



Marking the collaboration to offer half price entry to this year's East Gippsland Field Days are, from left, Field Days Chair Ron Alexander, East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority CEO Graeme Dear, East Gippsland Shire Council Mayor Cr Mendy Urie, East Gippsland Water Acting Managing Director Carol Ross, and Southern Rural Water Managing Director Cameron FitzGerald.

See you at the Field Days

With half-price entry, we look forward to seeing everyone at the annual East Gippsland Field Days, to be held at the Bairnsdale Aerodrome this Friday and Saturday, 23 and 24 April.

There will be something for the entire family, and our site will include activities for children, the mobile library, opportunities to chat with councillors and staff, free apples, raffle draws and flu vaccinations.

Mayor, Cr Mendy Urie said the Field Days was a great community event and one not to be missed.

"We have partnered with local water authorities and the Field Days committee to reduce the usual adult entry price to \$10 as a stimulator for the rural sector and encouragement for the broader community to enjoy a day out after more than 12 months of limited opportunity for large social gatherings. Entry for children 16 and under will be free.

The ticket price reduction will be subsidised by Council (\$30,000, from Regional Development Victoria Drought Communities Priorities Funding), and \$10,000 from each of

East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (EGCMA), East Gippsland Water (EGW) and Southern Rural Water (SRW).

"It is a great example of local agencies working together to support one of the region's most iconic and important events, but to also make the Field Days an event to consider for everyone," Cr Urie said.

"I congratulate the Lindenow Lions Club and Field Days Committee, and the EGCMA, EGW and SRW for the collaboration on this great initiative. There's a real community spirit at work here."

Chair of the East Gippsland Field Days, Ron Alexander said the Field Days are an important community milestone each year.

"The Field Days have good social value. They mark the end of a season and people come along and catch up with each other every year. It's good to have a major event in the area - to be able to offer half price tickets, and if weather is like today, it'll be great. After we had to cancel last year's event, the support from everyone has been absolutely fantastic," Mr Alexander said.

[Read more>>>](#)

Acknowledgement of country

East Gippsland Shire Council acknowledges the Gunaikurnai, Monero and the Bidjawan people as the Traditional Custodians of the land that encompasses East Gippsland Shire. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in East Gippsland, their Elders past and present.



Officially open! Mayor Cr Mendy Urie cuts the ribbon with CEO Anthony Basford and members of the community.

Skatepark the place to be on opening day

The official opening event of the Bairnsdale Skate Park was the place to be on Saturday 10 April.

The day was jam-packed full of events and activities for all ages with music, games, food vans and the Australian Skate Park League series holding a competition. Thank you to those who supported the event and also to the community who attended on the day.

Watch the official opening >>>



The upgraded skate park caters for all ages and skill levels.



Smiles for miles from these two who were enjoying the activities of the day.



Thumbs up for a great skate event.



Getting some airtime on the scooter!

23-24 April: East Gippsland Field Days

25 April: Anzac Day

30 April: Wairewa Bridge opening and 'end of bushfire bridge rebuild'

3-4 May: Benambra, Omeo and Swifts Creek community visit

4 May: Council Meeting, Swifts Creek



New citizens celebrate in April


We were very pleased to host our recent citizenship ceremony in Lakes Entrance on Tuesday 13 April.

It was fantastic to see a large, COVIDSafe crowd in attendance to help celebrate this important day in their friend or family member's life. The ceremony was attended by approximately 70 people - a marked difference from last year's ceremonies which were limited to six conferees and one guest each.

Mayor Cr Mendy Urie officiated the ceremony, taking the 14 conferees through the final step to Australian citizenship. Those taking part in the ceremony hailed from Hong Kong, China, India, United Kingdom, Philippines and Malaysia.

Citizenship ceremonies involve candidates pledging support for Australia by reciting an Affirmation or Oath and receiving their citizenship certificate.

All new citizens receive a native plant as a gift from council to mark the special occasion.

You can watch the ceremony on [YouTube](#) 



Karishma Rao celebrates with her family.



