

# Community Engagement Review Results



*South Gippsland  
Shire Council*

**18 November - 2 December 2020**



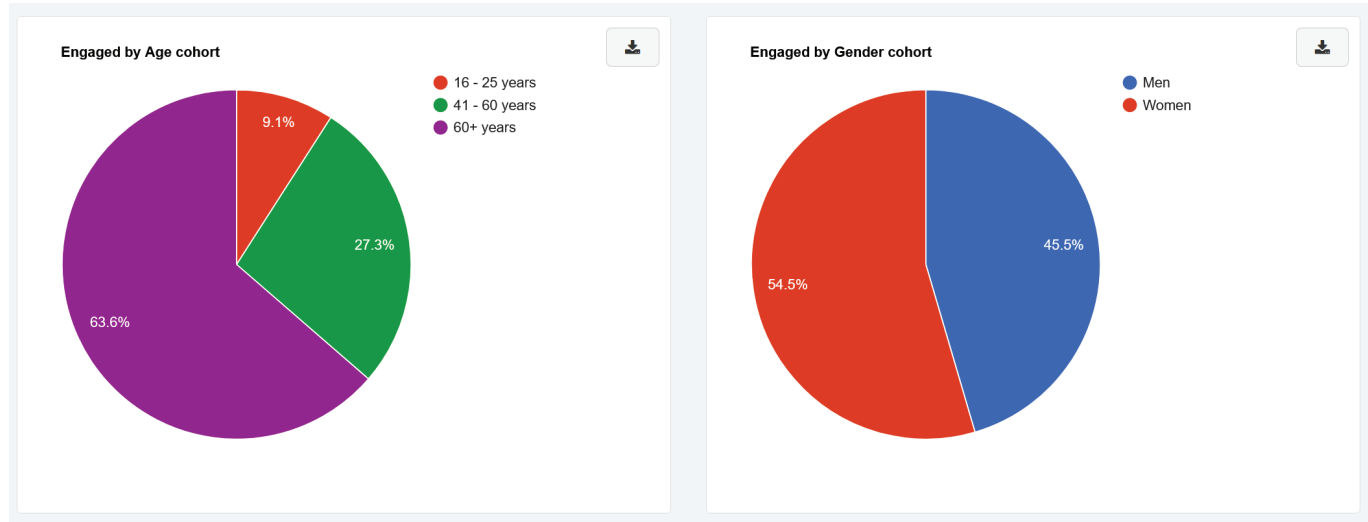
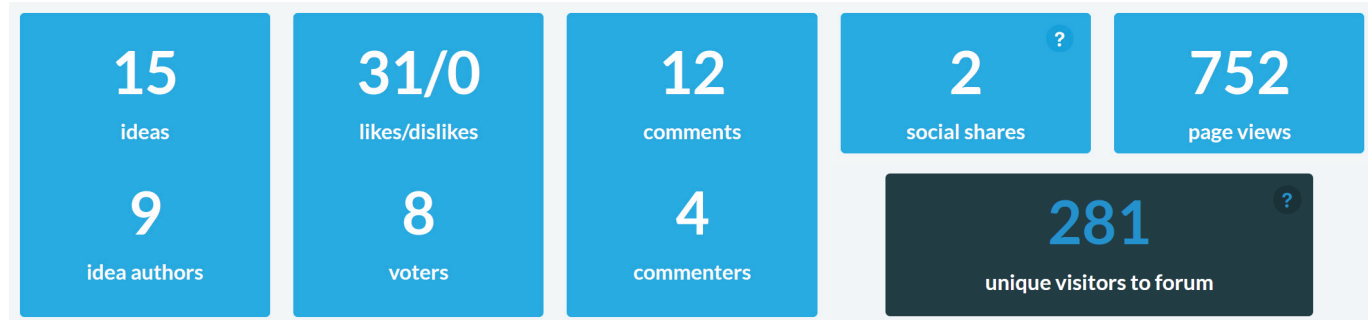
## Background

South Gippsland Shire Council is committed to understanding the needs of its community and believes that decisions are improved through the process of community engagement.

Council opened the Draft Community Engagement Policy 2021 to the community for review through an OurSay forum and survey from 18 November to 2 December 2020.

The following pages outline the forum summary, survey responses received and one written submission which was provided during the consultation period.

# OurSay Forum Summary



The OurSay Forum provided an opportunity for community members to directly comment on the Draft Community Engagement Policy. While community members did respond to the forum most submissions made did not focus on the policy.

Community projects were highlighted which can be considered for future Council Plans and the Community Vision.

Some ideas to note for the policy included:

- That the Policy should include that all community correspondence must be accessible.
- All correspondence with the community through engagement should be published and searchable on Council's website (in pages not documents).
- That the Policy should include a dedicated place where community engagement opportunities will be advertised so that interested parties could sign up. Council's e-newsletter or a website engagement hub was suggested.
- That the Policy needs more detail on how the feedback is sought and provide community members with assistance to understand the material that is provided to them for them to be able to comment.

Responses provided in the oursay forum are able to be viewed in full at:

[oursay.org/southgippsland/community-engagement-policy-review](https://oursay.org/southgippsland/community-engagement-policy-review)

# COMMUNITY

## OurSay Survey Summary

105

number of views

61

number of submissions

58%

conversion

07:36

avg. completion time

Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you?

61 out of 61 people answered the question

95.1%

Yes

4.9%

No

3 responses

What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?

58 out of 61 people answered the question

87.9%

Decisions about infrastructure/services

51

55.2%

Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets)

