focus on financial sustainability.	
Undertake a review of non-Council Assets.	A review of non-Council assets has been completed and the outcomes from the review will be incorporated into future planning and the development of the <i>2026/27 Annual Budget</i> .	


#### Strategy 1.2:

Ensure Council's financial sustainability through prudent management and strategic planning.

Action	Comment	Progress
Develop the 2026/27 Annual Budget.	A draft <i>2026/27 Annual Budget</i> and <i>Year 2 Council Plan</i> Actions have been developed following the completion of five budget workshops with Councillors, consideration of community feedback and extensive discussion.	

#### Strategy 1.3:

Build community confidence through transparent, inclusive and accountable governance practices.



Action	Comment	Progress
Provide strategic support for the Audit and Risk Committee.	The December 2025 Audit and Risk Committee meeting minutes were adopted by Council in this reporting period, and the March 2026 meeting was successfully held. Inductions for new Committee members have been completed, with recruitment underway for a new independent member. The Questions on Notice process continues to support timely and comprehensive responses. Ongoing liaising with internal and external auditors to ensure alignment with audit timelines and reporting requirements.	

## Leading with Integrity

Objective: Good Governance and Financial Sustainability


### Strategy 1.4:

Ensure innovative service delivery in line with community expectations.

Action	Comment	Progress
Develop a program of service reviews to ensure the delivery of quality Council services.	Two out of three service reviews have been completed, with the final review to be completed by 30 June. To support this work, a development program for Senior Leaders was delivered in February 2026, with a focus on best practice approaches to service design and business improvement.	
Implement the 2025/26 actions from the <i>Digital and Technology Roadmap</i> .	A range of improvements to Council's digital systems have been implemented to enhance user experience, resolve issues and improve efficiency.  Nineteen of 25 roadmap actions have been completed to date, with a key consolidation project now underway that will reshape several actions from mid-2026 onwards.	

### Strategy 1.5:

Continue to build trust and listen to our community using multiple communication methods and engagement


Action	Comment	Progress
Review Council's <i>Community Engagement Policy</i> and <i>Community Engagement Strategy</i> .	An updated <i>Community Engagement Policy</i> and <i>Community Engagement Strategy</i> will be presented to Council for consideration at the May 2026 Council Meeting.	

## Leading with Integrity

Objective: Good Governance and Financial Sustainability



### Strategy 1.6:

Partner with our community to advocate for our shared interests to the Victorian and Australian Governments.

Action	Comment	Progress
Continue to develop and participate in advocacy campaigns and support Council's annual advocacy priorities.	Council has continued to undertake significant advocacy with both State and Federal Governments. This will continue throughout the year, with additional focus in the lead-up to the Victorian election.	

### Strategy 1.7:

Maintain our assets (roads, buildings, recreation facilities, paths and trails) through responsible Financial Management.

Action	Comment	Progress
Manage Council's road and asset maintenance in-line with Council's <i>Asset Plan</i> .	The asset management system has been successfully updated, with a revised framework now in development.	
Deliver Council's Capital Works program.	Council continues to have success securing external funding. Key projects completed include the Korumburra and Fish Creek streetscapes, Clarkes Road (Hallston) landslip repair, Great Southern Rail Trail signage, and the Gravel Road Resheeting Program.	

# Developing a Sustainable Future

## Environment, Growth and Economy

A commitment to long-term sustainability is at the heart of this theme, which focuses on preserving resources, protecting and enhancing our environment, and promoting responsible economic and social development.

The goal is to ensure a balanced approach to growth that supports our economy, agriculture, environmental stewardship, innovation, and resilience in the face of future challenges.

Initiatives could include attracting new investment, advancing renewable energy solutions, and fostering sustainable planning.

### Achievements to Date:

- Heritage Review is progressing, with background studies complete and community engagement scheduled for May 2026.
- A draft Planning Scheme Review Report has been prepared and will be released for community consideration in the coming months.
- Council hosted a Workshop with key industry representatives to explore emerging trends and opportunities in South Gippsland and to assist with a review of the *Economic Development and Visitor Economy strategies*.
- A project brief for the Nyora Traffic Study has been completed.
- A review of the *Paths and Trails Strategy* has commenced, with information gathered and scoping underway.
- Following a highly competitive Expression of Interest process Council, has commissioned an artist to deliver an externally funded major public art installation on the Great Southern Rail Trail.





## Developing a Sustainable Future

Objective: Environment, Growth and Economy

### Major Actions


#### Strategy 2.1:

Provide clarity through our Planning Scheme in areas such as township boundaries, preservation of township identity and heritage, protection of agricultural land and identify areas for future growth including industrial land.

Action	Comment	Progress
Commence Heritage Review in select townships.	Work on the Heritage Review continues, with background studies now complete and community engagement planned for May 2026.	 75%
Initiate a review of Council's Planning Scheme.	A draft Planning Scheme Review Report has been prepared. Draft documents outlining proposed changes will be released for community consideration and feedback mid-year.	 70%
Commence background reports to support the implementation of a Development Contributions Scheme for South Gippsland's growth areas.	Funding has been secured through the Department of Transport and Planning for a Nyora Traffic Study. A project brief for the Nyora Traffic Study has been prepared.	 60%
Implement the annual action plan of the <i>South Gippsland Coastal Strategy</i> .	Draft planning scheme controls to implement key recommendations of the <i>South Gippsland Coastal Strategy</i> have received support from key State Government agencies responsible for coastal planning, allowing the project to progress.	 80%

#### Strategy 2.2:

Support business and industry in events and activities to drive economic growth in local communities and connect key tourism destinations to drive local spend and investment opportunities.


Action	Comment	Progress
Commence review of the Economic Development and Visitor Economy Strategies and deliver initiatives in accordance with the action plan.	A review of the current Economic Development Strategy has been completed. An industry workshop held in March provided preliminary insights for new strategic work, exploring national trends and economic opportunities for South Gippsland.	 75%

## Developing a Sustainable Future

Objective: Environment, Growth and Economy


### Strategy 2.3:

Deliver waste management through collaboration with industry and government partners.

Action	Comment	Progress
Provide community education in the lead-up to introducing a Food Organics Garden Organics waste service.	<p>Community education on the Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) service, commencing 1 July 2026, continues. Letters and Frequently Asked Questions have been sent to households, with caddies and liners to be delivered in May and June 2026.</p> <p>Pop-up events at key community locations will begin in April 2026, and systems are in place to effectively triage and respond to customer enquiries.</p>	

### Strategy 2.4:

Explore the potential of our path and trails; including the Great Southern Rail Trail to enhance our visitor experience and increase awareness of this our region.

Action	Comment	Progress
Deliver actions from the <i>Great Southern Rail Trail Visitor Experience and Marketing Plan</i> .	<p>Signage has been installed along the 2km Koonwarra Biodiversity Walk on the Great Southern Rail Trail, highlighting key biodiversity points of interest.</p> <p>The trail received strong promotion over summer via billboard advertising along the Princes Highway in Morwell and Torquay, helping to raise awareness and attract visitors to the region.</p>	
Commence a review of the <i>Paths and Trails Strategy</i> list and Footpath Programs list.	A review of the Paths and Trails Strategy has commenced, with information gathered and scoping underway. The review will reassess prioritisation criteria and affordability.	

## Developing a Sustainable Future

Objective: Environment, Growth and Economy


### Strategy 2.5:

Demonstrate Council's commitment to preserve, protect and enhance the natural environment across South Gippsland.

Action	Comment	Progress
Support annual actions of the Landcare Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).	Council continues to meet monthly with Landcare to ensure action plan items are progressed, including trialling co-designed management plans for the Great Southern Rail Trail and bush reserves. Council has also supported and attended the Rabbit Control Boot Camp. A Biodiversity Forum is scheduled for April 2026.	


### Strategy 2.6:

Develop an integrated land management approach including enhanced weed management on Council and Department of Transport-controlled roads and exploring alternatives to chemical treatments.

Action	Comment	Progress
Increase the focus on the management of roadside weeds and partner with landowners to maximise impact.	To support improved management of roadside weeds, Council has appointed a Weed Education Officer, commencing in April 2026.	

### Strategy 2.7:

Support domestic animal management through community education and promoting collaboration to enhance responsible pet ownership and community safety.

Action	Comment	Progress
Commence development of the <i>Domestic Animal Management Plan</i> .	Completed the review of the <i>2026 - 2029 Domestic Animal Management Plan</i> which was endorsed at the 10 December 2025 Council Meeting.	

# Empowering Communities

## Healthy, Connected and Inclusive

This theme emphasises strengthening local communities by providing the tools, resources, and support needed for individuals and groups to thrive. It focuses on fostering inclusion, enhancing access to services, and encouraging active community participation. The aim is to empower residents to take part in decision-making processes and create positive change. Key actions may involve promoting volunteerism, and investing in local programs and services that support well-being and equity.



### Achievements to Date:


- Continued support of community planning groups through grants, emergency resilience and events.
- Council continues to engage with local Reconciliation Groups and Gippsland councils to share insights, strengthen networks and benchmark Reconciliation Action Plans.
- Successful advocacy by the Live4Life partnership group secured funding from the Gardiner Foundation and Primary Health Network to support program delivery.
- Review of the *Youth Strategy* and consultation continued with feedback gathered from Youth Council members, and students through visits to local secondary colleges.
- Community Plans for Outtrim, Foster and Dumbalk were completed with support from Council.

## Empowering Communities

Healthy, Connected and Inclusive


### Strategy 3.1:

Build a relationship with Traditional Custodians of South Gippsland to support our common environmental, cultural, social and economic objectives.

Action	Comment	Progress
Continue to build relationships with Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people.	<p>Council continues to engage with local Reconciliation Groups and Gippsland councils to share insights, strengthen networks and benchmark Reconciliation Action Plans.</p> <p>Two Cultural Awareness training sessions were delivered in February and March 2026 to build understanding and respect.</p>	

### Strategy 3.2:

Partner, support and encourage volunteerism and celebrate our volunteers ongoing commitment.



Action	Comment	Progress
Deliver the Community Grants program to support volunteer organisations, including a one-off stream for 2025/26 that focuses on building community resilience.	<p>Round Two of the Community Grants Program received 33 applications, which are currently being assessed. Additionally, nine applications were received through the Small Grants Program, with four approved totalling, \$3,724. Two applications totalling \$6,045 were received through the Emergency Grants Program.</p> <p>Draft guidelines, application and assessment criteria for the Resilient Communities Social Enterprise Incubator Grants have also been developed, with support from Social Enterprise Australia and Banyule City Council.</p>	

## Empowering Communities

Healthy, Connected and Inclusive


### Strategy 3.3

Partner with youth and youth focused organisation providers and industry to facilitate engagement and connection to community.

Action	Comment	Progress
Deliver the Live4Life program 2025/26, which provides mental health education and suicide prevention for young people in rural communities.	Successful advocacy by the Live4Life partnership group secured funding from the Gardiner Foundation and Primary Health Network to support program delivery, including Teen Mental Health First Aid manuals and certificates for participants.  The partnership group were consulted on changes to Live4Life Crew recruitment, with agreement reached to transition meetings to monthly, out-of-school hours sessions.	
Commence development of the <i>Youth Strategy</i> .	Consultation for the new <i>Youth Strategy</i> continued this reporting period with feedback gathered from Youth Council members, and students through visits to local secondary colleges.	

### Strategy 3.4:

Sustainably plan and design our open spaces to enable healthy lifestyles.


Action	Comment	Progress
Commence development of an <i>Open Space Asset Management Plan</i> that will show how assets will be managed and maintained; including play spaces.	Development of an <i>Open Space Asset Management Plan</i> has commenced, with data collected and asset classes confirmed.  Next steps include data validation, draft plan development and ongoing engagement with relevant stakeholders.	

## Empowering Communities

Healthy, Connected and Inclusive


### Strategy 3.5:

Empower our communities to build community resilience in response to environmental challenges.

Action	Comment	Progress
Continue supporting the development of Community Plans incorporating emergency resilience where applicable.	<p>Outtrim, Foster and Dumbalk completed their community plans for this reporting period, with strong support from Council.</p> <p>Community Emergency Management Plans were also reviewed for Mirboo North, Sandy Point, Venus Bay and Foster, with training delivered in partnership with neighbouring councils and Volunteering Gippsland on grant writing and volunteer recruitment.</p>	

### Strategy 3.6:

Plan for connected communities through improved transport networks, arterial roads, footpaths and public and community transport options.

Action	Comment	Progress
Review the amenity, accessibility, safety and connectivity of Council's supporting infrastructure at public transport bus stops.	An audit of V/Line coach stops has been completed, with key trends and issues provided to the Department of Transport and Planning. A scope for potential upgrades has been developed, with funding opportunities continuing to be explored.	




Great Southern Rail Trail

## Empowering Communities

Healthy, Connected and Inclusive


### Strategy 3.7:

Enrich the lives of all community members through community and cultural events, skills development, creative industries, sport, recreation and performance spaces.