Cr Arthur Allen and Mayor Cr Mendy Urie congratulate Phillip Jones.



New Australian citizens: Windy Wight, Phoebe Padillo and Pearl Miguel.



Family and friends helped make the day special for our new citizens.



Cr Arthur Allen and Mayor Cr Mendy Urie present Megaa Velayuthan Batros with her citizenship certificate and native Australian plant.



Teach a skill for life

Do you have the passion to make a difference by teaching vital life skills?

Then maybe being a swim teacher is for you! With flexible hour and days of work, swim teachers are currently in high demand. AUSTSWIM is offering a 2-day course at the Lake Entrance Aquadome on Saturday 1 May and Sunday 2 May. The course gives you the opportunity to develop essential knowledge, skill and understanding to teach vital swimming and water safety education.

For more information or to register for the course, visit the **AUSTSWIM** website.

Are you a grants guru?

Grant funding can make a community project, business idea or event great...and finding the next grant opportunity just got easier!

We have partnered with Grant Guru to provide the 'East Gippsland Grant Finder'. The new website is available to all local businesses, community groups, not-for-profits and individuals free of charge to help easily find and track grants and turn your great ideas into reality.

The site provides a comprehensive list of grant and funding opportunities available from many sources, including local, state and federal government, corporate and philanthropic. The site provides tips and advice on grant writing and gives the ability to receive email alerts for new grants and save favourites.

Mayor Cr Mendy Urie said the new 'East Gippsland Grant Finder' is a huge step in supporting the community, assisting them to find grants relevant to their interests.

"With drought, bushfire and the pandemic, there has been an overwhelming amount of new grants available to our community, not to mention the existing grants that were also available. The new grant finder supports and simplifies the process of identifying grants relevant to your interests. It is a free service provided by Council to support the many groups, individuals, businesses and not-for-profits in East Gippsland," Cr Urie said.

"I encourage everyone to visit the **East Gippsland Grant Guru portal** – or the **East Gippsland Shire Council website** and find out for yourself."

Get involved in the emergency plan

We are calling for community representatives to nominate as a sitting member of the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee.

The Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee oversees the development, update and test of the Municipal Emergency Management Plan. The Municipal Emergency Management Plan seeks to prepare for and plan how we will respond to emergencies throughout the shire.

Nominations are invited from interested community members for positions on the committee. Particularly in the categories of:

- community representative
- recovery representative
- other representative (such as an industry, business or additional agency)

You will have an understanding of the Victorian Emergency Management arrangements, strong community links and be prepared to attend a minimum of four meetings per year.

Membership of the committee is by appointment by the Council and subject to the Terms of Reference for the committee.

If you think you fit the description or would like more information, we would love to hear from you. Nomination forms can be found via our **website**.

Did you pay your pet registration?

Pet registration renewals were due by Saturday 10 April.

If you missed the deadline, please pay as soon as possible.

Dogs and cats aged three months and over need to be registered with council.





Read all about it, our libraries are on the road

If you're new to East Gippsland you may not know we run a mobile library service for our smaller communities.

Our mobile library visits Bemm River, Benambra, Bendoc, Bonang, Bruthen, Buchan, Cann River, Delegate River, Ensay, Goongerah, Lindenow, Lindenow South, Marlo, Metung, Newmerella, Nowa Nowa, Nungurner, Omeo, Swan Reach, Swifts Creek, Tambo Upper, and W Tree.

And that's on top of our six library branches spread throughout the shire. To join the library, you'll need some identification with your current address on it.

Our mobile library offers many of the same services as our branches: you can select items to borrow including fiction, large print fiction, non-fiction, biographies, DVDs, talking books, and children's books/DVDs.

You can also reserve items, and all items borrowed can be returned to any library branch or mobile service.

But you don't need to be near one of our libraries to access our services. Members can also use online resources at any time, including a range of eBooks, eMagazines and eAudiobooks.

Agribusiness opportunity for Orbost and Omeo farmers

Are you a small farm owner or own micro-agribusinesses in the Orbost and Omeo districts, including Buchan? There are still spaces available for farmers to participate in the Agribusiness Program.