32 responses

53.4%

Local Laws

31 responses

51.7%

Council Policies

30 responses

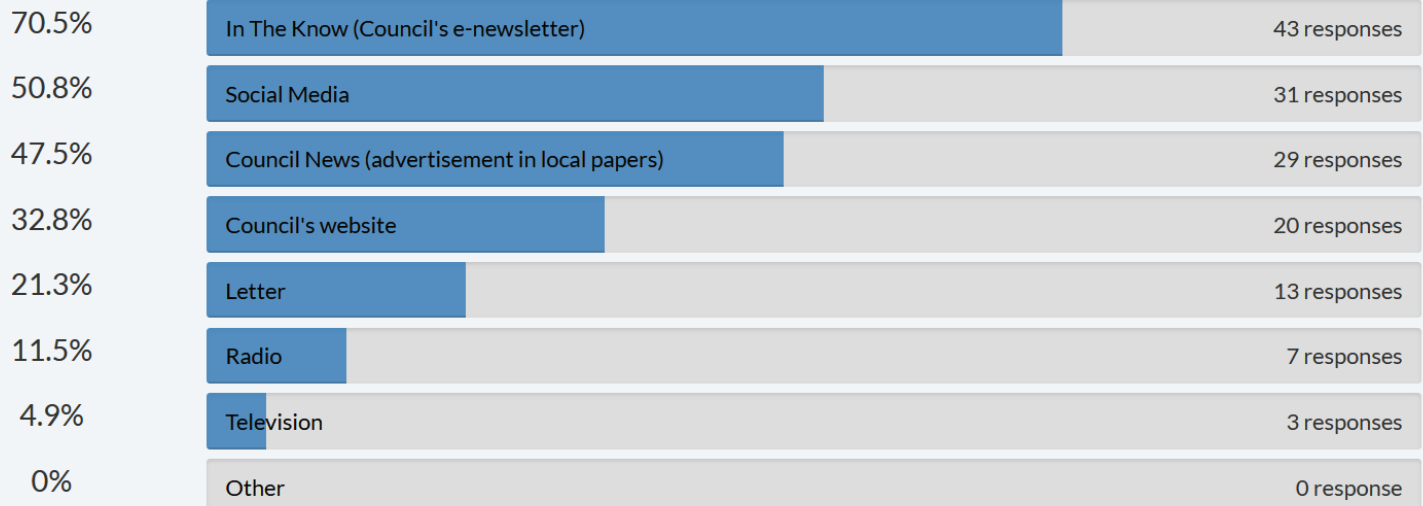
3.4%

Other

2 responses

### How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities?

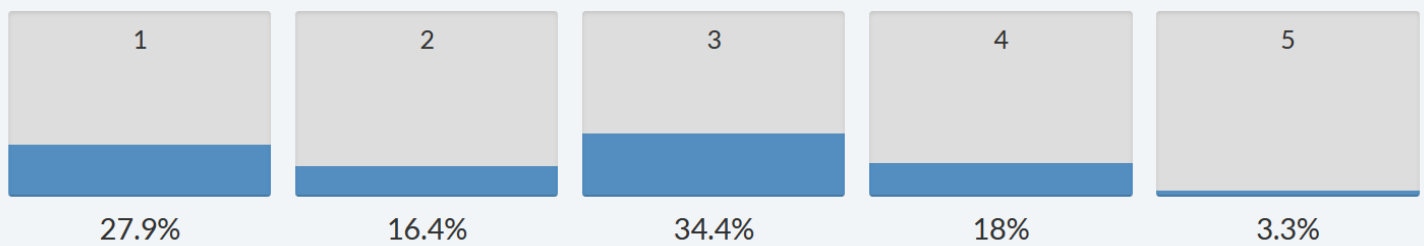
61 out of 61 people answered the question



### How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts?

2.5 Average

61 out of 61 people answered the question



### Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part?

Summary: 61 responses in total.

### Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?

Summary: 61 responses in total.

\*For qualitative responses please see results in the following section.



# OurSay Survey Results

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?  | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?   | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities?                         | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part?   | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?  |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| No   |  | Community Panel   | Letter  | 1  | Have a council that can say yes once in a hundred times  | Mirboo nth commitee should havd the only say on what happens in mirboo nth  |
| No   |  | SurveyCommunity Panel   | Social MediaRadio   | 1  | Listening to what the community DOES say would be a good start.  | Again ..... listen to the people. For example, Franklin River reserve, dump point in Toora.   |
| No   |  | Survey  | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)Social Media  | 2  | Re-Open Franklin River Reserve Campground please   | Re-open Franklin River Reserve Campground please  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services   | SurveyOnline interactive platform (like OurSay)Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)Council News (advertisement in local papers)                        | 5  | after I have let you know what i think about something tell me how it ended up. did my contribution make a difference? what about when I've had a say about a project - tell me when it's complete, etc. | no thanks   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ servicesStrategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets)Local LawsCouncil Policies | SurveyOnline interactive platform (like OurSay)Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)Council News (advertisement in local papers)LetterCouncil's website | 3  | Responding to complaints made on the official website page (and possibly even taking action to remediate the problem i.e. mature dead trees overhanging roads) instead of just ignoring them even when a | Advertising programs in the local paper is the most likely place I am going to notice them as I don't go to the SGSC website much unless I am downloading council documents for comment or for submissions. |

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?   | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?  | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities?                | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part?  | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?                       |
|--|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Council Policies Local Laws | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) Online interactive platform (like OurSay) Workshops or Meetings Community Panel                               | Council News (advertisement in local papers)   | 1  | response has been requested.<br>change your culture   | yes but not enough space here  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Local Laws                  | Online interactive platform (like OurSay)  | Social Media   | 3  |   | Listen to the owners of property outside of Leongatha and Korumburra. They pay rates to                                  |
| Yes  | Council Policies  | Online interactive platform (like OurSay)  | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter) Council's website   | 3  | Yes. Email and/or hard copy on policies   | No   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Council Policies            | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) Survey Online interactive platform (like OurSay) Informal Conversations Workshops or Meetings Community Panel | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter) Social Media Council News (advertisement in local papers) | 4  | Most community engagement is great but there has been more uptake of things locally since CoVid with an increase in Zoom meetings. These allow those with small children to be involved and in winter no going out in the cold wet wombat roo riddled | With use of technology, exchanging ideas and networking is now much easier across the wide geographic area of the shire. |

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?  | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?                                | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities?                | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part? | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?   |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  | roads. Happy to discuss this further   |  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services   | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)<br>Council News (advertisement in local papers)<br>Letter | 4  |  | I would like to see a footpath go right around Baromi Park, a lot of older people do not like walking around the football ovals or rail trail on their own. A path around Baromi Park has been discussed many times. |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services<br>Council Policies<br>Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) | Survey<br>Online interactive platform (like OurSay)<br>Community Panel | Council News (advertisement in local papers)<br>Letter<br>Social Media                         | 1  | Yes, let it be known that ANYONE who is a ratepayer may participate.   | It should be Council's responsibility to reach out to the public on all infrastructure and strategic matters; not the other way round.   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services   | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)   | 4  | I don't know   | No   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services<br>Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets)                     | other: email   | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)   | 1  | Council staff should answer emails promptly  | there are too many channels of communication. Reduce them.   |
| Yes  | Council Policies<br>Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets)<br>Decisions about infrastructure/          | Survey<br>Workshops or Meetings<br>Community Panel                     | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)<br>Letter   | 3  | Hold more workshops that are promoted via letters to rate payers and via in the know                                 | Whilst it is important that council have a concept for projects, policies etc it should not be developed too much before the community is engaged. An example was the proposed changes to the by-laws relatively     |



| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in? | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with? | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities? | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part? | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide? |
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services

recently that were withdrawn by the Council before they were passed after receiving strong public feedback.