Action	Comment	Progress
Implementation of annual actions from the <i>Arts and Creative Industries Strategy</i> .	<p>Key highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following a highly competitive Expression of Interest process, artist Christabel Wigley was commissioned to deliver an externally funded major public art installation on the Great Southern Rail Trail.</li> <li>A new exhibition, TRACE: Sea Ghosts &amp; Other Phenomena, opened at Coal Creek Community Park and Museum, featuring monoprints, photography, movement and film by local artists Kim McDonald, Jasmine Susic and Karli Duckett.</li> <li>Council successfully applied to the Victorian Government's 2025/26 Small Regional Presenters Program, with funding secured to coordinate events in Toora and Mirboo North later in the year.</li> <li>A Small Halls music event was held in Foster in February 2026.</li> </ul>	

### Strategy 3.8:

Partner, support and encourage relationships with our community; including the development of community plans.

Action	Comment	Completion
Implement annual actions from the <i>Coal Creek Community Park and Museum Strategic Plan</i> .	<p>Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched a new exhibition titled TRACE: Sea Ghosts &amp; Other Phenomena.</li> <li>Music promoters Love Police held a music event in February 2026 featuring major international folk duo Gillian Walsh and David Rawlings.</li> <li>Reimagined the monthly Heritage Days to include a Drink/Food Truck and other activities.</li> </ul>	

South Gippsland Shire Council

# Financial Report

1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026



South Gippsland  
Shire Council



## Contents

### Section 1 – Financial Report Overview and Progress

- 1.1 Management Cash Result Statement
- 1.2 Management Cash Result Reconciliation
- 1.3 Budget Adjustment Summary
- 1.4 Material Variance Summary
- 1.5 Capital Works
- 1.6 Treasury
- 1.7 Local Procurement
- 1.8 Disaster Recovery Funding

### Section 2 – Financial Statements

- 2.1 Income Statement as at 31 March 2026
- 2.2 Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2026
- 2.3 Cashflow Statement to 31 March 2026

### Section 3 – Financial Sustainability

- 3.1 Financial Ratios

## Section 1 – Financial Report Overview and Progress

### 1.1 Management Cash Result Statement

Whilst the Comprehensive Income Statement is prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards, it contains several items which are “non-cash” in nature such as depreciation on assets and the written down (book) value of assets sold. It also excludes capital expenditure, new borrowings and loan repayments and as such, does not provide an accurate indication of the surplus/deficit cash position within a financial year. The Management Cash Result statement provides a summary of the financial performance for the period 1 July 2025 to 31 March 2026 which removes non-cash items and adds back cash items that are excluded from the Comprehensive Income Statement.

The Management Cash Result is in surplus year to date of \$20.7 million. The favourable variance of \$7.7 million compared to the forecast is primarily due to less capital works completed year to date than forecast.

As part of regular fiscal oversight, a third quarter budget review has proposed an unfavourable adjustment of \$6 million to the management cash result due to movement of funds to reserve accounts, with the changes explained further in section 1.3.

	Actual YTD FY26 \$'000	Year to Date		Full Year		
		Approved Forecast \$'000	Variance Fav/(Unfav) \$'000	Approved Forecast \$'000	Proposed Forecast \$'000	Adopted Budget \$'000
<b>Income Statement</b>						
Income	70,938	71,461	(523)	91,882	92,203	85,632
Expenditure	52,898	53,798	900	75,519	76,720	74,487
<b>Net surplus / (deficit) - ongoing operations</b>	<b>18,040</b>	<b>17,663</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>16,363</b>	<b>15,483</b>	<b>11,145</b>
<b>Management Accounting result</b>						
<u>Add back (less) non cash items</u>						
Depreciation	11,032	10,168	864	13,557	13,557	13,557
Depreciation - right of use assets	69	69	0	92	92	92
Amortisation - intangible assets	0	0	0	0	0	0
Landfill provision	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contributions - non-monetary	(300)	(339)	39	(452)	(452)	(452)
Found assets (recognised)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fair value adjustments of investment properties	0	0	0	0	0	0
Written down value of assets sold/disposed	1,998	547	1,451	729	729	729
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>12,799</b>	<b>10,445</b>	<b>2,354</b>	<b>13,926</b>	<b>13,926</b>	<b>13,926</b>
<b>Net operating surplus</b>	<b>30,839</b>	<b>28,108</b>	<b>2,731</b>	<b>30,289</b>	<b>29,409</b>	<b>25,071</b>
<u>Less (add) non operating cash items</u>						
Capital Works expenditure	13,500	18,300	4,800	25,629	24,641	21,656
Transfers to/(from) Reserves	(4,361)	(4,233)	128	(2,160)	3,888	2,024
New loan borrowings	0	0	0	0	0	0
Loan Repayments	924	966	42	1,291	1,291	1,297
Lease Repayments	70	70	0	94	94	94
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>10,133</b>	<b>15,103</b>	<b>4,970</b>	<b>24,854</b>	<b>29,914</b>	<b>25,071</b>
<b>Cash surplus / (deficit)</b>	<b>20,706</b>	<b>13,005</b>	<b>7,701</b>	<b>5,435</b>	<b>(505)</b>	<b>0</b>

## Section 1 – Financial Report Overview and Progress

### 1.2 Management Cash Result Reconciliation

The Raw Accumulated Surplus (Deficit) is the total unallocated cash surplus retained over time. It is calculated by taking current assets and deducting both current and non-current liabilities (excluding certain provisions and loans) and other reserves.

The movement in the Raw Accumulated Surplus year over year matches to the Management Cash Surplus (Deficit) for the year.

	Actual YTD FY26 \$'000	Proposed Forecast \$'000	Actual Annual FY25 \$'000
Current assets	61,024	36,639	31,329
Less: Assets held for sale	0	0	0
Non-current receivables and financial assets	0	0	0
	<b>61,024</b>	<b>36,639</b>	<b>31,329</b>
Current liabilities	29,244	17,792	15,991
Less: current interest-bearing liabilities	(1,236)	(1,316)	(1,236)
Less: current lease liabilities	(24)	(87)	(94)
Less: current landfill provision	(187)	(187)	(187)
Non-current liabilities	14,661	14,286	15,556
Less: non-current interest-bearing liabilities	(8,140)	(7,693)	(9,063)
Less: non-current lease liabilities	(87)	0	(87)
Less: non-current landfill provision	(5,781)	(5,781)	(5,781)
Other reserves	7,690	15,952	12,052
	<b>36,140</b>	<b>32,966</b>	<b>27,151</b>
<b>Raw accumulated surplus</b>	<b>24,884</b>	<b>3,673</b>	<b>4,178</b>
<b>Movement from 2024/25 financial year</b>	<b>20,706</b>	<b>(505)</b>	
<b>Cash surplus / (deficit) for the year</b>	<b>20,706</b>	<b>(505)</b>	

## Section 1 – Financial Report Overview and Progress

### 1.3 Budget Adjustment Summary

#### Income

##### **Rates and Charges – Operating (\$0.1 million) – Unfavourable**

Due to a reduction in supplementary rate assessment income as fewer supplementary assessments were issued than anticipated.

##### **Grants – Capital – \$0.4 million – Favourable**

Due to the Safer Local Roads and Streets Program, income was received earlier than anticipated. As a result, income has been moved from the next financial year into the current financial year to align with actuals.

##### **Other Income – \$0.02 million – Favourable**

Favourable adjustment due to a reimbursement received in relation to insurance works on a council building.

#### Expenditure

##### **Employee Costs (\$0.1 million) – Unfavourable**

Reallocation of employee costs for a grant funded position, reclassified from materials and services.

##### **Materials and Services – (\$1.1 million) – Unfavourable**

Funding to respond to the ongoing fuel crisis and resulting cost pressures.

##### **Transfer to Reserves - \$6.0 Million – Unfavourable**

Transfer of \$3.0 million to the general reserve to be able to respond to emergency events and \$3.0 million to the asset development reserve from 2025/26 surplus.

##### **Capital Works Expenditure – (\$1.0 Million) – Favourable**

Due to savings recognised in allocation of employee costs to capital works.

## Section 1 – Financial Report Overview and Progress

### 1.4 Material Variance Summary

#### Income

##### **Grants – Capital (\$0.8 million) – Unfavourable**

Due to \$0.2 million unfavourable variance from the Simon's Lane, Leongatha Stage 2 realignment and intersection project which is delayed due to design delays and \$1.5 million unfavourable unearned revenue adjustment, reflecting the accounting treatment of capital grant revenue being recognised when milestones have been met. These unfavourable movements are offset by \$0.6 million favourable Safer Local Roads Streets program income received ahead of forecast (with budgets updated accordingly), and a \$0.4 million favourable due to the Korumburra Tennis Clubrooms second instalment being received earlier than anticipated.

##### **Grants – Capital – Natural Disasters \$1.4 million – Favourable**

Due to unbudgeted DRFA income received, including \$0.8 million for AGRN 1029 relating to the 13-14 August 2022 storm event, with expenditure incurred from 2022 to 2026.  
Also contributing was \$0.6 million for AGRN 1022 relating to the 6 June 2022 slip event, with expenditure incurred in 2024.

##### **Net Gain on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment – (\$1.4 million) – Unfavourable**

Largely due to disposal of the Waratah Bay Caravan Park where Council is no longer Committee of Management, therefore no proceeds of sale to offset disposal.

#### Expenditure

##### **No material variances to note.**

Council is tracking 2% favourable against the forecast expenditure budget.

## Section 1 – Financial Report Overview and Progress

### 1.5 Capital Works

The Capital Works program comprises of asset renewal, expansion, upgrade and the investment in new assets.

Following the third quarter budget review, a proposed reduction of \$1.0 million has been identified due to savings recognised in the allocation of employee costs to capital works, bringing the revised forecast to \$24.6 million.

#### Capital Works Material Variance Summary:

**Buildings** - Replacement of Korumburra tennis clubrooms and Nyora public toilet are contracted but behind budget forecast.

**Plant, machinery and equipment** - Backhoe replacement with wheeled excavator has been ordered but not yet received. Still expected this year.

**Roads** - Road reseals are slightly behind schedule extending into April 2026. Sealed road rehabilitations have been delayed by materials and contractor availability issues.

**Bridges** - Planning for four Bass Valley Road bridge replacements has slowed as extensive cultural heritage and flora and fauna permitting processes are underway.

**Drainage** - Replacement pipe condition surveillance camera has not yet been purchased but is expected this year.

**Other Infrastructure** - Playground replacements for Nyora is behind forecast. Community consultation has recently been completed.

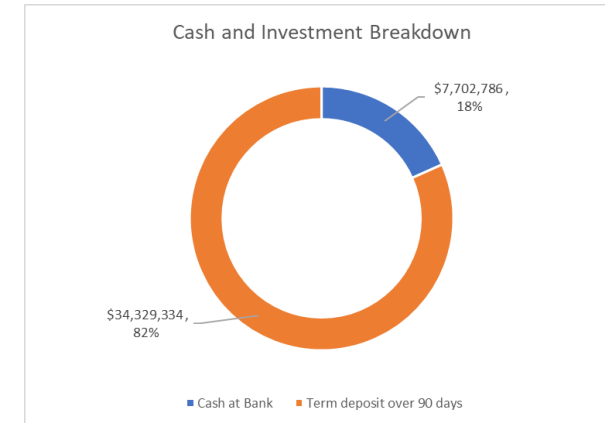
	Actual YTD FY26 \$'000	Year to Date		Full Year		
		Approved Forecast \$'000	Variance Fav/(Unfav) %	Approved Forecast \$'000	Proposed Forecast \$'000	Adopted Budget \$'000
<b>Property</b>						
Buildings	656	1,432	(54%)	2,118	2,118	2,605
Heritage buildings	20	49	(59%)	65	65	65
<b>Total property</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>1,481</b>	<b>(54%)</b>	<b>2,183</b>	<b>2,183</b>	<b>2,670</b>
<b>Plant and equipment</b>						
Plant, machinery and equipment	1,390	1,884	(26%)	3,209	3,209	2,448
Computers and telecommunications	545	524	4%	699	699	760
<b>Total plant and equipment</b>	<b>1,935</b>	<b>2,408</b>	<b>(20%)</b>	<b>3,908</b>	<b>3,908</b>	<b>3,208</b>
<b>Infrastructure</b>						
Roads	7,621	10,606	(28%)	13,094	13,094	11,812
Bridges	814	1,016	(20%)	1,254	1,254	2,195
Major culverts	(1)	0	(100%)	0	0	0
Footpaths and cycleways	293	287	2%	397	397	81
Drainage	151	275	(45%)	367	367	250
Kerb & channel	124	113	10%	150	150	150
Waterway infrastructure	158	183	(14%)	186	186	0
Waste	298	372	(20%)	425	425	240
Other infrastructure	1,431	1,559	(8%)	3,665	2,677	1,050
<b>Total infrastructure</b>	<b>10,889</b>	<b>14,411</b>	<b>(24%)</b>	<b>19,538</b>	<b>18,550</b>	<b>15,778</b>
<b>Total capital works expenditure</b>	<b>13,500</b>	<b>18,300</b>	<b>(26%)</b>	<b>25,629</b>	<b>24,641</b>	<b>21,656</b>