The program is designed to assist agribusinesses to undertake diversification or value adding projects on their properties to increase income security and resilience.

Participants will be involved in group workshops, individual business and adaptation sessions, and monthly mentoring sessions to support the implementation of ideas. There is no cost to participate in the program.

Funded by Regional Development Victoria and East Gippsland Shire Council and delivered by ION Group (Gippsland based).

To learn more or to register for the program, please contact Leigh Crocker on 0419 359 409 or email lcrocker@iongroup.com.au

Council meeting decisions – 13 April

- Council awarded a two-year contract extension to Almerly for the important task of cleaning our barbecues, public toilets and sewage disposal units. The contract also includes minor maintenance of these facilities.
- Council resolved to grant a planning permit for the redevelopment of the WORLD sporting grounds in Bairnsdale. The project involves removing and replacing infrastructure, including netball courts, hockey pitches and soccer pitches.
- Council resolved to grant a planning permit for a retirement village in Coast Avenue, Paynesville. The village includes 93 self-contained villas, boat and caravan storage, and a community centre.
- East Gippsland's tourism marketing brand will be retired. The 'East Gippsland – Naturally Magic' slogan and logo will be replaced with the Gippsland-wide branding developed by Destination Gippsland: GIPPS all kind of wonder LAND. The branding is designed so the tagline can be adjusted to each Gippsland region.
- The Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy for Councillors was adopted.
- The Environmental Sustainability Strategy Annual Report 2019-20 was endorsed; it details activities over the year and shows some great achievements.
- Council awarded a construction contract for the Omeo MTB Trails. See story on page 10.

Read minutes here>>
or watch on YouTube





Cr Sonia Buckley with Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack.

Regions rising

Cr Sonia Buckley attended the Regions Rising Summit in Canberra on the 17 and 18 March. Invited as an executive committee member of Rural Councils Victoria, Cr Buckley met with Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack and other keynote speakers.

"Regional Australia is undergoing a renaissance as an attractive and viable alternative to capital city living, with opportunities for affordable housing and a better work-life balance," Cr Buckley said.

"The Summit provided a clear picture that regional Australia will face challenges with social housing, planning and infrastructure, yet is well placed to handle the anticipated population growth to rural Victoria."

A \$5 million national campaign - Move to More - has been unveiled by Mr McCormack to encourage city dwellers to move to regional areas and letting them know that regions are ready for them. The campaign is an initiative by the Regional Australia Institute.

Hot topics at the Summit included economic development, regional employment and addressing the issues remote communities face to cater for the influx in population such as healthcare, telecommunications and education.

"Australia is on the cusp of a new era, one in which regional Australian towns grow and thrive like never before. It has never been a better time for regional communities to take stock, focus their efforts and create a viable, actionable plan to improve their town's livability," Cr Buckley said.

Calls for changes to state's building regulatory system

Victoria's peak advocacy body for local government, the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), has called for significant changes to the building regulatory system to improve community safety and address conflicts of interest.

The MAV made the announcement with the release of the Framework for Reform discussion paper by the Victorian Government's independent expert panel looking at Victoria's building regulatory system.

The panel is undertaking the most comprehensive review of the building system since the introduction of private building surveyors in the early 1990s.

The review recognises longstanding problems in Victoria's building system and provides a not-to-be-missed opportunity to make the changes needed to give Victorians the protection and confidence they deserve. MAV President, Cr David Clark said there is an inherent conflict of interest in the current private building surveyor model.

"We must have a building system that focuses on ensuring buildings are safe and compliant with building codes, rather than satisfying developers. Allowing developers to employ their own building surveyor, as they can in the current system, is incompatible with a rigorous system of regulation," Cr Clark said.

"We need to move to a system where building surveyors are no longer conflicted between their role as regulators and accommodating the developer that employs them. This will improve community safety, consumer protection, and the integrity of the construction industry. It will also provide a level playing field for the many building surveyors already doing the right thing.

"We have all seen the results of poor building regulation in Victoria, the cost and stress it creates for those left to mop up the mess is enormous.