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|-----|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| Yes | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Council Policies Local Laws | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) Survey Informal Conversations Workshops or Meetings Community Panel                    | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter) Social Media Council News (advertisement in local papers)                   | 2 | Publicise all questions and complaints made to council, and the responses.                        | Commitment to openness and transparency is not the reality. |
| Yes | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Council Policies Local Laws | Informal Conversations Workshops or Meetings Community Panel Online interactive platform (like OurSay)  | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter) Social Media  | 1 | I don't know of any community activities run by council.  | I love the edible and pickable street plantings.            |
| Yes | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Local Laws Council Policies  | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) Survey Online interactive platform (like OurSay) Workshops or Meetings Community Panel | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter) Social Media Council's website Council News (advertisement in local papers) | 3 |   |   |
| Yes | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan,                                      | Workshops or Meetings   | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)   | 4 | I think community meetings are great ways to communicate not sure how you make them more inviting | Not at this time  |

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in? | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with? | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities? | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part? | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide? |
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Budgets)Local Laws

maybe a door prize giving a slight concession on rates perhaps

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|-----|--|--|--|---|---|--|
| Yes | Decisions about infrastructure/ servicesStrategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets)Council Policies | Pop-up stallsInformal ConversationsOnline interactive platform (like OurSay)SurveyInform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)Social MediaCouncil News (advertisement in local papers) | 3 | Pop up Sth Gippsland Shire Council stalls at all produce and or other markets on a regular basis. This supports engagement n opportunity for not only information but relationships with current residents and would be residents n visitors. If people know you will be there for them in their environment it demonstrates care and interest in the people you serve. Sometime people have simple questions but think it's not worth bothering the Shire. This stall would be an easy way to engage with everyone. Face to face interaction is undervalued. Your profile needs a boost as | Your workers that are out and about are your visible Ambassadors. I was out walking n walked by SGSC gardeners working hard and they said 'hi lovely day'. How friendly n approachable! These are the only SGSC workers I see on a regular basis. Maybe an opportunity to improve their communication skills to engage even more with the people they serve. I loved the SGSC gardener who was on ABC gardening show talking about kerbside edible gardens. I guess I'm saying I want to know all of you a lot better. I think your Facebook page needs more photos n info on what you are achieving in the field. Good luck |
|-----|--|--|--|---|---|--|

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?  | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?                                      | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities?                   | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part?  | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide? |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|--|
|  |  |  |   |  | you are very removed from the people you serve. It will be like a portable 'Info Centre' n can still have volunteers with a staff member to keep costs down. My message is be more visible n available.<br>Cheers Pat   |  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services   | SurveyOnline interactive platform (like OurSay)Workshops or Meetings         | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)  | 4  | not sure  | No   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services   | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc)Survey | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)Council's websiteCouncil News (advertisement in local papers) | 5  | I think your doing a great job  | No   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ servicesStrategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets)Council PoliciesLocal Laws | Community PanelWorkshops or Meetings   | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)Council News (advertisement in local papers)                  | 1  | Council need to discuss projects with community and jointly decide on the engagement, the target for decisions and the reporting of outcomes and how the community can actually influence the projects. It should not be just a process to say that Council has | Check the City of Monash process and the VAGO report into Council Engagement effectiveness.        |

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?  | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?  | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities?                           | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part? | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?                      |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|---|
|  |  |  |   |  | talked to the community but taken no input from community nor reported process back to community                     |   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services<br>Local Laws   | Workshops or Meetings<br>Pop-up stalls<br>Survey   | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)<br>Social Media<br>Council News (advertisement in local papers)      | 4  |  |   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services   | Survey   | Council's website   | 3  | More interest showing for Tarwin Lower & Venus Bay   | Never seen a Administrator in our area  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services<br>Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets)<br>Council Policies<br>Local Laws | Survey   | Council's website   | 3  | keep it only online or by way of being able to participate anonymously   | keep the costs down through not holding minority interest group meetings and doing it online or through anonymous means |
| Yes  | Local Laws   | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc)<br>Survey<br>Online interactive platform (like OurSay)<br>Informal Conversations<br>Workshops or Meetings | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)<br>Council's website<br>Council News (advertisement in local papers) | 4  | Not that I know of.  | No  |
| Yes  | Council Policies<br>Local Laws   | Workshops or Meetings<br>Informal  | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)<br>Council's   | 3  | Difficult at the moment due to Covid but in due  | Use Zoom for community engagement via live streaming  |

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?   | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?  | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities?  | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part?  | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?   |
|--|---|--|--|--|---|--|
|  |   | Conversations  | website Council News (advertisement in local papers)                             |  | course a return to District Cluster Meetings etc  | not Microsoft Teams!   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Council Policies Local Laws | Survey Online interactive platform (like OurSay) Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) Informal Conversations Community Panel | Social Media   | 2  | As an avid contributor to the local community and a young person who has been awarded young person leading change in regional vic I believe council lacks engagement with youth and so decisions for the future are made bu | My last question cut out but I think youth need to be involved in decision making and young families who are largely the demographic of the region |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets)                             | Workshops or Meetings  | Social Media   | 3  |   |  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Local Laws   | Pop-up stalls Online interactive platform (like OurSay) Survey Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc)                          | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter) Social Media                                | 4  | take part and be present in community activities  | no   |
| Yes  | Council Policies  | Pop-up stalls  | Council News (advertisement in local papers)                                     | 1  | no  | no   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Local Laws   | Survey Workshops or Meetings Community Panel Online interactive platform (like OurSay)   | Social Media Council's website In The Know (Council's e-newsletter) Council News | 2  | Have the council listen to the community wishes and take it on board  | Its important that all people feel like they have a voice and are heard  |