# Section 1 – Financial Report Overview and Progress

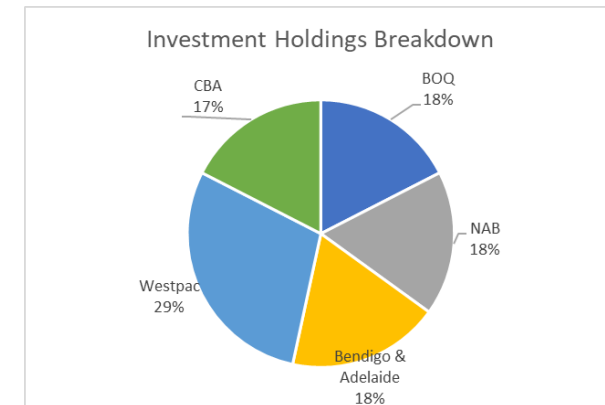
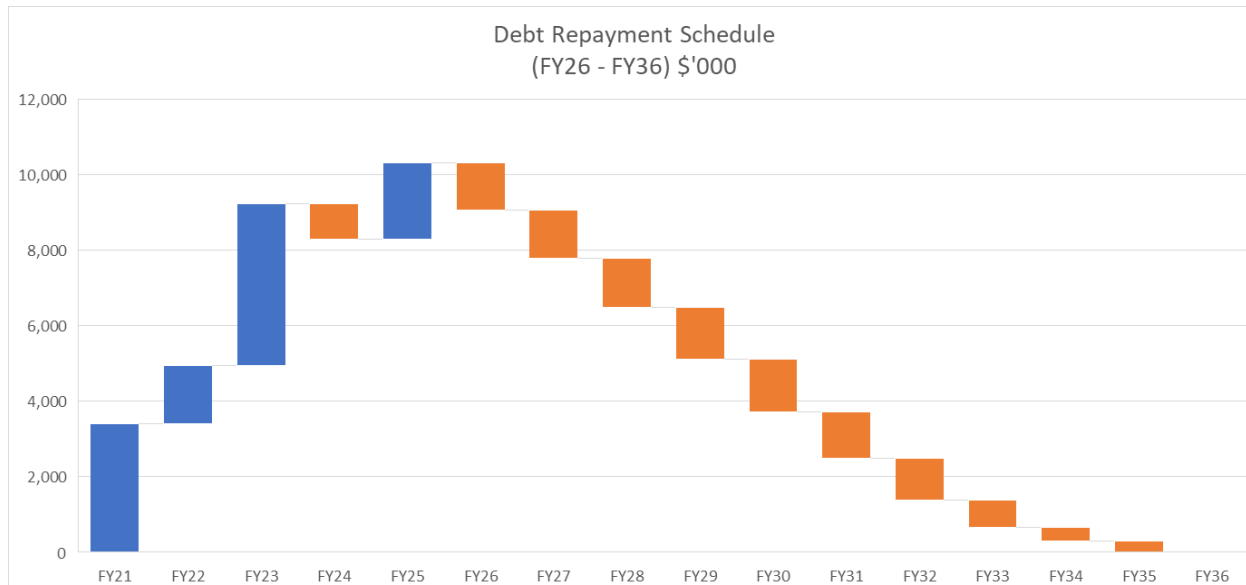
## 1.6 Treasury

Council have paid \$0.9 million in scheduled principal debt repayments year to date. Full year principal debt repayments are on schedule, with a forecasted closing position of \$9.1 million.

Loans Maturing	YTD March 2026				Full Year			
	Opening Balance \$'000	Proceeds \$'000	Repayments \$'000	Closing Balance \$'000	Opening Balance \$'000	Proceeds \$'000	Repayments \$'000	Closing Balance \$'000
Current Loans	1,236	0	0	1,236	1,236	0	40	1,276
Non-Current Loans	9,063	0	(923)	8,140	9,063	0	(1,275)	7,788
	10,299	0	(923)	9,376	10,299	0	(1,236)	9,063



Cash and investment holdings total \$42.0 million as of 31 March 2026, an increase of \$21.8 million from the 30 June 2025 balance of \$20.2 million. Council has \$34.3 million in term deposits earning an average interest rate of 4.5% and Cash at bank comprising \$7.7 million.



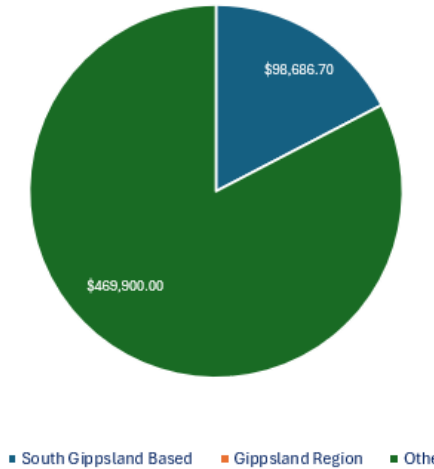
## Section 1 – Financial Report Overview and Progress

### 1.7 Local Procurement

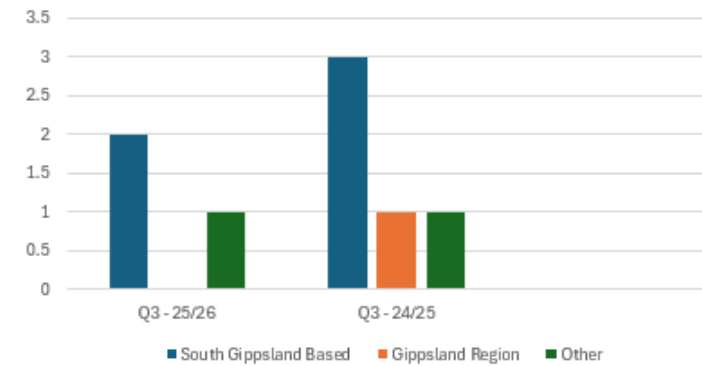
Contracts awarded by South Gippsland Shire Council for the March 2026 quarter.

Contract Number	Contract Name	Supplier	Estimated Contract Value (Ex. GST)	Supplier Location
CON/456	Construction of Longstaff Rd Landslip Repair	Huitema Plumbing & Excavation Pty Ltd T/A Huitema	\$ 98,686.70	South Gippsland Based
CON/452	Design and Construct All Abilities Access Pontoon at Port Welshpool Boating Facility	Bellingham Marine Australia Pty Ltd	\$ 469,900.00	Other
CON/444	Panel of Suppliers for Quarry Products	The Trustee for Allen Family Trust, trading as Allens Contracting	Schedule of Rates	South Gippsland Based

\$ Value of contracts awarded by supplier location Q3 - 25/26



Contracts Awarded Q3 25/26 VS Q3 24/25



## Section 1 – Financial Report Overview and Progress

### 1.8 Disaster Recovery Funding

South Gippsland Shire Council funds immediate relief and recovery works following natural disaster events and seeks reimbursement through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA). The DRFA is a cost sharing arrangement between the Commonwealth and State Governments to support certain relief and recovery activities following an eligible disaster. The below table outlines the status of active claims for eligible disasters:

Event	Expenditure by Council \$'000	Approved DRFA			Pending DRFA Assessment \$'000	Ineligible for DRFA funding \$'000	Council Contribution \$'000	Internal DRFA Claim process in progress \$'000
		Approved DRFA Funding - Paid \$'000	Funding - Outstanding \$'000					
AGRN 1233 (26/11/25) Nov Toora Rain	54	0	0	0	0	0	0	51
AGRN 1147 (28/08/24) Aug Sep Wind	2,799	1,884	0	0	915	0	0	0
AGRN 1142 (15/07/24) July Storm	34	14	0	0	5	15	0	0
AGRN 1108 (13/02/24) Mirboo North	6,355	5,016	0	0	521	6	0	0
AGRN 1096 (26/12/23) Welshpool / Toora	983	692	0	0	242	35	0	0
AGRN 1087 (29/11/23) Toora	88	44	0	0	22	22	0	0
AGRN 1072 (03/10/23) Foster	257	130	0	0	92	35	0	0
AGRN 1037 (21/11/22) Toora / Dumbalk	225	40	0	0	162	23	0	0
AGRN 1029 (13/08/22) Poowong East	9,970	9,587	0	0	205	35	0	0
AGRN 1022 (06/06/22) Foster	1,674	999	0	0	30	24	0	0
AGRN 985 (30/09/21) Rain Event	1,497	1,456	0	0	41	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>23,936</b>	<b>19,862</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2,235</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>51</b>	

## Section 2 – Financial Statements

2.1 Income Statement as at  
31 March 2026

	Actual YTD FY26	Year to Date				Full Year		
		Approved Forecast	Variance Fav/(Unfav)	Actual YTD FY25	Variance Fav/(Unfav)	Approved Forecast	Proposed Forecast	Adopted Budget
		\$'000	%	\$'000	%	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
<b>INCOME</b>								
Rates and charges	40,922	40,896	0%	39,474	4%	54,527	54,420	54,453
Statutory fees and fines	878	864	2%	626	40%	1,150	1,150	1,056
User fees	3,647	3,984	(8%)	3,186	14%	5,604	5,604	5,555
Grants - operating	6,831	6,418	6%	13,758	(50%)	8,250	8,250	14,056
Grants - operating - natural disasters	1,882	1,882	0%	4,221	(55%)	1,882	1,882	0
Grants - capital	6,066	6,824	(11%)	5,110	19%	8,218	8,618	6,730
Grants - capital - natural disasters	9,149	7,774	18%	41	22215%	8,069	8,069	250
Contributions - monetary	610	530	15%	488	25%	1,127	1,127	919
Contributions - non monetary	300	339	(12%)	2,157	(86%)	452	452	452
Net gain on disposal of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(892)	538	(266%)	68	(1412%)	748	748	0
Other income	1,545	1,412	9%	1,510	2%	1,855	1,883	2,161
<b>Total income</b>	<b>70,938</b>	<b>71,461</b>	<b>(1%)</b>	<b>70,639</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>91,882</b>	<b>92,203</b>	<b>85,632</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>								
Employee costs	21,487	22,313	4%	22,254	3%	30,941	31,028	32,311
Materials and services	17,420	18,514	6%	20,240	14%	27,462	28,576	25,093
Natural disasters	(3)	0	100%	2,774	100%	0	0	0
Depreciation	11,032	10,168	(8%)	9,795	(13%)	13,557	13,557	13,557
Depreciation - Right of use assets	69	69	0%	69	0%	92	92	92
Borrowing costs	163	165	1%	108	(51%)	220	221	220
Finance costs - Leases	2	2	0%	3	33%	2	1	2
Other expenses	2,728	2,567	(6%)	5,789	53%	3,245	3,245	3,212
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>52,898</b>	<b>53,798</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>61,032</b>	<b>(13%)</b>	<b>75,519</b>	<b>76,720</b>	<b>74,487</b>
<b>Surplus / (deficit) for the period</b>	<b>18,040</b>	<b>17,663</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>9,607</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>16,363</b>	<b>15,483</b>	<b>11,145</b>

## Section 2 – Financial Statements

2.2 Balance Sheet as at  
31 March 2026

	Actual YTD FY26 \$'000	Year to Date			Full Year	
		Actual YTD FY25 \$'000	Year over Year Variance Fav/(Unfav) \$'000	%	Adopted Budget \$'000	Proposed Forecast \$'000
<b>Current assets</b>						
Cash and cash equivalents	7,703	17,359	(9,656)	(56%)	5,165	3,349
Trade and other receivables	18,319	17,093	1,226	7%	5,764	7,426
Other financial assets	34,329	9,333	24,996	268%	16,326	24,983
Inventories	165	253	(88)	(35%)	296	208
Prepayments	502	470	32	7%	0	673
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>61,018</b>	<b>44,508</b>	<b>16,510</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>27,551</b>	<b>36,639</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>						
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	884,391	855,066	29,325	3%	878,329	894,424
Investment property	857	857	0	0%	857	857
Right-of-use assets	108	200	(92)	(46%)	85	85
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>885,356</b>	<b>856,123</b>	<b>29,233</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>879,271</b>	<b>895,366</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>946,374</b>	<b>900,631</b>	<b>45,743</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>906,822</b>	<b>932,005</b>

