

Administrators' Message



South Gippsland
Shire Council

As we have seen the impact of COVID-19 changing across Victoria in recent weeks, we would like to take the opportunity to congratulate our community on their response to the pandemic. We are fortunate that case numbers across Gippsland remain low and we hope that with our collective hard work we can keep it that way.

While we are thankful that restrictions have relaxed in our region we would like to remind everyone to continue with the good efforts they have been displaying. It is vital we continue to keep our distance, wash our hands and get tested if you are feeling sick to ensure the future health and wellbeing of our community.

This week we have another important Council Meeting; on Wednesday we will hold a Special Council Meeting to consider the \$2M COVID-19 Community Support Package and our governance rules. We would like to thank our officers who have been working very hard in consultation with key community groups to present us with a community support package that will provide for those in need across our municipality. The governance rules are a requirement of the new *Local Government Act 2020* and outline how to handle Council Meetings and the process for making decisions. At the meeting on Wednesday, Council will consider making these Rules available for public feedback. As Administrators we look forward to considering both topics and determining the best course of action for our community.

No doubt we will have an update to provide next week on how this space develops and we look forward to these further discussions with the community.

In other news, we would like to take the opportunity to thank the outgoing Great Southern Rail Trail Committee of Management for all its hard work over the last few years. Maintaining the trail has been no small achievement and we are appreciative that the committee took on this responsibility for the community. Council will now be responsible for the maintenance of the trail and we are committed to ensuring that this tourism asset remains in tip top shape for the enjoyment of our residents and visitors. Once COVID-19 travel restrictions are further relaxed we will work to attract more tourists to this fantastic asset.

We also welcome the news that the Federal Government is providing an additional \$400 million through tertiary reforms to increase opportunities for regional, rural and remote students to get a world-class education and support regional university campuses. The measures will create new opportunities for regional and remote students to study closer to home, help students to meet the costs of studying away from home and build the research capacity of regional universities.

We are thankful for the opportunities this will bring to our local students and we encourage anyone wanting more information on the initiative including the tertiary access payment and improved fares allowance to visit www.dese.gov.au/more-opportunities-regional-australia

Julie Eisenbise, Christian Zahra AM and Rick Brown – Administrators