"We shouldn't think the problems with Victoria's building regulatory system are contained to high-rise apartment buildings and flammable cladding. We've seen issues with every type of building – these are always costly for owners."



High Country visit

Councillors and senior staff are hitting the road to Benambra, Omeo and Swifts Creek in May to meet with community members and local businesses.

Mayor, Cr Mendy Urie and Councillors invite residents of Omeo and district to meet informally with Councillors and senior officers at community meet and greets to discuss projects and issues of interest to the community.

Benambra

Monday 3 May 2.15 pm – 3.15 pm

Benambra Recreation Reserve

Light refreshments provided. RSVP: To register your attendance please book through the following link:

<https://www.trybooking.com/BQNFG>

Omeo

Tuesday 4 May 7.30 am to 9.00 am

Omeo Soldiers Memorial Hall, 179 Day Avenue, Omeo.

Light refreshments provided. RSVP: To register your attendance please book through the following link:

<https://www.trybooking.com/BQDVH>

Swifts Creek

Tuesday 4 May 12.30pm to 1.15 pm

Swifts Creek Hall, 6869 Great Alpine Road, Swifts Creek.

Light refreshments provided. RSVP: To register your attendance please book through the following link:

<https://www.trybooking.com/BQGGB>

Council Meeting

The Council Meeting on Tuesday 4 May 2021 will be held at 1.30 pm at the Swifts Creek Hall, 6869 Great Alpine Road, Swifts Creek. The meeting is open to the public however due to COVID-19 restrictions you will need to register to attend. To register your attendance please book through the following link:

<https://www.trybooking.com/BQGDY>

Doors open at 1.15 pm.

Council encourages the community to view the meeting via livestreaming. The agenda is available from 1.00 pm on the Friday before the meeting from our website.

In August Council will hold its meeting in Orbost and in October at Mallacoota.

Correction: Poet's Walk project

In the March edition of this newsletter, our article titled 'Poet's Walk dream comes true' contained errors in a couple of group names.

Below is the correct information.

Many individuals and groups have made the Poet's Walk project come to life, including the Poet's Walk Working Group, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, Swifts Creek Ensay Landcare Group, Great Alpine Gallery, East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Swifts Creek Men's Shed, Omeo District Health, Swifts Creek Angling Club, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and Council.



We were pleased to be part of the Gippsland East Jobs Expo on Friday 26 March at the Bairnsdale Aquatic and Recreation Centre. We assisted job seekers of all ages with enquiries about currently advertised positions, how to apply for work with us, the Working for Victoria initiative, work experience opportunities and about our Youth Ambassador program. Lilly Hodge (Youth Engagement Project Officer), Fiona Blevins (Learning and Development Officer) and Khloe Moxham (Commercial Business Administration Officer) were among our staff helping out. Well done to the businesses and organisations who had stands, and for all who attended.



Congratulations to Jen Smith (second left) on being awarded a 2020 Young Farmers Scholarship Program scholarship in Melbourne on 20 April by Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas.

Jen's expertise is in agribusiness (livestock - beef) and is a member of the newly formed Council Agriculture Sector Advisory Committee, among other volunteer community positions.

For more information>>>



East Gippsland is open for business

After a very difficult more than 12 months, with unprecedented bushfire impact and the global pandemic to boot, East Gippsland is excited to be open for business once again.

The National Bushfire Recovery Agency (NBRA) and Tourism Australia have developed a video series celebrating the recovery progress of many regions around the country, and how they have reopened for visitors and tourism. With 15 videos created in total, several of them focus on areas in East Gippsland. Nine of the videos have been released thus far, with the remaining videos to following in the coming weeks.

You can watch the videos on the [Tourism Australia website](#).

We would also like residents and visitors alike to know that our Visitor Information Centres (VICs) are open across East Gippsland, including weekends, to help inform and guide you on all the wonderful places, activities and accommodation our region has to offer.

To learn more about exploring your own backyard, or to showcase our beautiful area to visitors, pop into one of our VICs, or visit the [Visit East Gippsland website](#).