	Actual YTD FY26 \$'000	Actual YTD FY25 \$'000	Year to Date		Adopted Budget \$'000	Proposed Forecast \$'000
			Year over Year Variance Fav/(Unfav) \$'000	%		
<b>Current liabilities</b>						
Trade and other payables	796	3,363	2,567	76%	4,983	5,074
Trust funds and deposits	5,150	4,151	(999)	(24%)	2,434	2,821
Contract and other liabilities	1,088	1,233	145	12%	1,709	1,170
Provisions	7,467	7,224	(243)	(3%)	6,887	7,324
Interest-bearing liabilities	1,236	965	(271)	(28%)	1,323	1,316
Lease liabilities	24	23	(1)	(4%)	87	87
Unearned rates revenue	13,483	12,980	(503)	(4%)	0	0
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>29,244</b>	<b>29,939</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>17,423</b>	<b>17,792</b>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>						
Provisions	6,434	6,492	58	1%	7,178	6,593
Interest-bearing liabilities	8,140	8,932	792	9%	7,747	7,693
Lease liabilities	87	181	94	52%	0	0
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>	<b>14,661</b>	<b>15,605</b>	<b>944</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>14,925</b>	<b>14,286</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>43,905</b>	<b>45,544</b>	<b>1,639</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>32,348</b>	<b>32,078</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>902,469</b>	<b>855,087</b>	<b>47,382</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>874,474</b>	<b>899,927</b>
<b>Equity</b>						
Accumulated surplus	294,296	268,306	25,990	10%	284,197	283,492
Revaluation Reserve	600,483	582,144	18,339	3%	582,144	600,483
Other Reserves	7,690	4,637	3,053	66%	8,133	15,952
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>902,469</b>	<b>855,087</b>	<b>47,382</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>874,474</b>	<b>899,927</b>

## Section 2 – Financial Statements

2.3 Cashflow  
Statement for the  
period 1 July 2025 to  
31 March 2026

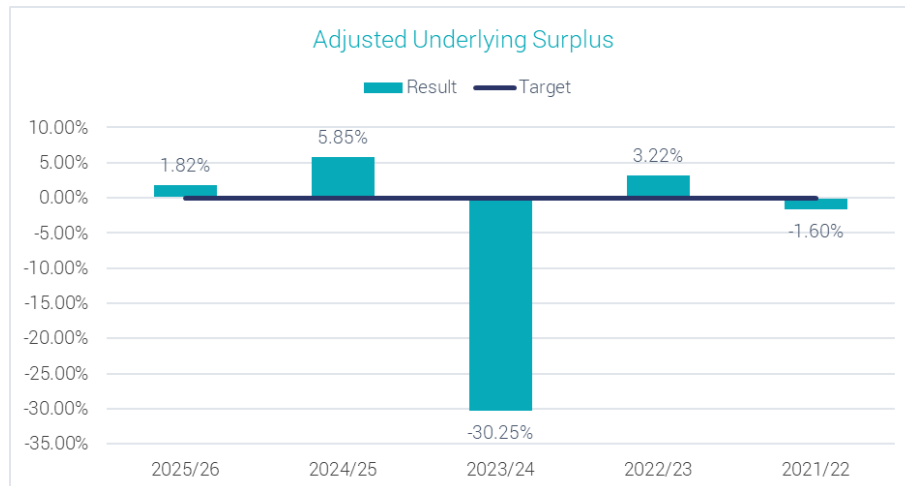
	Actual YTD FY26 \$'000	Year to date			Full Year	
		Actual YTD FY25 \$'000	Year over Year Variance Fav/(Unfav) \$'000	%	Adopted Budget \$'000	Proposed Forecast \$'000
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>						
Rates and charges	46,696	43,982	2,714	6%	53,945	56,974
Statutory fees and fines	878	626	252	40%	1,052	1,186
User fees	3,376	3,754	(378)	(10%)	5,534	5,780
Grants - operating	10,213	17,503	(7,290)	(42%)	14,056	10,132
Grants - capital	15,215	5,151	10,064	195%	6,980	16,687
Contributions - monetary	610	488	122	25%	919	1,127
Interest received	810	1,011	(201)	(20%)	1,100	750
Other receipts	855	936	(81)	(9%)	1,358	1,204
Employee costs	(21,489)	(22,743)	1,254	(6%)	(32,422)	(30,059)
Materials and services	(19,036)	(25,237)	6,201	(25%)	(25,179)	(27,724)
Other payments	(2,615)	(2,523)	(92)	4%	(3,223)	(3,149)
<b>Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities</b>	<b>35,513</b>	<b>22,948</b>	<b>12,565</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>24,120</b>	<b>32,908</b>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>						
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant & equipment	(13,500)	(23,064)	9,564	(41%)	(21,656)	(24,641)
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant & equipment	987	380	607	160%	729	1,477
Payments (for) / from Other Financial Assets	(21,008)	6,992	(28,000)	(400%)	0	(11,661)
<b>Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities</b>	<b>(33,521)</b>	<b>(15,692)</b>	<b>(17,829)</b>	<b>114%</b>	<b>(20,927)</b>	<b>(34,825)</b>
<b>CASHFLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>						
Finance costs	(162)	(106)	(56)	53%	(220)	(216)
Repayment of borrowings	(924)	1,609	(2,533)	(157%)	(1,297)	(1,291)
Interest paid - lease liability	(2)	(2)	0	0%	(2)	(2)
Repayment of leases	(70)	(69)	(1)	1%	(94)	(94)
<b>Net cash provided by (used in) financing activities</b>	<b>(1,158)</b>	<b>1,432</b>	<b>(2,590)</b>	<b>(181%)</b>	<b>(1,613)</b>	<b>(1,603)</b>
<b>Net increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>8,688</b>	<b>(7,854)</b>	<b>(90%)</b>	<b>1,580</b>	<b>(3,520)</b>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year	6,869	8,671	(1,802)	(21%)	3,585	6,869
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the period</b>	<b>7,703</b>	<b>17,359</b>	<b>(9,656)</b>	<b>(56%)</b>	<b>5,165</b>	<b>3,349</b>

## Section 3 – Financial Sustainability

### 3.1 Financial Ratios

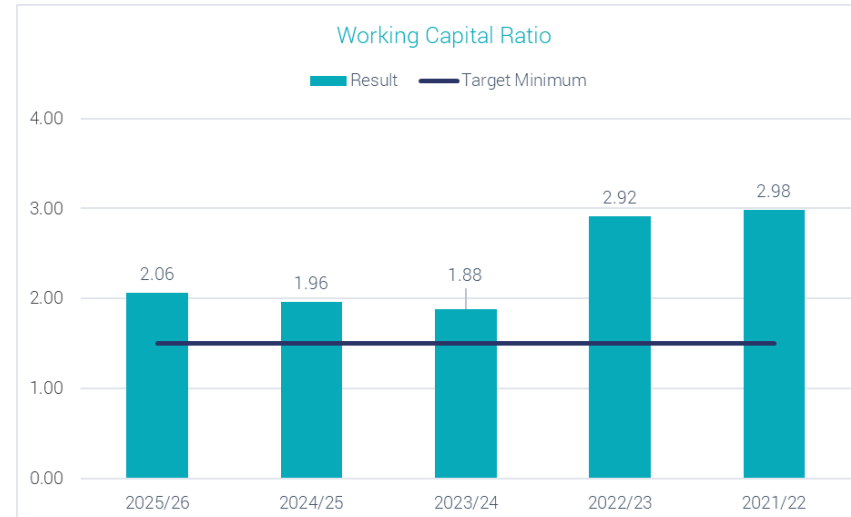
#### Operating Position

The adjusted underlying result demonstrates Council’s ability to generate a surplus in its ordinary course of business, excluding non-recurrent capital grants, non-monetary asset contributions and other contributions to fund capital works from its net result. The adjusted underlying result of 1.82% represents a solid operating surplus. While lower than the 5.85% recorded in 2024/25, it still reflects a strong underlying position and demonstrates Council’s continued ability to generate surplus from its core operations.



#### Liquidity

The Working Capital Ratio, which assesses Council’s ability to meet current commitments, is calculated by measuring Council’s current assets as a percentage of current liabilities.



Council’s proposed forecast as of 30 June 2026 has a Working Capital Ratio of 2.06. Forecast of 2.06 is higher than last financial year and remains above the targeted minimum of 1.50.

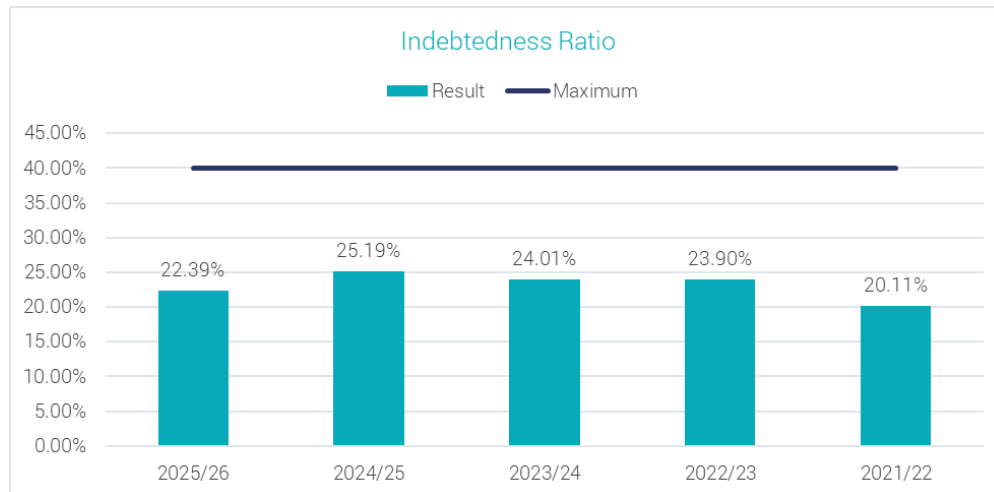
## Section 3 – Financial Sustainability

### 3.1 Financial Ratios

#### Obligations

The Indebtedness Ratio Percentage measures Council’s ability to pay the principal and interest on borrowings when they are due from the funds it generates. Own-sourced revenue is used in the calculation, not including any grants or contributions.

Council’s proposed forecast Indebtedness Ratio as of 30 June 2026 is 22.39 per cent, and is well within the maximum of 40 per cent or lower.

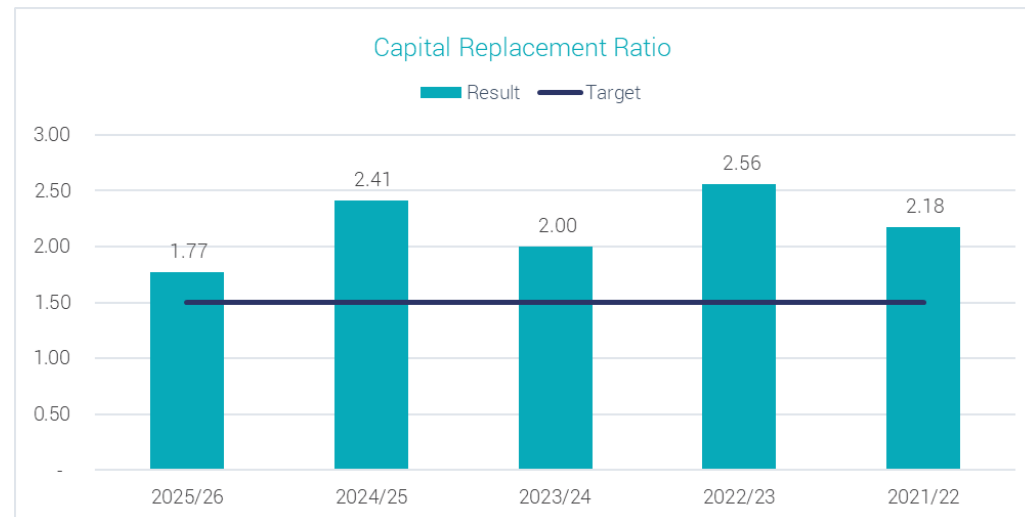


#### Asset Renewal

Council aims to ensure that it is able to maintain its infrastructure assets at the expected levels, while at the same time continuing to deliver the services needed by the community.