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in? | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with? | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities? | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part? | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide? |
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|     |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | Local Laws<br>Decisions about infrastructure/services                  | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc)<br>Online interactive platform (like OurSay)<br>Informal Conversations | (advertisement in local papers)<br>In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)<br>Social Media<br>Council News (advertisement in local papers) | 4 | Maybe suggest/ask to attend community groups at their own gatherings rather than have additional meetings. That works well for our business association & I'm sure plenty of other groups would welcome it too. | Community engagement along the lines of Korumburra Round Table for larger towns can be very beneficial depending on what needs to be achieved. An open town meeting for each town/area 4 times a year would be the best way to engage with the community. There is only a certain small percentage of the population that are interested in any engagement at all. I could have put some of this information further back in this survey but there is no back button. Holding additional engagement get together for people that are already involved in a group or several groups can just add to their already large commitment to the community. Some of these gatherings just seem like they are ticking boxes for the Shire to say they have engaged with the community. |
| Yes | Decisions about infrastructure/services<br>Strategic Plans (ie Council | Survey<br>Informal Conversations<br>Workshops or Meetings<br>Pop-up stalls  | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)<br>Social Media<br>Council News (advertisement in local  | 3 | I find it hard at times to find things on website. Maybe easy button from main page to current  | I believe community want to engage. Usually I have seen surveys when someone has shared them onto social media  |



| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?   | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?  | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities?                                  | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part? | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?  |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|---|
|  | Plan, Budgets) Council Policies Local Laws  |  | papers) Television Letter  |  | engagement.  | even though I follow the shire page. You need to make sure people see it. And listen to the feedback not just tick it off. Make sure survey questions are clear for what response you want eg. The one on pets I didn't feel really got the feel of what was being discussed by community due to the questions asked. |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Local Laws   | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) Pop-up stalls                                       | Social Media   | 3  | Haven't lived in Gippsland long enough yet (6 months) so I'm not aware of what you've done in the past.              | As a new member it's been a struggle as of COVID...we've been unable to meet people and establish a network. It was months before someone told me there was a local paper to keep us informed, but I believe that's gone now. Eventually I got onto the council's Facebook page, so that has helped.                  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Council Policies Local Laws | Workshops or Meetings Community Panel Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) Pop-up stalls | Council's website Social Media In The Know (Council's e-newsletter) Council News (advertisement in local papers) | 1  |  |   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services  | Online interactive platform (like OurSay)  | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)   | 1  | Get a new council  | no  |

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?                                      | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?  | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities? | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part? | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?  |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|---|
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services<br>Local Laws   | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc)<br>Survey<br>Community Panel  | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)<br>Social Media<br>Council's website       | 3  | Allow online answers more than workshops   |   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services   | Survey   | Social Media  | 1  | Post in local community Facebook groups  | The Franklin river reserve needs to be opened for camping again. Being closed is a huge loss to the community and local business owners like myself. Toora locals are committed to helping keep it tidy and efficient and it's ridiculous that it isn't open. How can you claim to be helping the community yet shutting such vital places like this. |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services<br>Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets)<br>Local Laws | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc)<br>Survey<br>Online interactive platform (like OurSay)<br>Pop-up stalls<br>Workshops or Meetings<br>Community Panel<br>Informal Conversations | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)<br>Social Media<br>Council's website       | 2  | More in smaller towns  | I think it is wrong for them to make decisions regarding items that impact certain towns without trying to find a solution with that town. E.g No camping at Franklin River reserve will severely impact businesses in Toora  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services   | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc)<br>Survey<br>Pop-up stalls  | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)<br>Social Media<br>Radio                   | 2  | Act in the best interest of community & listen.  | Disappointed in lack of response to footpath enquiry & a hole I reported that I fell down into a few years back. Act on enquiries would be a great start.   |

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?  | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?  | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities?  | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part?   | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?   |
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| Yes  | Local Laws   | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc)Survey   | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)   | 4  |  |  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ servicesStrategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets)Council PoliciesLocal Laws | SurveyOnline interactive platform (like OurSay)Informal ConversationsWorkshops or MeetingsPop-up stallsCommunity Panel | LetterTelevisionRadioCouncil News (advertisement in local papers)Council's websiteSocial MediaIn The Know (Council's e-newsletter) | 1  | This council is entirely alienated from its residents. Any kind of engagement would be appreciated. One of the previous questions was - how I would prefer future engagement. ANY engagement would be welcome, especially personal ones. How about market stalls and you come and talk to us directly? I have checked with about 20 friends from Foster, to Mirboo, Leongatha and Korumburra. NONE of them knew about this survey - all are very informed and active in the community. How can a survey be representative if people don't know that it is happening? | Ask the people you decide about. Before closing campsites, talk to the locals. There might be other solutions. TALK TO US! There are Facebook pages for every single township. Have a look, mingle, be one of us. Come to where we are, markets, clubs etc. Come out of your ivory tower and meet your residents. A great start would be to answer the phone nicely. Have you called yourselves and actually checked? Then call Basscoast Shire Council - a difference like night and day! We have a local radio station - staff from bass coast Shire Council frequently talk about their activities there. Never any of our shire. |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/  | Community Panel  | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)   | 3  | Ask what the community would like  | Meet with community members more frequent  |

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?  | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?   | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities?                                | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part? | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?                           |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|--|
|  | services   |   |  |  |  |  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services<br>Council Policies<br>Local Laws   | Community Panel<br>Pop-up stalls<br>Survey  | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)<br>Council News (advertisement in local papers)                           | 3  |  | Happy with interaction with Council staff. Always informative and response to requests efficiently.                          |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services<br>Local Laws<br>Council Policies<br>Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc)<br>Survey<br>Online interactive platform (like OurSay)<br>Informal Conversations<br>Workshops or Meetings<br>Community Panel | Social Media<br>Council's website<br>Letter  | 3  |  |  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services<br>Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets)                                   | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc)<br>Survey<br>Online interactive platform (like OurSay)   | Social Media<br>Radio<br>Television  | 3  |  |  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services<br>Local Laws<br>Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets)                     | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc)<br>Online interactive platform (like OurSay)   | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)<br>Letter   | 2  |  | Keep us up to date with progress reports on projects and plans.  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services<br>Strategic Plans (ie Council  | Informal Conversations<br>Workshops or Meetings<br>Community Panel  | Social Media<br>Council's website<br>Council News (advertisement in local papers)<br>Radio<br>Letter<br>In The | 2  | social, exciting, far reaching, effective  | I feel that if you want to contribute you need to look, more emphasis needs to be put into placing at the feet of the masses |