Mayor appointed to statewide panel

Mayor Cr Mendy Urie is one of 15 Victorian mayors to be appointed to the 2021 Local Government Mayoral Advisory Panel.

Cr Urie said she was delighted to receive the opportunity to contribute directly into such an important forum with the Minister for Local Government and her peers from across the state.

"I know East Gippsland has considerable knowledge to share and many lived experiences, and I look forward to using the platform to highlight some important messages from East Gippsland to our Victorian Government," Cr Urie said.

Minister for Local Government Shaun Leane recently announced the 15 mayors who will meet four times this year to provide advice on a range of matters that impact local government. Chaired by the Minister, this year's panel will present ideas and initiatives to benefit the local government sector and aid in recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

Cr Urie will join mayors from Melbourne, Frankston, Port Phillip, Stonnington, Hume, Wyndham, Mornington, Greater Shepparton, Ballarat, Surf Coast, Macedon Ranges, Ararat, Indigo and Towong. Cr Urie is the only mayor on the panel from east of metropolitan Melbourne, while there are two representatives from the North-East (Indigo and Towong).

In applying, Cr Urie said the Minister wanted to hear about successful council or regional initiatives, policies or programs that may be of interest to state governments and other councils.

"I nominated two items, the first being our community's healing and recovery from disaster, as East Gippsland Shire experienced in the Black Summer Bushfires," Cr Urie said.

"The second was the experience of a large regional municipality progressing through an Environmental Effects Statement process. I look forward to, with the panel, identifying the possibilities for major review of the process to make it fairer for residents and ratepayers, in striving to achieve the best possible outcomes for our communities," Cr Urie said.

The panel will meet for the first time on 21 April via videoconference.

Four regular meetings of the Local Government Mayoral Advisory Panel were held in 2020 and panel discussions included recovery from the 2019-20 bushfires, responding to the pandemic, implementation of the Local Government Act 2020, state and local government approaches to homelessness, dealing with the effect of the pandemic on tourism and harnessing the government's Working for Victoria initiative.

Rural strategy aims to support agriculture

We are preparing a new draft Rural Land Use Strategy to guide planning decisions on the future development and subdivision of rural land.

The strategy will be the first of its kind for the shire and will enable the East Gippsland Planning Scheme to be reviewed and updated to respond to rural land use pressures and opportunities.

Agricultural production is a vital part of the East Gippsland economy, yet there has been a trend over the past 20 to 30 years for the subdivision of rural land and housing development that is not associated with agriculture.

Mayor, Cr Mendy Urie said this trend has the potential to impact on commercial agriculture by driving up land prices, making it difficult for primary producers to expand their farms.

"It can also introduce land use conflicts as residents bring different lifestyle expectations to rural areas," Cr Urie said.

"We are seeking to find the right balance between the need to protect agricultural operations and cater for the demand for rural lifestyle properties.

"The strategy will include a new decision-making framework that will assist Council when it considers proposed rural subdivision and development, and how that supports the continued economic viability and growth of our agricultural producers.

"Fragmentation of land that is suitable for farming is a significant threat to agricultural productivity and that will be seriously considered in the new draft strategy."