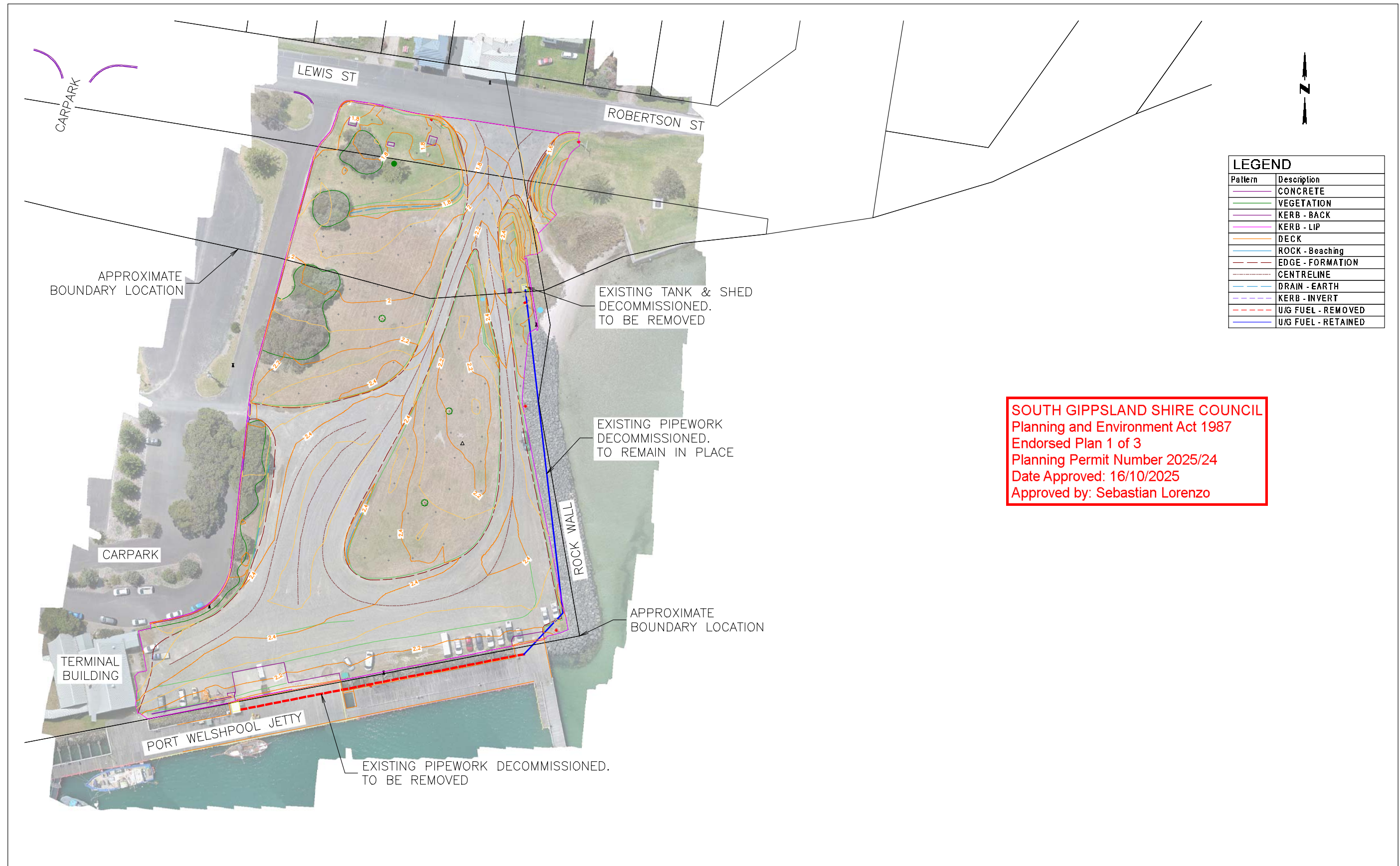
The Capital Replacement Ratio compares the total rate of spending on new infrastructure, property, plant and equipment with its depreciation. Ratios of higher than 1:1 indicate that spending is faster than the depreciation rate. Council’s proposed forecast Capital Replacement Ratio of 1.77 for the year ending 30 June 2026, which is well above the target of 1.5.

The investment in asset renewal for 2025/26 is forecasted to be \$22.3 million resulting in a lower ratio forecast compared to the previous year, where renewal expenditure was \$33.0 million, and the average over the previous four years was \$26.5 million per year.





9 Smith Street (Private Bag 4) Leongatha VIC 3953 | Ph: 5662 9200 | Fax: 5662 3754  
Email: [council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au) Website: [www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au](http://www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/southgippslandshirecouncil](http://www.facebook.com/southgippslandshirecouncil)



**SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL**  
 Planning and Environment Act 1987  
 Endorsed Plan 1 of 3  
 Planning Permit Number 2025/24  
 Date Approved: 16/10/2025  
 Approved by: Sebastian Lorenzo

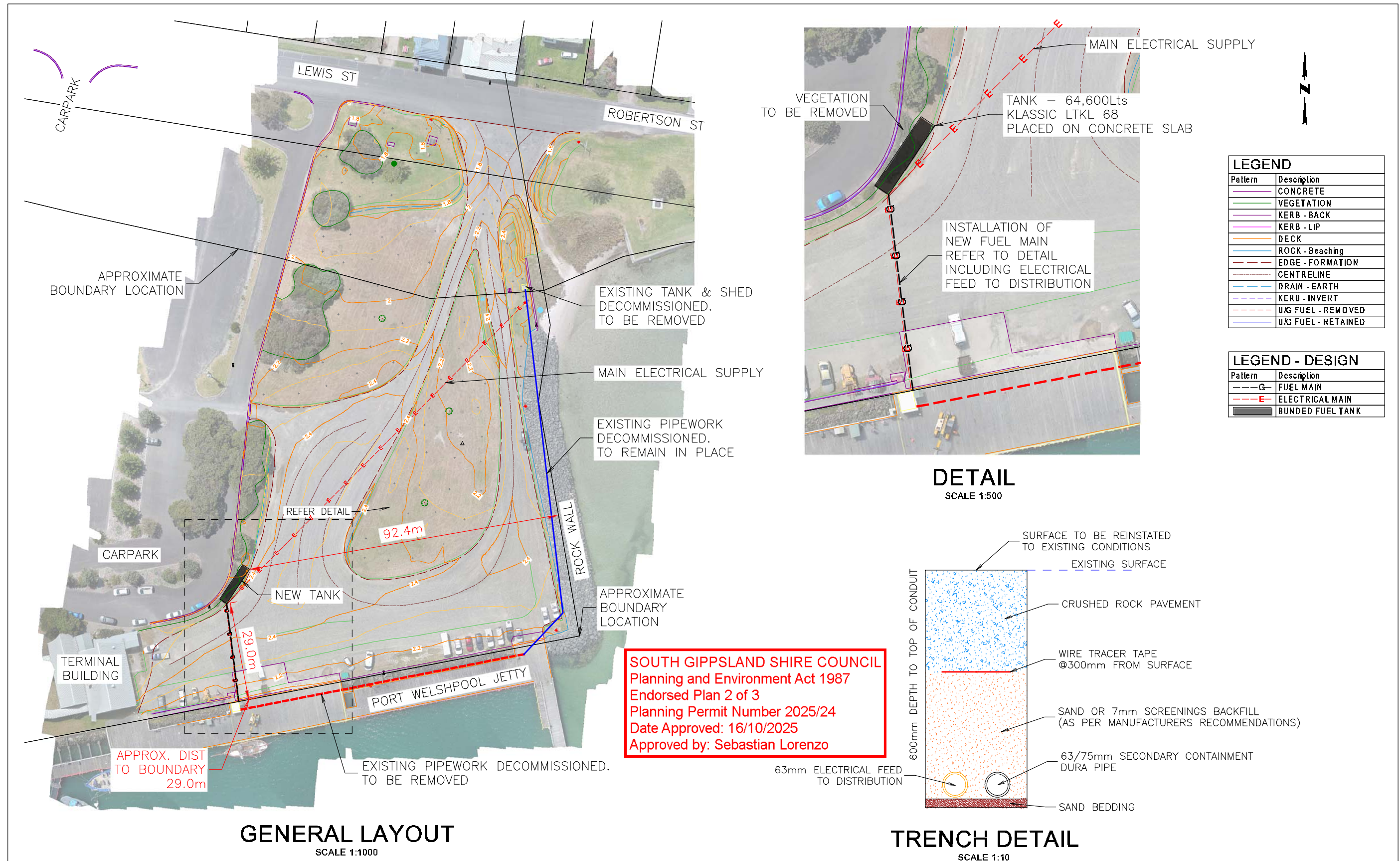
BOUNDARIES ARE APPROXIMATE ONLY

REV	Appr.	DATE	REVISION
A	CW	26/11/2024	ORIGINAL ISSUE
B	CW	19/12/2024	ISSUED FOR PLANNING
C	CW	23/12/2024	TANK LOCATION AMENDED
D	CW	26/06/2025	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
E	CW	07/10/2025	ELECTRICAL SUPPLY DETAILS

**Chris Whelan**  
 Civil Engineering  
 PO BOX 144, BARNSDALE, 5875  
 Mob: 0418 804 608  
 Email: chris@chriswhelaneng.com.au

SURVEYED: 18/11/2024 <b>SIMON MURRELL</b>	CHECKED: <b>CHRIS WHELAN</b>
DESIGNED: <b>CHRIS WHELAN</b>	APPROVED:
DATUM: <b>Australia/GDA2020</b>	
ZONE: <b>Zone 55</b>	

PROJECT:	<b>EVANS PETROLEUM PORT WELSHPOOL</b>	SCALE: (A3) <b>1:1000</b>
	<b>EXISTING FEATURES</b>	DATE: <b>DEC 24</b>
CLIENT:	<b>GIPPSLAND PROJECT MANAGEMENT</b>	SHEET: <b>1 OF 3</b>
		DRAWING No.: <b>1418 - E</b>



**SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL**  
 Planning and Environment Act 1987  
 Endorsed Plan 2 of 3  
 Planning Permit Number 2025/24  
 Date Approved: 16/10/2025  
 Approved by: Sebastian Lorenzo

BOUNDARIES ARE APPROXIMATE ONLY

REV	Appr.	DATE	REVISION
A	CW	26/11/2024	ORIGINAL ISSUE
B	CW	19/12/2024	ISSUED FOR PLANNING
C	CW	23/12/2024	TANK LOCATION AMENDED
D	CW	26/06/2025	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
E	CW	07/10/2025	ELECTRICAL SUPPLY DETAILS

**Chris Whelan**  
 Civil Engineering  
 PO BOX 144, BARNSDALE, 3875  
 Mob: 0418 804 608  
 Email: chris@chriswhelaneng.com.au

SURVEYED: 18/11/2024 <b>SIMON MURRELL</b>	CHECKED: <b>CHRIS WHELAN</b>
DESIGNED: <b>CHRIS WHELAN</b>	APPROVED:
DATUM: <b>Australia/GDA2020</b>	
ZONE: <b>Zone 55</b>	

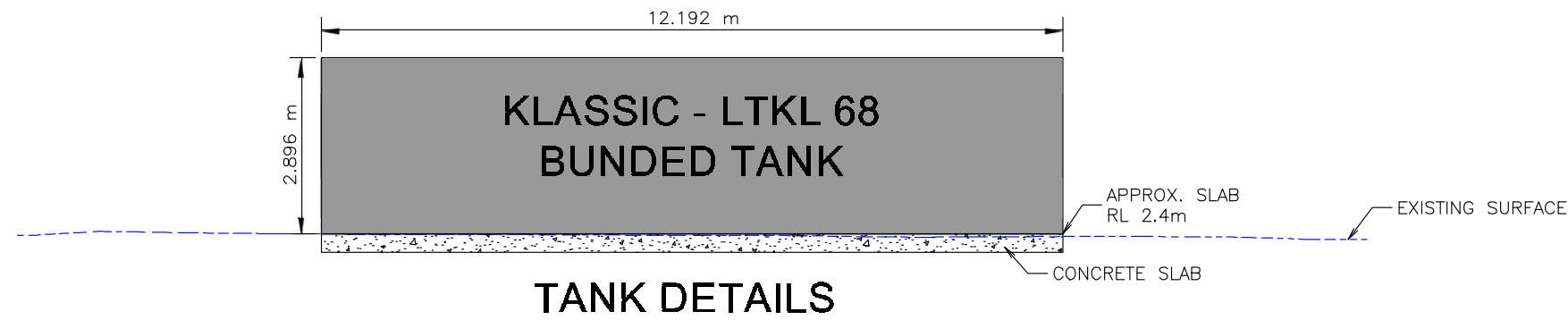
PROJECT: <b>EVANS PETROLEUM PORT WELSHPOOL</b>	SCALE: (A3) <b>AS SHOWN</b>
DESIGN LAYOUT	DATE: <b>DEC 24</b>
CLIENT: <b>GIPPSLAND PROJECT MANAGEMENT</b>	SHEET: <b>2 OF 3</b>
	DRAWING No.: <b>1418 - E</b>




SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL  
 Planning and Environment Act 1987  
 Endorsed Plan 3 of 3  
 Planning Permit Number 2025/24  
 Date Approved: 16/10/2025  
 Approved by: Sebastian Lorenzo

**TANK - LTKL68**

LENGTH: 12.192m  
 WIDTH: 2.438m  
 HEIGHT: 2.896m  
 CAPACITY: 64,600Lts



REV	Appr.	DATE	REVISION		SURVEYED: 19/11/2024	CHECKED:	PROJECT:	SCALE: (A3)
A	CW	26/11/2024	ORIGINAL ISSUE	 <p><b>Chris Whelan</b>                      Civil Engineering                      PO BOX 144, BARNSDALE, 3875                      Mob: 0418 804 608                      Email: chris@chriswhelanciveng.com.au</p>	SIMON MURRELL	CHRIS WHELAN	<b>EVANS PETROLEUM PORT WELSHPOOL</b>	NOT TO SCALE
B	CW	19/12/2024	ISSUED FOR PLANNING		DESIGNED:	APPROVED:	<b>DESIGN LAYOUT</b>	DATE: DEC 24
C	CW	23/12/2024	TANK LOCATION AMENDED		DATUM:		<b>GIPPSLAND PROJECT MANAGEMENT</b>	SHEET: 3 OF 3
D	CW	26/06/2025	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION		Australia/GDA2020			DRAWING No.:
E	CW	07/10/2025	ELECTRICAL SUPPLY DETAILS		ZONE:	Zone 55		1418 - E

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

# DRAFT Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2026 to 2030



*South Gippsland*  
Shire Council

## 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.*

## Thank You and Acknowledgement

*The Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee plays a vital role in providing advice to South Gippsland Shire Council on opportunities to make our community more accessible and inclusive.*

*As a group of dedicated advocates living and working in South Gippsland, with a diverse set of lived and professional experiences, we are proud to support the Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2026 to 2030.*

*We are committed to bringing lived experience to this work and helping create a South Gippsland community where people of all backgrounds and abilities are included, heard and supported to fully participate.*

*Council thanks the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee for their valuable guidance, lived experience and thoughtful contributions to this Action Plan. Their insights have strengthened Council's commitment to building a more inclusive South Gippsland.*



*eucalyptus, (genus Eucalyptus)*

## Contents

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Priority Four:</b>	
		<b>Inclusion, Safety and Fairness</b>	<b>16</b>
		Strategy 4.1	
		Strategy 4.2	
<b>Strategic Framework</b>	<b>4</b>		
South Gippsland Shire Council Plan 2025 to 2029 (Council Plan)			
South Gippsland Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP)		<b>Development of the Action Plan</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Statistics</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting</b>	<b>18</b>
		Implementation	
<b>Summary of Plan Priorities and Strategies</b>	<b>7</b>	Monitoring	
		Reporting	
<b>Priority One:</b>		Authorising Environment	
<b>Communication and Engagement</b>	<b>8</b>		
Strategy 1.1			
Strategy 1.2		<b>Definitions</b>	<b>21</b>
Strategy 1.3			
<b>Priority Two:</b>			
<b>Council Environments that Support Inclusion</b>	<b>11</b>		
Strategy 2.1			
Strategy 2.2			
Strategy 2.3			
<b>Priority Three:</b>			
<b>Healthy, Active and Connected Living</b>	<b>14</b>		
Strategy 3.1			
Strategy 3.2			

## Purpose

The Access and Inclusion Action Plan 2026 to 2030 outlines South Gippsland Shire Council's commitment to building a community where everyone can participate, belong and thrive. The Plan supports Council to meet its legislative responsibilities while responding to community expectations for greater accessibility, inclusion and equitable participation for all community members.