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?  | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?  | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities?  | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part? | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?   |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Yes  | Plan, Budgets)Council Policies<br><br>Decisions about infrastructure/ servicesStrategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets)Council PoliciesLocal Laws | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc)SurveyOnline interactive platform (like OurSay)Informal ConversationsWorkshops or MeetingsPop-up stallsCommunity Panel | Know (Council's e-newsletter)<br><br>In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)Social MediaCouncil's websiteCouncil News (advertisement in local papers)Letter | 1  | Use higher IPA2 spectrum engage, collaborate and empower not just therapy of informing consulting                    | to get people to invest time and energy to make a difference<br><br>The halving of time for consultations is indicative of a shabby approach. Organisations have a 4 weekly meeting cycle and the old council allowed four weeks not just 2 weeks. This is indicative of the Council under the administrators respect or lack of it for the community. Councils performance is extremely poor and well below par for similar councils. Councils performance on the customer survey question "Community satisfaction with community consultation and engagement" in 2019 was 40% or some 29% below the state average. An extremely poor and disturbing result that council has failed over the years to own up to and address. Councils performance on the survey question "Community satisfaction with council decisions" was 35% or 33% below the state average. Councils performance on survey question "Council decisions made at |

|  |   |   |   |  |  |  |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in? | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with? | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities? | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part? | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide? |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|

meetings closed to the public made” was 17.4% of all decisions. This compares with 9.5% for the state or some 84% higher. Baw Baw Shire was 1.7% Bass Coast Shire 7.1% and East Gippsland 2.8% Councils performance has declined dramatically over the past ten years. It scores on the Customer research survey was in 2010 57% satisfaction on “Community satisfaction with community consultation and engagement”. This decline dramatically to 41% in 2020 a drop of some 28%. Council should develop a report and strategy on how to shift council’s engagement with the community progressively from level 1-2(inform, consult) to 3-5 (Involve, collaborate and empower)on the IPA2 spectrum that can help restore trust, reputation, and satisfaction. To address the precarious level of support for council, we need council to start shifting from a conservative and reactive position to an innovative, creative, and leading one. One that can start to restore



| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in? | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with? | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities? | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part? | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide? |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|
|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|

|     |   |   |   |   |  |   |
|-----|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| Yes | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Council Policies            | Online interactive platform (like OurSay) Survey                              | Council's website Council News (advertisement in local papers)                    | 2 | Allow more time.                                   | confidence in council and its reputation by embracing and trusting the community and its common wisdom. We need a shift from low levels of informing and consulting to higher levels of engagement, collaboration, and empowerment. To focus on developing a genuine system of participatory governance that restores faith and trust in council. Thanks to South Gippsland Voices for publishing this. |
| Yes | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Local Laws   | Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) Survey | Council News (advertisement in local papers) Radio                                | 4 | Be made aware sooner of the pending works/ changes | No  |
| Yes | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Council Policies Local Laws | Workshops or Meetings Survey  | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter) Council News (advertisement in local papers) | 3 | Hold meetings on towns                             |   |

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?                                      | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?   | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities?                     | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part?   | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?  |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Council Policies | Survey Online interactive platform (like OurSay) Workshops or Meetings Informal Conversations | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter) Council News (advertisement in local papers) Council's website | 2  | The above questions and your policy and strategy all suggest that engagement is based always on ideas, plans etc emanating from Council. What about the ideas that are presented to Council by community members, eg the recent climate change presentation which appears to have been fobbed off. | As suggested with my previous answer, community engagement needs to be open-ended as well as specifically targeted at a risk or problem identified by Council.  |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Council Policies  | Survey Online interactive platform (like OurSay) Community Panel                              | Letter In The Know (Council's e-newsletter) Council News (advertisement in local papers)            | 3  | Make the communications / activities relevant and understandable   | In my view, the average person doesn't understand the context of where the policy / plan / service fits in - is there an explainer on the website for SGSC and its various functions, services and how it operates in line with which relevant plans? |
| Yes  | other: environment   | Survey  | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)  | 1  | Offer more opportunities for input; then provide feedback on how the input was used  | I would like to comment on decisions that affect the environment; and to be honest I would like to see the council develop an environmental strategy and do more in that space  |
| Yes  | Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan,  | Online interactive platform (like OurSay)   | Social Media  | 1  | Utilise social media   | make community engagement more visible so that we can   |


| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?   | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?  | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities? | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part?   | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?  |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|---|
|  | Budgets)  |  |   |  |  | interact more easily about our regions business   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Council Policies            | SurveyOnline interactive platform (like OurSay) Workshops or Meetings Pop-up stalls Community Panel                        | LetterIn The Know (Council's e-newsletter)                                      | 3  | interactive and professionally facilitated consultation sessions together with anonymous online or hard copy 'listening post' surveys for those less likely to speak out in a public forum |   |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Council Policies Local Laws | SurveyOnline interactive platform (like OurSay) Informal Conversations Workshops or Meetings Pop-up stalls Community Panel | Social Media Council's website In The Know (Council's e-newsletter)             | 1  | Hold information sessions and meetings to discuss issues before they are presented as agenda items to be voted on.   | Council's current approach is to come up with an idea that will save money and reduce risk to Council. If you are lucky hold a community engagement process but ignore feedback from the community anyway then go ahead and do what the Council wanted to do in the first place. (eg Planning amendment C90, closure of Franklin River Reserve to camping). If something is in the too hard basket for staff to prepare a document that the Community will support then kick the can down the road and move on to something else. (eg Port Welshpool Marina project, RV and Camping paper PR2340 20/12/18, Coastal Strategy |

| 1.- Will you engage with Council on decisions that are important to you? | 2.- What decisions are most important for you to have a say in?   | 3.- How do you like to be engaged with?   | 4.- How would you like to hear about future community engagement opportunities?  | 6.- How would you rate Council's current engagement efforts? | 7.- Are there any ways we can make community engagement activities more inviting for community members to take part?   | 8.- Do you have any additional feedback about community engagement that you would like to provide?   |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Council Policies other: Creative community projects and opportunities | Pop-up stalls Inform only (notification via e-newsletters, social media, papers etc) Informal Conversations | Social Media   | 3  | Be more inclusive, transparent and genuine. Tone and language could be more casual/ relatable/ informal to make news and updates more appealing and interesting. | project, By-laws review)<br>Make a genuine attempt to engage with a balanced/ true cross section of the demographic, as opposed to just putting info out there and hoping it will be responded to (which more often than not will be Middle Aged, white, middle class, and not entirely representative of the actual demographic). |
| Yes  | Decisions about infrastructure/ services Strategic Plans (ie Council Plan, Budgets) Council Policies Local Laws   | Informal Conversations  | In The Know (Council's e-newsletter) Social Media Council's website Council News (advertisement in local papers) Radio | 1  | Be more accountable for your actions.  | What is happening with Tourism?  |

# Written Submission



## SUBMISSION TO SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL RE: REVIEW OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

| INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION  |  |  |   |   |  |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|
|  | INFORM   | CONSULT  | INVOLVE   | COLLABORATE   | EMPOWER  |
| PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL  | To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. | To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.  | To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.  | To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.                     | To place final decision making in the hands of the public. |
| PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC  | We will keep you informed.   | We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. | We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible. | We will implement what you decide.                         |

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### IPA2 Spectrum

We thank Council for the opportunity to make a submission to Council's Community Engagement Policy Review.