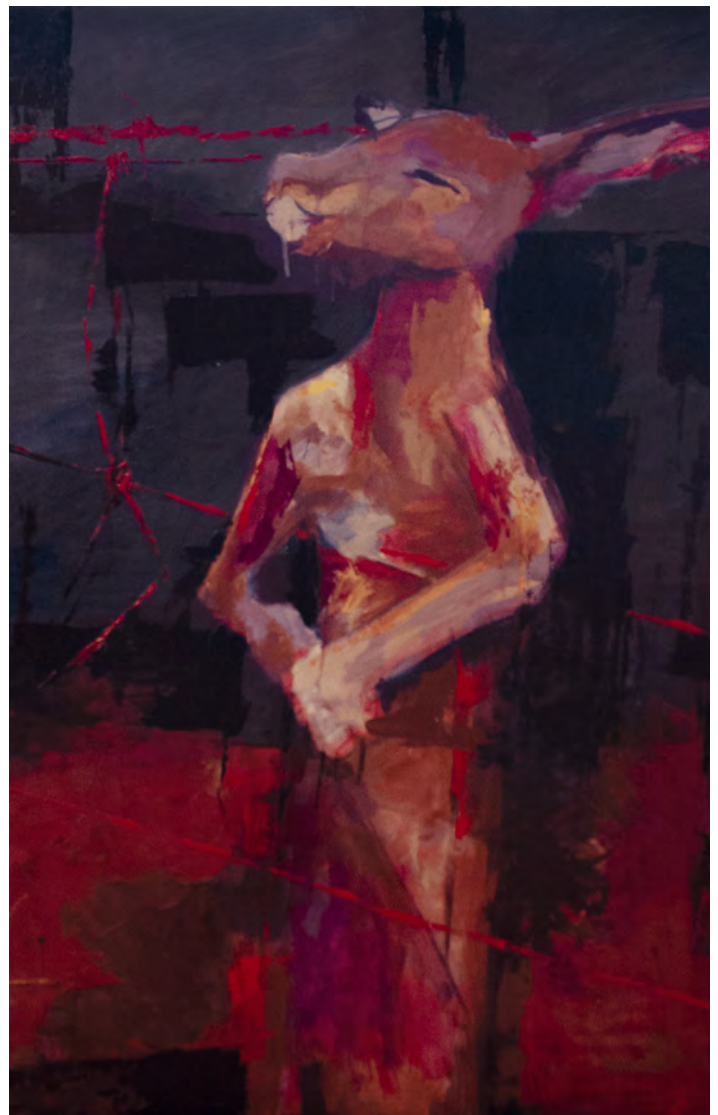
The strategy will provide clearer policy guidance for Council on the type of development that should be encouraged or discouraged in rural areas, protection of agricultural land from inappropriate subdivision, and responding to landscape values, environmental hazards and climate change.

"There are many factors to be considered within Council's planning responsibilities that can either support or constrain agricultural enterprises and we will be seeking to ensure the long-term viability of our agricultural sector through clear planning policy," Cr Urie said.

The strategy builds on previous work undertaken by Council that received significant community support. More recently, the draft strategy has been discussed with agricultural producers in the region and will soon be presented to the recently formed Agricultural Sector Advisory Committee for further feedback.

Cr Urie said it is important that the rural strategy reflects the needs of agricultural producers and meets the community's aspirations for the vast and diverse rural areas of the shire.

"A comprehensive public consultation process will occur over the next three months before the draft strategy is presented to Council for consideration," Cr Urie said.



Harley Kewish, Ode to the Anthropocene, was one of the winners of the 2020 Youth Art Prize.

Save the date!

Are you a budding young artist?

The time to start on your artwork entry is now. The 2021 East Gippsland Youth Art Prize is held in August for all people aged 12-25 years who live, work or study in East Gippsland.

It provides a platform for aspiring and emerging young creatives, aged 12-25 years to showcase their artistic talents. Cash prizes will be up for grabs, for winners and runners up in each age group.

Artworks can include drawings, paintings, photographs, digital illustrations or 3D visuals and short 2 to 3 minute films. Photographs of larger physical works will be accepted.

In celebration of the Archibald prize coming to the Gippsland Art Gallery at Sale, a special portraiture category will be included this year!

Artists are free to choose their genre or medium, and entry is free. Entries must be original works and there is a limit of one entry per artist.

Age categories will be 12-15 years, 16-19 years and 20-25 years.

Entries will open later in the year, start preparing now!

MAJOR PROJECTS UPDATE

Green light for Omeo trails construction

A contract for the construction of the Omeo Mountain Bike Trails 'high priority' trails, representing 56 kilometres of the 121.8km trail project, has been awarded.