The Plan provides a structured approach to identifying, reducing and preventing the barriers that affect people's ability to participate fully in community life. These barriers may be experienced by people with a disability, their families and carers, as well as others who encounter exclusion due to physical, social, cultural, economic or systemic factors. It highlights the importance of designing spaces, services and systems that enable all community members to take part on an equal basis.

Everyone deserves the opportunity to participate fully in community life. However, barriers continue to exist, including accessible facilities, services, information and practices. This Plan has been informed by engagement and lived experience perspectives and will guide Council's ongoing efforts to embed accessibility and inclusion across its operations and decision-making between 2026 and 2030.

## Strategic Framework

### South Gippsland Shire Council Plan 2025 to 2029 (Council Plan)

The Council Plan 2025 to 2029 sets out actions that drive positive changes for South Gippsland. The Access and Inclusion Action Plan aims to support Council to achieve its strategic themes of *Leading with Integrity*, *Developing a Sustainable Future* and *Empowering Communities*.

### South Gippsland Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP)

The MPHWP aims to ensure that all people have access to necessary services and support, while focusing on improving the health outcomes for groups who may be facing challenges. The Access and Inclusion Action Plan aims to support the MPHWP achieve its strategic priorities of *Preventing All Forms of Violence*, *Improving Wellbeing*, *Increasing Active Living*, *Health Eating* and *Climate Change and its Impacts on Health*.

South Gippsland Shire Council plays a vital role in supporting access and inclusion within the South Gippsland community. Council's role in the actions described in this Plan is outlined below.

<b>Collaborator</b>	We work alongside people with lived experience, community groups, staff and partners to co-design inclusive approaches and shared outcomes.
<b>Champion</b>	We elevate the voices, rights and priorities of people from diverse backgrounds and experiences, including those who face barriers to participation in Council planning, leadership conversations and everyday practice.
<b>Regulator</b>	We ensure Council assets, buildings, infrastructure, programs and events meet accessibility standards, legislation and safe practice requirements.
<b>Communicator</b>	We share information in accessible ways, raise awareness, encourage positive community attitudes and participation.
<b>Service Provider</b>	We deliver accessible programs, services and experiences that support participation, wellbeing and inclusion.

## Statistics

### Access and Inclusion in South Gippsland

- The population estimate as of 30 June 2024 was 31,022. Since the previous year, the population grew by 0.65 per cent. Population growth in regional Victoria was 1.23 per cent.
- 1,962 people (6.4 per cent) needed assistance with daily activities due to disability.
- In 2021, 11.5 per cent of the population was born overseas compared to 12.4 per cent in regional Victoria.
- 145 people who spoke a language other than English at home had difficulty speaking English.
- 1.2 per cent of residents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- 49 per cent of the population were aged 50 years or older.
- 33.6 per cent of the population have a low income, compared to 33.3 per cent in regional Victoria.
- Between July 2024 and July 2025, there were 604 total incidents of family violence, a 5.04 per cent increase in incidents compared to the previous year.
- In 2021, 9.7 per cent of the population had a mental health condition compared to 10.9 per cent in regional Victoria.
- In 2021, 37.4 per cent of the population has a long-term health condition compared to 37.2 per cent in regional Victoria.



## Summary of Plan Priorities and Strategies

### Priority One: Communication and Engagement

**Goal** – South Gippsland Shire Council communicates in accessible, inclusive and consistent ways, ensuring people with inclusion barriers can easily receive information and participate in engagement.

- 1.1 Improve the accessibility and clarity of Council’s communication materials.
- 1.2 Strengthen community-facing information to increase awareness.
- 1.3 Ensure engagement processes are inclusive.

### Priority Two: Council Environments that Support Inclusion

**Goal** – South Gippsland Shire Council-owned places, spaces and infrastructure are inclusive, safe and accessible.

- 2.1 Ensure public spaces and facilities support universal access.
- 2.2 Improve accessibility across roads, paths and signage.
- 2.3 Strengthen accessible tourism, events and public experiences.

### Priority Three: Healthy, Active and Connected Living

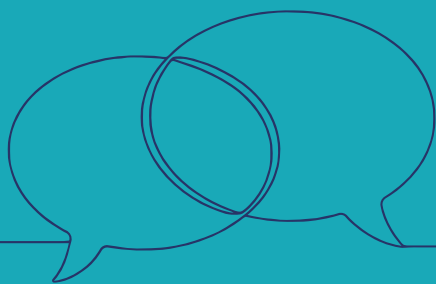
**Goal** – People with barriers to inclusion have equitable opportunities to participate, connect, contribute and feel valued in their community.

- 3.1 Support participation in sport and all forms of recreation (including the arts).
- 3.2 Improve community connection through inclusive programs.

### Priority Four: Inclusion, Safety and Fairness

**Goal** – South Gippsland Shire Council fosters a culture of fairness, safety and inclusion through equitable policies, accessible services and behaviours that promote respect and wellbeing for all.

- 4.1 Strengthen inclusive workforce practices.
- 4.2 Promote community safety, inclusion and respect.



## Priority One: Communication and Engagement

*South Gippsland Shire Council communicates in accessible, inclusive and consistent ways, ensuring people with inclusion barriers can easily receive information and participate in engagement.*

Strategy 1.1 – Improve the accessibility and clarity of Council communication materials.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Investigate options for providing closed captions on social media videos to improve accessibility.	Communicator	Ongoing	Communications, Engagement and Advocacy
Promote venues where Augmentative and Alternative Communication boards are available.	Communicator	Year 1 to 3	Customer Experience
Review and update the kindergarten registration form to improve accessibility, clarity and use of plain English for families.	Communicator	Year 1	Children and Families
Add clear guidelines on accessible communication and using interpreters to the staff intranet.	Champion	Year 1	Customer Experience
Review and report on Council's Augmentative and Alternative Communication Boards to ensure information is relevant.	Collaborator	Year 3	Customer Experience

## Strategy 1.2 – Strengthen community-facing information to increase awareness.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Incorporate Access and Ability information into 'In the Know' to support regular community awareness.	Communicator	Ongoing	Community Development / Communications, Engagement and Advocacy
Develop practical guidelines to help community groups understand what makes their activities accessible and use these to inform updates to the South Gippsland Community Directory.	Service Provider	Year 1	Community Development / Communications, Engagement and Advocacy
Review and update the existing recreation section of the Community Directory using an accessibility lens, including standard accessibility questions developed with the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee.	Collaborator	Year 1	Community Development
Publish and promote a local food relief list and improve accessibility information by adding a food relief category to the online Community Directory.	Service Provider	Year 1	Community Development
Encourage community projects to plan for accessibility and inclusion by adding this to the Community Grants Program Guidelines.	Champion	Year 1	Community Development
Develop a community awareness campaign encouraging people to respect disability parking spaces.	Service Provider	Year 3	Community Safety / Community Development

### Strategy 1.3 – Ensure engagement processes are inclusive.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Work in partnership with Bunurong and Gunaikurnai Traditional Custodians to strengthen relationships in readiness to support cultural recognition across Council facilities and publications.	Collaborator	Ongoing	Community Development
Share significant accessibility-related plans and projects to the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee for feedback.	Service Provider	Ongoing	Infrastructure Delivery
Develop organisation-wide engagement guidelines to support inclusive consultation with children, youth and families and carers across facilities, services and programs.	Communicator	Year 2 to 3	Community Development Customer Experience



## Priority Two: Council Environments that Support Inclusion

*South Gippsland Shire Council-owned places, spaces and infrastructure are inclusive, safe and accessible.*

Strategy 2.1 – Ensure public spaces and facilities support universal access.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Developing a Sustainable Future, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing, Increasing Active Living.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Where possible, consider that open space and playgrounds offer inclusive, diverse and adventurous play experiences supporting children, families and carers of all abilities.	Champion Service Provider	Ongoing	Children and Families Open Space and Environment
New and redeveloped public spaces, walking and cycling paths and community facilities are designed to be child friendly, family friendly and accessible.	Champion Service Provider	Ongoing	Children and Families Open Space and Environment
Ensure access and inclusion are considered in the development and review of the Playground Strategy.	Service Provider	Ongoing	Open Space and Environment
Promote sensory gardens in South Gippsland and encourage the consideration of sensory elements and nature play in open space designs where possible.	Champion	Ongoing	Open Space and Environment
Deliver and maintain the accessible pontoon at Port Welshpool to support safe boating access for people of all abilities.	Service Provider	Year 1	Infrastructure Delivery

## Strategy 2.2 – Improve accessibility across roads, paths and signage.

## Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Developing a Sustainable Future, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing, Increasing Active Living.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Advocate for Victorian Government funding to enable the Department of Transport and Planning to progress Stage 2 of the Leongatha Heavy Vehicle Route.  In addition to improving traffic flow, this would also improve safety and accessibility for pedestrians in the precinct and users of the Great Southern Rail Trail.	Champion	Ongoing	Regional Partnerships
Identify high-risk pedestrian locations and recommend improvements as opportunities and funding arise.	Service Provider	Ongoing	Infrastructure Delivery
Investigate opportunities to close priority footpath gaps in townships.	Service Provider	Ongoing	Infrastructure Delivery
Consider accessibility requirements when project planning.	Service Provider	Ongoing	Infrastructure Delivery
Advocate for clearer, easy to read signage at local beaches, supporting accessibility and beach safety.	Champion	Ongoing	Arts, Culture and Visitor Economy / Community Development
Contribute to accessibility audits being undertaken by the Step Outside and Move Your Way Initiatives with the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee.	Collaborator	Year 1	Community Development

## Strategy 2.3 – Strengthen accessible tourism, events and public experiences.

## Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Developing a Sustainable Future, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing, Increasing Active Living.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Investigate and deliver sensory-friendly approaches within arts and creative projects.	Service Provider	Ongoing	Arts, Culture and Visitor Economy
Ensure accessibility is considered and promoted across Council's digital visitor experience assets where possible.	Communicator	Ongoing	Arts, Culture and Visitor Economy / Communications, Engagement and Advocacy
Provide education to customer-facing teams on the locations of Changing Places facilities across South Gippsland and how they can be accessed.	Communicator	Year 1	Community Development
Contribute to and support a stock take of accessible tourism assets in South Gippsland.	Collaborator	Years 2 to 3	Arts, Culture and Visitor Economy
Develop accessibility guidelines to support inclusive planning of Council and community events.	Service Provider	Years 2 to 3	Community Development



## Priority Three: Healthy, Active and Connected Living

*People with barriers to inclusion have equitable opportunities to participate, connect, contribute and feel valued in their community.*

Strategy 3.1 – Support participation in sport and all forms of recreation (including the arts).