### Purpose of our Submission

We are a group of people involved in the publication of *Just Community* journal in South Gippsland. The journal is distributed fortnightly to around 1000 people in South Gippsland. As a group, we are committed to forging a strong collaborative relationship between council and community through participatory forms of democracy. Participation is the real lifeblood of local democracy and has the

capacity to restore trust and confidence in council and revitalise local government processes in South Gippsland, once we are again allowed to vote for a shire council.

The community generally is far less trusting of governments and institutions. Democratic satisfaction, trust in politicians and key institutions, and confidence in the capacity of governments at all levels to address public policy concerns are all in decline.<sup>1</sup>

South Gippsland has historically performed significantly below par on 'consultation and engagement' in its customer market research. Council is currently 22 percent below the state average. Its performance has declined from 57 percent satisfaction with consultation and engagement in 2010 to 41 percent in 2020, a dramatic decline of 28 percent. Council's 'Reputation' and 'leadership' are both at a low of 32 percent satisfaction. 'Faith and trust' are at only 26 percent. Strategies to turn around reputation require not more of the same approach, but something significantly different.

We believe there is an appetite for more direct engagement and empowerment of relations between Council and the community. Many state governments and councils are experimenting with more participatory forms of engagement and partnership. These forms of citizen involvement in the processes of local government have the capacity to transform Council's poor reputation and its apparent failures on consultation and engagement.

Council's Community Engagement Policy is incomplete in not addressing these forms of participatory local democracy and giving them a high priority. This submission is made in good faith, as we all want Council and the community working together for the betterment of the community. Restoring confidence in Council requires a new compact driven by open and democratic processes of governance. More of the same just will not cut mustard!

## **Introduction**

Council performs more than satisfactorily in the provision of its service and infrastructure according to Council's customer research. This is a credit to the professionalism and dedication of its staff. However, its overall performance on the key indicators is extremely poor. It has failed in its own vision in Part 2 to "*Have made significant progress to entrench a sense of shared community direction across the Shire*". It suffers from an extremely poor reputation and seriously underperforms on key performance indicators in comparison to the State and similar large rural councils. It has failed to recover to the level of performance of Council in 2018 and remains on average 14 percent below 2018 across the key indicators. The one exception is the particularly good performance of its customer service, which again is a function of the calibre of its staff.



| <b>Customer Satisfaction Survey results 2010-2019</b> |      |       |              |                          |            |
|---|------|-------|--------------|--------------------------|------------|
| South Gippsland                                       | 2019 | State | % dif. State | Large Rural Shires (LRS) | % dif. LRS |
| Overall Performance                                   | 33   | 60    | -45          | 54                       | -38.9      |
| Consultation & engagement                             | 40   | 56    | -28.6        | 51                       | -21.6      |
| Advocacy  | 39   | 68    | -42.6        | 51                       | -23.5      |
| Customer Service                                      | 66   | 71    | -7.0         | 66                       | 0.0        |
| Reputation  | 27   | Na.   | Na.          | Na.                      | Na.        |
| Overall Direction                                     | Na.  | 51    | Na.          | Na.                      | Na.        |
| AVG of factor/year                                    | 41.0 | 63.8  | -35.7        | 55.5                     | -26.1      |

South Gippsland Shire Council performs poorly (-35.7%) against both the State average for the above mentioned six factors and against its peer group of large rural shires (-26.1%)

South Gippsland Shire Council has been failing badly over the past ten years. Its average of the five key factors has declined by 34 percent over a decade. Overall performance has dropped by 30 percent; consultation and engagement by 28 percent; advocacy by 31.6 percent. It has been, in retrospect, a wasted decade of failing to adapt to changes in the community and expectations. (See Appendix One)

| 2020 State-wide survey                   | Importance |             | Performance |             | Difference |             |
|--|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
|  | State      | Large Rural | State       | Large Rural | State      | Large Rural |
| Decisions made in interests of community | 80.0       | 79.0        | 53.0        | 52.0        | -27.0      | -27.0       |
| Consultation & engagement                | 74.0       | 76.0        | 55.0        | 54.0        | -19.0      | -22.0       |
| Environmental Sustainability             | 74.0       | 73.0        | 60.0        | 60.0        | -14.0      | -13.0       |
| Lobbying                                 | 68.0       | 69.0        | 53.0        | 53.0        | -15.0      | -16.0       |
| Average                                  | 74.0       | 74.3        | 55.3        | 54.8        | -18.8      | -19.5       |

The general community places high importance on, “decisions being made in interests of community”, on “consultation and engagement”, on “environmental sustainability” and “lobbying”. There is a significant gap between the level of importance and the actual performance at the State and for large rural shires.

## **The Proposed Policy and Strategy**

The proposed policy and strategy are functional at best, but still in practice focused on the lower levels of the IPA2 spectrum 1-3 (inform, consult, and involve), and not on the higher levels of ‘collaborate’ and ‘empower’. The proposed strategy and policy lack coherence and connection to a real strategy to address the now 10 years of subpar performance (see Attachment One) of Council and the wounds left by the

sacking of Council. Minor changes and window dressing will not address the deep and ongoing lack of trust in Council and its poor reputation. The policy and strategy are pedestrian and unlikely to generate a significant shift in respect and reputation for Council.

Restoring trust and faith in Council in an era of growing cynicism is extremely difficult. It requires a deep and honest introspection and a philosophical commitment to transform the relationship between Council, citizens, and communities. Genuine collaborations and partnerships on key problems and issues and key projects and functions, has the potential to transform these relationships and hence people's perceptions of Council. Restoring trust and faith requires deep, not incremental change that can inspire and lead to a new compact between Council, citizens, and the community. The situation is serious and should not be underestimated. According to Council's own Customer Research Report, Council only scores a 32 percent positive to its reputation. Specifically, this appallingly low score relates to a perceived failure in:

- "Leadership" with only 32% positive and 59% negative, or a net -27%
- "Trust and Faith" with only 30% positive and 58% negative for a net -28%
- "Financial management" with 30% positive and 59% negative for a net -29%

These scores remain a 'poison' for Council-community relations.

While there has been some improvement with the collapse of support for Council in the annus horribulus in 2019, council has not restored its support levels to those the old Council achieved in 2018.

## **Where to from here?**

Addressing the twin challenges of climate emergency and collapse in faith in representative democracy as it applies to Council should be driving Council's policy and strategy. We have suffered political paralysis for far too long, with a small minority of denialists and institutions delaying action on climate change, and apathy about Council performance. These are fundamentally leadership tasks or challenges for Council.