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Developing a Sustainable Future, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing, Increasing Active Living.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Promote and share information about the Sport4All program to build inclusion in local sports clubs.	Communicator	Ongoing	Building and Recreation Assets / Community Development
Support organisations that provide physical and creative recreation activities to deliver accessible programs for people experiencing participation barriers.	Collaborator	Ongoing	Building and Recreation Assets / Community Development
Advocate for the continuation of the Get Active Victoria vouchers to support families.	Champion	Year 1	Building and Recreation Assets / Community Development

### Strategy 3.2 – Improve community connection through inclusive programs.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Developing a Sustainable Future, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing, Increasing Active Living, Healthy Eating.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Support and promote the Choose Tap campaign in Gippsland to encourage tap water use and highlight accessible drinking water points.	Champion	Ongoing	Community Development
Support people with disability to strengthen their emergency preparedness by collaborating with community organisations to enhance access to emergency information and training.	Champion	Years 1 and 2	Community Development
Consider accessibility and diversity when delivering 'The First 72 Hours' program across the South Gippsland community, supporting people to create personalised emergency plans that suit their own individual needs and strengthen their resilience.	Service Provider	Years 2 and 3	Community Development



## Priority Four: Inclusion, Safety and Fairness

*South Gippsland Shire Council fosters a culture of fairness, safety and inclusion through equitable policies, accessible services and behaviours that promote respect and wellbeing for all people.*

### Strategy 4.1 – Strengthen inclusive workforce practices.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Improving Wellbeing.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Deliver internal campaigns aligned with key health and wellbeing dates to promote awareness and inclusive practices.	Service Provider / Champion	Ongoing	People and Culture
Formalise South Gippsland Shire Council's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion through the development of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan.	Champion	Year 1	People and Culture / Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Working Group / Community Development
Integrate access and inclusion training into the onboarding experience.	Communicator / Collaborator	Year 1	People and Culture
Incorporate disability inclusion into the Compliance Training Framework.	Communicator	Year 1	People and Culture
Identify and provide access and inclusion training opportunities for employees to build understanding and confidence.	Service Provider	Year 1	People and Culture
Create clear, practical guidelines outlining workplace accommodations available to employees.	Regulator	Year 2	People and Culture

### Strategy 4.2 – Promote community safety, inclusion and respect.

Strategic Alignment:

- **Council Plan:** Leading with Integrity, Empowering Communities.
- **Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:** Preventing all forms of Violence, Improving Wellbeing.

Actions	Role	Timeframe	Responsibility
Coordinate accessible awareness campaigns and training about family violence in partnership with local groups.	Champion	Ongoing	Community Development
Investigate and install interpreter symbol stickers at Council venues where an interpreter is available.	Service Provider / Communicator	Year 1	Customer Experience

## Development of the Action Plan

The development of this Access and Inclusion Action Plan was informed by a structured and collaborative process. Workshops were held to support the establishment of the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee and to gather early insights that shaped the Plan's direction.

The Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee provided ongoing advice and expertise, particularly in relation to access and inclusion challenges and the actions required to address them. South Gippsland Shire Council also reviewed a range of Access and Inclusion and Disability Action Plans from other organisations to ensure alignment with best practice and legislative requirements. Internally, teams across Council contributed to refining the scope and finalising the actions to ensure they were practical, achievable and responsive to community needs.

A draft of the Plan was then provided to the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee for review, and their feedback played a critical role in strengthening the final Plan and ensuring it reflects a clear, community-informed pathway for advancing access and inclusion across South Gippsland.

## Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

### Implementation

Implementation of the Access and Inclusion Action Plan is a shared responsibility across South Gippsland Shire Council. Each action identifies a lead team, with other departments contributing where relevant. The Action Plan will be delivered gradually, in line with Council's priorities and available resources.

South Gippsland Shire Council will support implementation by:

- Promoting awareness of the Plan across the organisation;
- Providing guidance and resources to staff;
- Considering access and inclusion in relevant projects, plans and processes; and
- Encouraging collaboration across teams to support consistent practice.

## Monitoring

The Community Development team will oversee the monitoring of this Action Plan. Monitoring aims to give a clear picture of progress and help teams deliver actions in a supportive and achievable way. Monitoring will include:

- Keeping a central record of all actions and their status;
- Having an annual progress touch base with internal teams;
- Sharing updates with the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee and inviting feedback; and
- Identifying any challenges that may affect timelines and making adjustments if needed.

## Reporting

An annual progress report on the Action Plan will be prepared to complement the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan reporting. This report will show how actions are tracking and identify what has been achieved during the year.

Each action will be given a traffic-light status to make progress easy to understand:

- Green (completed) – the action has been delivered.
- Orange (in progress) – the action is underway.
- Red (yet to commence) – the action has not started.

The annual snapshot report may also include:

- A summary of key achievements and improvements.
- Any challenges that affected progress.
- Actions or areas that need extra focus in the next year.
- Feedback or advice from the Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee.
- Any recommended changes to timelines, responsibilities or actions if needed.

## Authorising Environment

South Gippsland Shire Council has clear responsibilities under Victorian, Australian and international legislation to ensure that people with a disability can fully participate in community life.

These laws guide the development of our Access and Inclusion Action Plan and ensure our approach is consistent, rights-based and aligned with best practice.

The following table outlines the key Victorian, Australian and international legislation that shapes and supports this work.

State (Victoria)	National (Australia)	International
Disability Act 2006 (Vic)	Disability Discrimination Act 1992	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)
Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)	National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013	
Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)	Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021 to 2031	
Inclusive Victoria: State Disability Plan 2022 to 2026		



## Definitions

Word	Definition
Accessibility lens	Looking at a plan, design or activity to check if it is easy for everyone to use, including people with a disability or other barriers.
Accessible	Something that can be used, understood or entered by everyone, including people with a disability. This includes physical spaces, information, services and activities.
Advocate	A person who speaks up for themselves or others to support their rights, needs or interests.
Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) boards	A board with symbols or pictures that helps people communicate if speaking is difficult.
Accessibility Questions	Questions that may be asked to understand user experience, for example does the building have a ramp.
Barrier to inclusion	Anything that makes it hard for a person to take part. Barriers can be physical, social, communication, cultural or digital.
Captioning / Closed captions	Words on a video that show what is being said or what sounds are happening.
Champion	A person or group that actively supports and promotes accessibility and inclusion within an organisation or community.
Changing Places	A type of accessible toilet designed for people with high support needs. It includes extra space and specialist equipment such as height-adjustable change table and hoist.
Co-design	Working together with people who have lived experience of disability to plan, design or improve services, facilities or programs.
Collaborate	To work together with others, such as community members, organisations or partners, to achieve shared goals.

Communicate	To share information in ways that are clear, accessible and easy to understand. This may include spoken, written, visual or digital communication.
Community engagement	Ways Council talks and listens to the community to help make decisions.
Council	South Gippsland Shire Council – a local government organisation that works to improve the community.
Discrimination	Treating a person unfairly or differently because of disability or another personal characteristic.
Emergency preparedness	Getting ready for emergencies by having a plan, information and support.
Family Violence	Any behaviour that causes physical, emotional or psychological harm to someone within a family or intimate relationship. It includes controlling behaviour, threats and isolation.
First 72 Hours Program	A program that helps people prepare for emergencies by planning how they will manage on their own for up to three days if emergency services can't reach them.
Inclusion	Making sure everyone feels welcome, valued and able to participate, regardless of disability or other differences.
Inclusive design / Universal design	Designing something so it can be used by as many people as possible without needing changes.
Interpreter / Interpreter symbol	A person who helps people communicate by translating spoken language or signing. The interpreter symbol shows that this service is available.
Intranet	A private website or online space that only staff can access. It's used to share information, documents and updates within an organisation.
Low income	Having less money than most people and not enough to easily pay for everyday needs.
Sensory-friendly	Activities, spaces or events designed to reduce noise, lights or other things that might overwhelm someone. These environments can help people feel safer, calmer and more confident, particularly those with sensory sensitivities, anxiety or cognitive changes, including people living with dementia.

Service provider	An organisation or person that delivers services or support to the community.
Sport4All	A nationwide Australian initiative, developed with Dylan Alcott's Get Skilled Access and funded by the Australian Government, aimed at making community sports clubs and schools more inclusive for people with disabilities.
Sport and Recreation	What people choose to do in their free time for enjoyment and wellbeing such as playing sport, dancing, making music, acting in theatre, creating art or taking part in other fun activities.
Step Outside and Move Your Way	An awareness campaign focused on promoting tracks and trails to those who experience barriers to participation.
Support	Help provided to enable people to participate, access services or meet their needs. This can include physical assistance, information, programs or resources.
Workplace accommodations	Changes or supports that help an employee do their job well, such as flexible hours, equipment or adjustments.

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

9 Smith Street (Private Bag 4) Leongatha VIC 3953

Phone: 5662 9200

Email: [council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au)

Website: [www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au](http://www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/southgippslandshirecouncil](https://www.facebook.com/southgippslandshirecouncil)



*South Gippsland*  
Shire Council

# SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL COUNCIL POLICY



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Policy No.	C06	Adoption Date:	Council Meeting {approval-date}
Directorate:	Strategy and Integrity	Department:	Regional Partnerships
Revision Date:	MMM 2030		
<b>GOOD GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK – OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES</b>			
Supporting Pillar:	Pillar 1. Direction & Leadership Pillar 5. Community Engagement		
Link to Pillar:	Establish good processes and delegations to ensure decisions consider local community and broader municipal interests, are consistent. South Gippsland Shire Council actively seeks differing opinions to tailor services for the community and recognises the value of diverse views when decisions need to be made.		

### 1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of the Community Engagement Policy (C06) (the Policy) is to affirm South Gippsland Shire Council's commitment to genuine and effective community engagement as a cornerstone of good governance. It sets out the requirements for all engagement activities undertaken by Council, ensuring our decision-making is transparent, inclusive, and well-informed by diverse community perspectives.

### 2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This Policy applies to all community engagement undertaken by, or on behalf of Council. This includes activities by Councillors, Council staff, contractors, consultants and volunteers.

The Policy applies to the development of key strategic documents, major projects and services. It does not apply to routine operational matters or engagement processes that are governed by other legislation, such as planning permit applications and planning scheme amendments.

### 3. POLICY PRINCIPLES

#### Our framework

- 3.1. This policy is the foundation of the South Gippsland Shire Council Community Engagement framework. The framework provides clear and practical guidance for Council and the community. It consists of:

(Community Engagement Policy) (C06)

Adoption Date: Council Meeting {approval-date}

Page 1 of 5

**Community Engagement Policy (The 'Why')**: This overarching document defines our commitment and high-level principles, ensuring legislative compliance.

**Community Engagement Strategy (The 'How')**: Outlines how we will implement the Policy over the next four years (2025-2029) to meet the strategic needs of the Shire. It translates our policy commitments into key priorities and actions.

**Community Engagement Toolkit (The 'How-to')**: An internal toolkit providing guides, tools and templates to support staff in delivering consistent, high-quality engagement.

### **Our commitment**

3.2. Our commitment is to ensure the community is actively and meaningfully involved in shaping South Gippsland, that Council decisions are informed by diverse community perspectives, and that we continue to build trust and confidence between Council and the community we serve. We will do this by:

- Consistently communicating engagement opportunities across multiple channels.
- Providing regular updates on projects we are engaging on.
- Ensuring all views are considered fairly.
- Sharing an overview of results to show what we heard from the community.

### **Implementation**

3.3. This Policy is implemented through the practical, operational direction set out in the *Community Engagement Strategy 2025-2029* and the guidance provided to staff in the internal *Community Engagement Toolkit*.

## **4. STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS**

4.1. The Victorian *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) sets the legislative requirements for Council's community engagement. Adherence to this policy will ensure compliance with the Act.

## **5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

5.1. This Policy is guided by the community engagement principles of the *Local Government Act 2020*. We will actively apply these principles in all our engagement activities.

### **A clearly defined objective**

5.2. *Our commitment*: Every engagement process will have a clearly stated objective, so participants know why they are being engaged.

**Access to objective, relevant, and timely information**

5.3. *Our commitment:* We will ensure participants have access to the information they need to help them participate in a meaningful way.

**Representative participation**

5.4. *Our commitment:* We will seek out and listen to a diverse range of voices that are representative of the people and groups affected by the matter at hand.

**Reasonable support for participants**

5.5. *Our commitment:* We will do our best to ensure engagement opportunities are accessible to people of all abilities, ages, genders and backgrounds within our available resources, actively reducing barriers to participation to hear from all parts of our community.

**Informing participants**

5.6. *Our commitment:* Where possible, we will share a summary of the feedback received and explain how it has informed the outcomes.

**6. RISK ASSESSMENT**

6.1. This Policy provides a consistent and transparent approach for community engagement. Failure to adhere to the Policy presents significant risks, including:

6.2. **Erosion of community trust:** Inconsistent practices, particularly in providing feedback to participants, can damage Council's reputation and undermine community confidence in Council processes. This can lead to community disengagement, increased misinformation, and difficulty in delivering future projects and engagement processes.

- **Non-compliance:** Failure to meet the statutory requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* could lead to non-compliance.
- **Poor decision-making:** Decisions made without the benefit of community input may not meet community needs or reflect their priorities, increasing the likelihood of poor outcomes and unintended negative consequences.
- **Inefficient use of resources:** Poorly planned engagement can result in low-value outcomes, wasting both Council and community time and resources.

6.3. Council will manage these risks by following this Policy and using the supporting *Community Engagement Strategy and Toolkit*.

**7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

7.1. Successful community engagement is a shared responsibility across Council and the community. The following outlines these key roles:

- **Councillors:** Act as strategic leaders and champions for community engagement, promote this Policy, and consider community feedback in their decision-making.

- **Executive Leadership Team:** Are responsible for ensuring this Policy is implemented, that staff are adequately resourced and trained, and for fostering a culture that values community engagement.
- **Council Staff:** Are responsible for planning, delivering, and evaluating all engagement activities in line with this Policy and the supporting strategy and toolkit.
- **The community:** Have a responsibility to participate constructively and respectfully, contributing their diverse perspectives and local knowledge to inform Council decision-making.

## 8. IMPLEMENTATION STATEMENT

### Local Government Act 2020

8.1. This Policy has considered the requirements as outlines in the *Local Government Act 2020*.

### Gender Equality

8.2. This Policy has considered the *Gender Equality Act 2020* in its development including a Gender Impact Assessment (GIA).

### Human Rights Charter

8.3. This Policy has considered the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* in its development as required by the *Local Government Act 2020*.

## 9. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

9.1. This Policy will be reviewed and adopted by Council on a four-year cycle or at Council's discretion.

9.2. Policies may be reviewed earlier than a four-year cycle if legislative provisions, industry or organisation requirements change.

## 10. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Legislative Provisions	Charter of Human Rights and Responsibility Act 2006 Freedom of Information Act 1982 Gender Equality Act 2020 Local Government Act 2020 Local Government (Finance and Reporting) Regulations 2004
Council Supporting Documents	Community Engagement Strategy Council Plan Employee Code of Conduct (CE20) Councillor Code of Conduct
Related External Documents	<i>External Funding Application - Guidelines</i>

**11. DEFINITIONS**

Community Engagement	A planned process with the specific purpose of working with the community to shape the decisions or actions of Council.
Deliberative Engagement	An engagement process that brings together a representative sample of the community to consider an issue in-depth. Participants are provided with time, balanced information, and support to consider a complex issue and develop recommendations for Council.
Participatory Engagement	A process where Council invites feedback from the community on specific ideas, proposals, or draft documents, and is open to any community member who chooses to take part. It is typically used when there are non-negotiable elements, meaning the overall direction may be set, but community input is needed to refine the approach. Common methods include surveys and calling for public submissions.

**12. REVISION HISTORY**

Approved By	Approval Date	Sections Modified	CM9 Ref#
Council Meeting	25 July 2018	New Policy	D5228818
Council Meeting	24 February 2021	Revised	D1027921
Council Meeting	{approval-date}	Revised	

**13. ATTACHMENT SUMMARY**

Nil

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

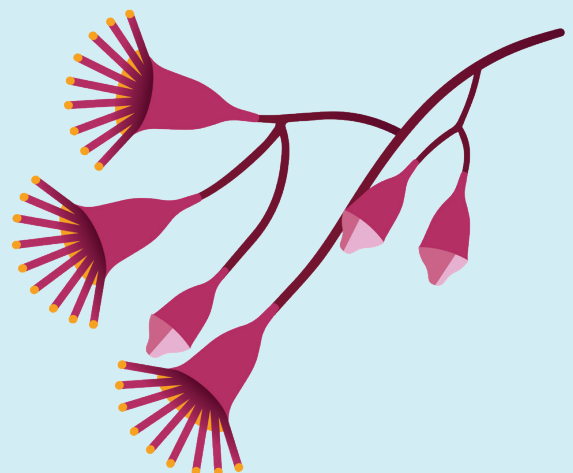
# Draft Community Engagement Strategy 2026 - 2029



*South Gippsland*  
Shire Council

### *Acknowledgment of Country*

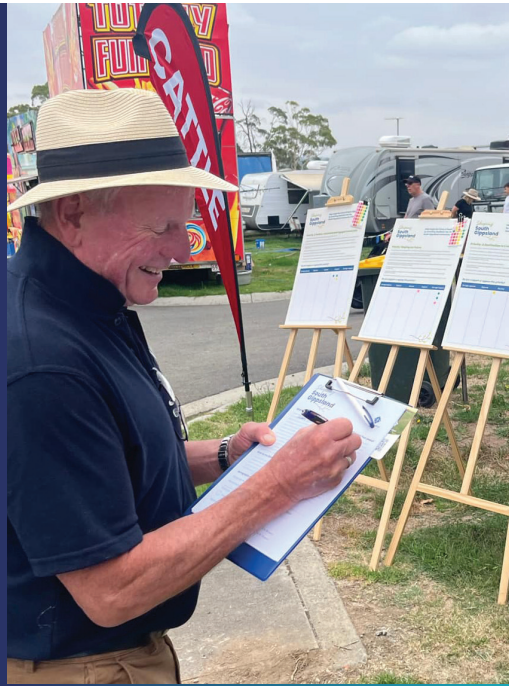
*We acknowledge the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Custodians of South Gippsland and pay respect to their Elders, past, present, and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.*



*Flowering Gum*

## Purpose of this document

This Community Engagement Strategy sets out how Council will listen to and work with the community it represents. Council recognises that effective community engagement can help to guide its decision making, to build trust, and to achieve shared goals.



## Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	2
Purpose of this document	3
Introduction	4
Our Approach	5 - 6
Strategic Priorities	7
Mandatory Processes	8
Measuring our Success	9
Action Plan	10 - 11

## Introduction

This strategy sets out how South Gippsland Shire Council will put its commitment to community engagement into practice. As the operational component of our Community Engagement framework, this document translates the high-level principles of our *Community Engagement Policy* into a clear and practical approach for the next four years.

It is designed to address the key challenges and opportunities we face, ensuring our engagement is more consistent, inclusive, and effective. It responds directly to community feedback and our legislative requirements to build a more transparent and trusting relationship between Council and the community we serve.

The *Council Plan 2025-2029* acknowledges that we are operating in a challenging financial environment, meaning we cannot always deliver on everything our community would like. To ensure Council remains financially viable, we must navigate tough decisions together, especially regarding the future of our assets. This Strategy provides the framework for this partnership, ensuring that even when faced with difficult choices, we are working collaboratively to find the best possible outcomes for South Gippsland.

## What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is a planned process that brings together organisations, stakeholders and the community to help inform decisions and actions in response to a problem, opportunity, or outcome. At its heart we see it as a partnership between Council and the community, a two-way process where we listen to your ideas and concerns, and you have a real opportunity to influence decisions and actions that affect our region. We are committed to this partnership because we know that we make better decisions and are more likely to achieve our shared goals when we work together.



## 1. Our Approach

To ensure a consistent and high-quality approach to all engagement we undertake, we have established a clear approach to guide our planning and delivery.

### The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

South Gippsland Shire Council uses the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation (Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, Empower) as the core framework for defining the level of community influence in our projects. This helps set clear expectations for staff and the community from the outset.

Level	Our Goal	Our promise to you
<b>Inform</b>	To provide the community with balanced and objective information to help them understand the issue, alternatives, and/or solutions.	We will keep you informed.
<b>Consult</b>	To obtain community feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals, listen to and acknowledge your concerns, and provide feedback - where applicable - on how your input influenced the decision.
<b>Involve</b>	To work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	We will work with you to ensure your input is directly reflected in the alternatives developed.
<b>Collaborate</b>	To partner with the community in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	We will use your advice in the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
<b>Empower</b>	To place final decision-making in the hands of the community.	We will implement what you decide.

## How we prioritise engagement

This Strategy establishes a clear process for guiding the allocation of our time and budget to ensure that our efforts are transparent, consistent and directed where they are most needed.

This approach helps us determine the appropriate level of engagement for any given project or decision. While projects with statutory engagement requirements will always be the highest priority, we will assess all other projects against the following series of questions:

### Impact:

How many people will be affected by the decision, and to what degree? Will it have a significant effect on their daily lives, finances, or access to services?

### Geography:

Does the issue affect a single township, a specific geographic area, or the entire Shire?

### Risk:

What is the level of political, social, financial, or reputational risk to the community and Council if the engagement is not undertaken?

Based on the assessment against these questions, the Communications, Engagement and Advocacy team will determine the appropriate engagement approach and provide coordination and support according to the identified needs.

## Deliberative engagement

As required by the *Local Government Act 2020*, we will use deliberative engagement practices to inform the development of key strategic documents such as the Community Vision and Council Plan,

## The toolkit

We are committed to developing and maintaining a practical, internal *Community Engagement Toolkit*. This will be an essential, living resource for staff, providing templates, checklists, and step-by-step guides to support them in planning and delivering engagement independently, particularly for lower-priority projects.



## 2. Strategic Priorities (2026 - 2029)

Our engagement work will be guided by four key priorities that respond directly to issues identified through recent consultations and Council activity.

### Engaging on 'what's possible'

We will endeavour to build a shared community understanding of the financial realities facing Council, particularly regarding services and assets. We will gather information from the community to help Councillors make necessary and difficult strategic decisions.

### Targeted engagement

Where appropriate, and depending on the consultation, we will take a proactive and tailored approach to engage sections of the community that have historically been harder to reach—for example, agricultural communities and younger people—ensuring their perspectives are actively sought and considered on projects that significantly affect them.

### Building trust through transparency

We will undertake consistent communication and investigate a more structured and predictable approach when consultation is undertaken. We also commit to publishing the results of all formal Community Engagement processes, effectively closing the loop so those who participated - and the wider community - can see the outcomes for each project.

### Improving online engagement and in person opportunities

We will work to ensure our engagement is accessible to all residents. We will continue to improve the quality and promotion of our online engagement, recognising that for many people it is a convenient way to provide feedback at little cost to Council.

We will also strengthen our commitment to providing meaningful and accessible in-person options for participation in all major projects. We recognise that face-to-face conversation is often the most effective way to explore complex issues and understand diverse perspectives. Our goal is to remove barriers to participation. This will ensure every resident can contribute in a way that works for them.



### 3. Mandatory Processes

To lift the standard and consistency of engagement across the organisation, we will progressively introduce the following key best-practice processes for engagements.

#### **Engagement planning:**

Community engagement activities must be supported by a documented engagement plan. This ensures that every engagement is well-considered, properly resourced, and has a clear purpose and scope.

#### **Consistent demographic data inclusion:**

Engagement activities will include questions that support Council to undertake Gender Impact Assessments where required, ensuring compliance with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

#### **Closing the loop:**

Engagement activities must conclude with a publicly available report or summary. This report will clearly state what we heard from the community and explain, where appropriate, how that input was considered in the final decision-making process.

#### **Evaluation:**

All Community Engagement projects will undergo an evaluation to assess their effectiveness and to identify lessons for future engagements. This will help us to continually learn and improve our processes.



## 4. Measuring our Success

To ensure this strategy is delivering on its commitments, we will track our performance against a set of clear key performance indicators (KPIs) and Actions. These targets establish a benchmark for success and will be reviewed annually.

### Key Performance Indicators

Our success will be measured by indicators including, but not limited to:

- Participant satisfaction with the engagement process.
- The reach and diversity of participants in our engagement activities.
- The completion rate of our mandatory processes (planning, closing the loop, evaluation).



## 5. Action Plan

### Engaging on 'what's possible'

Action	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Establish a baseline of communication channels for engagement and promote opportunities through these channels.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure engagements - where applicable - highlight financial implications and challenges to build community understanding of financial realities.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Implement engagement plans for all community engagement activities to ensure each is well-considered, properly resourced, and has a clear purpose and scope.	✓	✓	✓	✓

### Targeted engagement

Action	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Introduce and deliver targeted and tailored engagements to encourage a range of voices that are representative of the people and groups affected by the matter at hand.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Analyse participation data to understand the number of people engaged and the demographic profile (e.g., age, location).	✓	✓	✓	✓
Engagement activities will include consistent questions that will support Council to undertake Gender Impact Assessments where required, and as outlined, in the <i>Gender Equality Act</i> .	✓	✓	✓	✓

**Build trust through transparency**

Action	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Begin a process to assess participant satisfaction through post-engagement surveys, asking whether participants felt heard and found the process worthwhile, with an initial target of achieving an average rating of "satisfied."			✓	✓
Commence and implement a "closing the loop" report for engagements, providing participants with an overview of results and, where applicable, engagement outcomes.		✓	✓	✓
Implement an internal review of all formal engagement projects to ensure planning, closing the loop, and evaluation are completed.			✓	✓
Co-design significant community engagements with Councillors by presenting a menu of engagement options for consideration.	✓	✓	✓	✓

**Improving online engagements and in-person opportunities**

Action	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Investigate enhancements to Council's online engagement platform to make participation easier and encourage greater community involvement.		✓		
Review in-person engagement opportunities annually and trial new methods for capturing participant feedback.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Review Council's engagement schedule annually to identify opportunities for aligning activities and increasing community participation.			✓	✓

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

9 Smith Street (Private Bag 4) Leongatha VIC 3953  
Phone: 5662 9200 Fax: 5662 3754  
Email: [council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au](mailto:council@southgippsland.vic.gov.au)  
Website: [www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au](http://www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/southgippslandshirecouncil](https://www.facebook.com/southgippslandshirecouncil)