The recent petition with over 2000 signatures presented to Council by Prom Area Climate Action (PACA) was double the size of a similar one for Bass Coast, from which its council declared a climate emergency. Notwithstanding their commitment to engagement and partnership, the PACA petition was brushed aside by the administrators and left for the new council a year away, while all credible evidence and science suggest immediate action is required. The administrators are paid by the

community and are as responsible as any elected council to fulfil their functions under the Local Government Act to provide leadership and act on behalf of citizens. Their unwillingness to do this marked a failure of democracy and community engagement and empowerment – just what erodes community faith in government processes.

The State government’s climate legislation requires both the State and councils to act, the state of our local democracy requires us to act.

After what could fairly be described as 10 mediocre years with growing cynicism, council has the opportunity to shift gears and become a real leader, more open, more transparent, more accountable and trusting of communities and citizens through seeking higher levels of participation and engagement.

The words are there in Council’s plan and Annual Report, but the strategies to address them are not there. There is nothing wrong with the plan and strategy as far as it goes, but it lacks imagination and represents only incremental change. Incremental change, when radical change is required to address the appalling figures for reputation, trust, and leadership. This does not really address the deep-seated problems and chart a course to a modern system of governance operations between 3-5 on the IPA2 spectrum.

Countries, State Governments and indeed many councils have committed to this in their policy and strategy. We could choose to follow a well-worn path taken by many leading councils. In practice the gamut of such approaches lead to both better decisions and a higher level of trust and faith in governance.

Council has tended to operate in levels 1-2 occasionally level 3 and once on level four (Rating Review Strategy of councillors and community representatives was empowered to report to council on proposal).

**Councils Consultation and Engagement Practices under IPA2 Spectrum**

| <b>Inform</b>   | <b>Consult</b>  | <b>Engage</b>   | <b>Collaborate</b>                                 | <b>Empower</b>                             |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| General response of council<br>In the Know is particularly good | Halls Committee<br>Rec Reserve committees<br>Various policies and reviews | Community cluster meetings<br>Youth Council<br>Arts Network<br>Toora Youth Network<br>Budget and Plan | Rating Review committee<br>Arts Strategy Committee | Section 92 Committees many being disbanded |

There has been a serious deficiency in Council’s willingness to genuinely partner with citizens and the community. For the past decade, the business of Council has been

driven primarily by councillors and staff. Yes, the community has in many things been informed and consulted, but not genuinely engaged and empowered in a governing partnership. Leaving aside the decision for the streaming of Council meetings by the old council, the past three years have seen a significant diminution of openness and transparency and an unwillingness to be more open and collaborative, contrary to current trends and needs.

## **Challenge for Council today**

More than mediocre or just functional policy is required. To address the precarious level of support for Council, there needs to be a shift from a conservative and reactive position to an innovative, creative, and leading one. One that can start to restore confidence in Council and its reputation by embracing and trusting the community and its common wisdom. Something in which in part it subscribes to, but in practice has avoided or denied.

As community and Council together, we face profoundly serious challenges which require genuine leadership and which we must together tackle head on:

- Restore confidence in local democracy by engaging people in real partnerships and collaborations (people's assemblies, empower specific purpose assemblies, sortition, joint committees of councillors and citizens).
- Addressing the transition to a low-carbon economy and society and the climate emergency by building resilience in its communities through a clear plan and community partnership-driven approach.
- Forming strong collaborative partnerships that engage community members and tap into their immense common wisdom.

Action on these fronts will transform Council's relationship with the community. It would show real leadership rather than a corporatist bureaucratic approach. As such it has the potential to be a game changer for Council's reputation and support.

## **Proposed guiding purpose and principle**

It is proposed that the following purpose and principles be followed and built into Council's daily practice, plans and strategic direction:

*Updating and enhancing Council's engagement policy and strategy to be a foundational component for forging new relationship with the community; for strengthening community resilience and shifting to a modern collaborative partnership. A shift from low levels of informing and consulting to higher levels of engagement, collaboration, and partnerships. To focus on developing a genuine system of participatory governance that restores faith and trust in Council and addresses action on the climate emergency and a just transition*

*for South Gippsland.*

## **Transforming to a genuine participatory local democracy**

The old model of representative democracy was based on periodic elections and decisions being made by elected representatives. We have entered the digital era, with at times dramatic change, the emergence of the knowledge economy with higher expectations of a far better educated community, growing social media, rising inequality and precarious work. In this context the level of trust in governments and key institutions has collapsed. This has led to, at times, growing cynicism with governments. People with degrees and higher certificates have grown by 33 percent since 2006 from 25.6 percent to 34.1 percent. The community today is as well, if not better informed, educated and experienced than Council.

The IPA2 Spectrum outlines the emerging dichotomy and shift from a representative model of government to a more participatory form of governance, underpinned by a dramatic shift from simply informing and consulting people to active collaboration and participation. Council's plan canvases the concept, but it is not yet reflected in the policy and strategy.

Councils own Plan and Annual Report states that council should:

*"Investigate opportunities to consider a model for community self-determination to facilitate working in partnership with the community."*

Rather than 'something different' or even radical change, we are left with 'more of the same' as a recipe for continued underperformance.

## **Recommendations for a 21st century Engagement Policy**

It is proposed that Council:

1. Develop a report and strategy on how to shift Council's engagement with the community progressively from level 1-3 to 4-5 that can help restore trust, reputation and satisfaction.
2. Commit to develop the new future vision for the shire using People's Assemblies, reflecting the value given by Council to its citizens and communities.
3. Declare a climate emergency to address a climate emergency plan and strategy, like our neighbour Bass Coast Shire and numerous councils across Australia.
4. Give serious consideration to establishing a collaborative tourism and economic development structure IPA2 level 5.
5. To structurally enhance accountability and engagement, report annually on where discretionary capital works funds have been spent over the past ten

years and where they are planned to be expended over the 10-year long-term financial plan, including an analysis of equity and fairness.

6. Restore Question Time as the ability for any citizen to walk in and ask questions so long as they comply with Council’s meeting by-law procedures and with respect.
7. Restore Council’s 10-year capital works program in the budget paper.

## Fact and fiction

Councils Annual Report states:

*“Significant efforts have been made over the past twelve months to re-gain the community’s faith, trust and respect in the Council. The positive trends in the 2020 Customer Satisfaction Survey, shared later in the report, are an indication Council’s new direction and leadership are building a strong foundation for the future.*

*It is pleasing to note that the Community Satisfaction Survey results show that we are starting to see a recovery in how Council is perceived by its community. We knew it would not be an easy task to rebuild trust in local government given the circumstances prior to our arrival, but it is heartening to know that we are headed in the right direction.”*

## Council vs. Administrators

| South Gippsland<br>(Compare Council 2018 vs Administrators) |              |              |                      |              |
|---|--------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Factor  | Council 2018 | Council 2020 | Numerical Difference | % Difference |
| Overall Performance   | 46           | 42           | -4                   | -8.7         |
| Consultation & engagement                                   | 48           | 41           | -7                   | -14.6        |
| Customer Service  | 73           | 66           | -7                   | -9.6         |
| Reputation  | 42           | 32           | -10                  | -23.8        |
| Average   | 52.3         | 45.3         | -7.0                 | -14.2        |

Council was sacked in 2019 and administrators appointed by the former Local Government Minister, Adam Somyurek. 2019 was a disaster year for Council, with allegations of bullying and a series of resignations and reviews by the State government. To date, despite his promise to do so, Mr Somyurek has failed to publish councillors’ submission in response to the reviews of Council. The subsequent appointment of administrators has failed yet to revive the level of performance the old Council achieved in 2018.



Overall average performance remains some 14 percent below the council in 2018. Its reputation has collapsed by 23.8 percent.

## **A Fallen Reputation**

While council has marginally improved its reputation from 2019-2020, Council's reputation is a catastrophic 32 percent satisfied with 59 percent dissatisfied.

"Reputation is defined as how competent the Council is perceived to be and the extent that residents have developed an affinity with Council for the major components of its reputation"

- Reputation 32%
- Services and facilities 55%
- Leadership 32%
- Trust and Faith 26%
- Financial management 26%

The key improvement opportunities identified in Council's research for South Gippsland Shire Council are regarding financial management, leadership, faith and trust, regulatory services and roads, footpaths, and trails.

Despite representations, and while having sufficient reserves for a zero rate rise, Council increased rates by 2 per cent.

To date in terms of leadership, nothing substantial has been achieved over and above what the previous Council put in place. Disappointingly council has cancelled the Agnes Falls cantilever platform, closed the Franklin River reserve, refused community representation regarding the Expo and Equestrian Centre at Stony Creek and failed to lobby for the community hub in Korumburra for the railway yards site, which would have open up the whole area.

Their work on the pandemic has been commendable.

It has however failed to institute a strategy to restore faith and confidence in Council through genuine partnership and engagement with the community.

## **Community Engagement**

*"Council is committed to effective and sustainable forms of democratic and corporate governance as the key to ensuring the Council and its administration address community priorities. The community has many opportunities to provide input into Council decision-making processes including community consultation and engagement activities, public presentations to Council, community workshops/forums and the ability to make formal submissions to major strategic directions" Annual Report*

Council has in 2020 only 41 percent of people satisfied with “community consultation and engagement” vs 40 percent for 2019. The following table identifies serious deficiencies of Council in comparison to its Gippsland counterparts and to State and large rural shire averages. South Gippsland is 28.7 percent below the state average and 22.5 percent below similar council’s community satisfaction with community consultation and engagement. Likewise, it is below the State average by 32.7 percent and 22.5 percent below similar councils for community satisfaction with Council decisions. Council is massively above the state average for “Council decisions made at meetings closed to the public” by 84.2 percent and it is above average for large rural shires by 212 percent.

| <b>Community Engagement Elements</b>                              | <b>BASS COAST</b> | <b>BAW BAW</b> | <b>EAST GIPPSLAND</b> | <b>SOUTH GIPPSLAND</b> | All councils | S. Gipp. % +or- State | Similar councils | S.Gipp% +or- Similar |
|---|-------------------|----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Community satisfaction with community consultation and engagement | 51                | 49             | 48                    | 40                     | 56.9         | -28.7                 | 53               | -22.5                |
| Community satisfaction with council decisions                     | 51                | 43             | 46                    | 35                     | 52.8         | -32.7                 | 50.7             | -18.3                |
| Council decisions made at meetings closed to the public           | 7.1               | 1.7            | 2.8                   | 17.4                   | 9.5          | 84.2                  | 8                | 217.0                |

Source in Your Know Council: Vic Gov 2019

Symptomatic of these results have been the massive undemocratic restrictions on question time and the failure to publish the year Financial Plan that allows an analysis of equity and fairness of distribution of resources and facilities.

## Conclusion

Council has the opportunity to reinvigorate its relationship with the South Gippsland community and build a trusting and productive partnership to address issues that are serious and urgent. It can do this through a shift from low levels of informing and consulting to higher levels of engagement, collaboration, and partnerships. A genuine system of participatory governance that restores faith and trust in Council and addresses action on the climate emergency and a just transition for South Gippsland will set up long-term productive partnerships between future councils and the community.

## Appendix One

| <b>Customer Satisfaction Survey results 2010-2019</b> |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |                  |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------------------|
| South Gippsland                                       | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | % Change 2010-20 |
| Overall Performance                                   | 60   | 60   | 59   | 48   | 49   | 49   | 47   | 46   | 46   | 33   | 42   | -30.0            |
| Consult & engagement                                  | 57   | 57   | 56   | 54   | 55   | 49   | 47   | 47   | 48   | 40   | 41   | -28.1            |
| Advocacy  | 57   | 58   | 58   | 51   | 49   | 45   | 47   | 46   | 45   | 39   | Na.  | -31.6            |
| Customer Service                                      | 71   | 72   | 72   | 68   | 63   | 65   | 65   | 61   | 73   | 66   | 66   | -7.0             |
| Reputation  | Na.  | Na.  | Na.  | Na.  | Na.  | Na.  | Na.  | Na.  | 42   | 27   | 32   | -76.2            |
| Overall Direction                                     |      |      | 43   | 42   | 42   | 44   | 43   | 51   | Na.  | Na.  | 40   | 7.0              |
| AVG of factor/year                                    | 61.3 | 61.8 | 2.1  | 52.6 | 51.6 | 50.4 | 49.8 | 50.0 | 50.8 | 41.0 | 40.0 | -34.7            |

South Gippsland Shire has been failing badly over the past ten years. Its average of the 5 key factors has declined by 34% over a decade; Overall performance has dropped by 30%; consultation and engagement by 28%; advocacy by 31.6%

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<sup>1</sup> A survey conducted by the Museum of Australian Democracy and the Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis at the University of Canberra and released at the end of 2018 showed only 41 per cent of Australians were satisfied with the way our democracy works. [https://moad-web.s3.amazonaws.com/heracles-production/Oa2/ccf/1c8/Oa2ccf1c8b9bc2b588d880a788a0c4318be639f516ba279101ebe7025897/408\\_Democracy100-report-IGPA%20\(002\).pdf](https://moad-web.s3.amazonaws.com/heracles-production/Oa2/ccf/1c8/Oa2ccf1c8b9bc2b588d880a788a0c4318be639f516ba279101ebe7025897/408_Democracy100-report-IGPA%20(002).pdf)