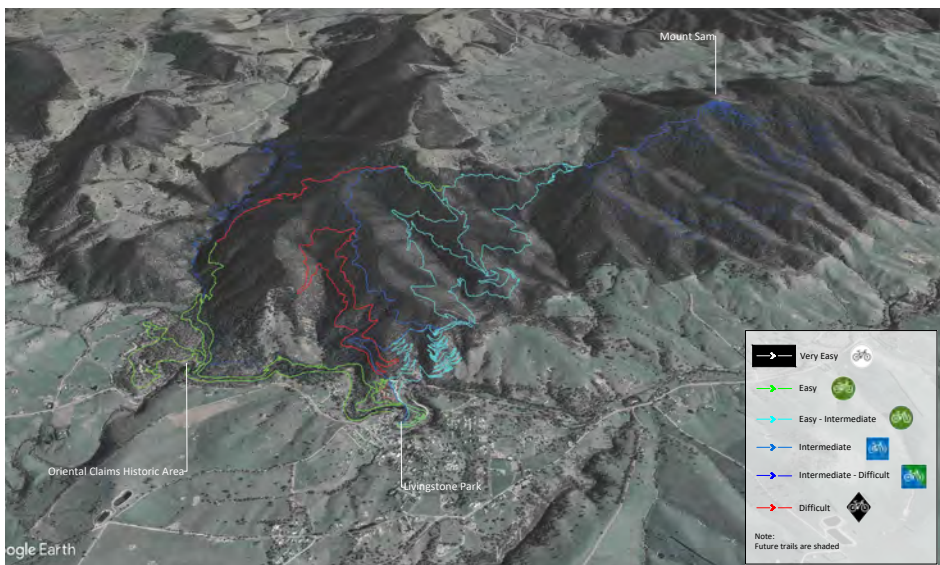
We awarded Common Ground Trails the \$2.188 million (excluding GST) contract, with works including the construction of high priority trails, low-level bridges, elevated bridges, design and construction of two trail intersection structures (underpass / overpass) and the supply and installation of on-trail signage. Environmental, cultural heritage and historic heritage monitoring and reporting is included throughout construction.

Common Ground Trails will be familiar to the Omeo community, as the company constructed the hugely popular Omeo Pump and Skills Track in 2020.

Mayor Cr Mendy Urie said Council awarding the construction contract for the first stage of the project last Tuesday, 13 April, gives the community, businesses and investors confirmation of this important project proceeding.

Cr Urie said the Omeo Mountain Bike (MTB) project has had a long and detailed development phase, including the development of a master plan and business plan to guide the project.

"The trails themselves have been through an extensive design



The proposed trails to be constructed as part of the Omeo Mountain Bike Trails project.

process by a mountain bike design specialist. The project business plan has demonstrated the economic stimulation that this project can deliver for the Omeo district and is a project eagerly awaited by the Omeo community," Cr Urie said.

"The community has been heavily invested in this project for some time, and we are all now starting to see the fruits of that labour. This really is an exciting time for all involved.

"The success of this project will be a result of the significant planning, but also how the community has embraced and driven the project from concept through to now."

Construction is anticipated to commence from mid-2021 following the conclusion of all planning processes. Council is seeking

additional funding for construction of the remainder of the trail network and the contract awarded allows for a further 35 kilometres of trail to be constructed if secured.

A Project Control Group comprising of representatives from Council, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR), East Gippsland Marketing and the project's community reference group has been overseeing the project.

The project is funded by Council, the Australian Government through the Building Better Regions Fund, and Victorian Government through Regional Development Victoria.

[Read more>>>](#)



Out with the old!

If you've been past the Bairnsdale Outdoor Pool recently, you may have noticed the old change rooms have been removed to make way for the new change facilities.

The new changerooms will be a significant improvement allowing for accessible change facilities to meet the requirements and needs of the community. Works are on track to be completed by July 2021.

MAJOR PROJECTS UPDATE

Partnership projects a major boost

The Federal Government announced earlier this month it would provide \$7 million supporting five East Gippsland community-based projects to boost the regional economy.

Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack and Federal Member for Gippsland Darren Chester announced the successful projects under the Regional Recovery Partnership.

- Krautungalung walk, Lakes Entrance, \$2.2 million.
- East Gippsland Rail Trail, \$2 million.
- Forest Park, Orbost, \$1.3 million.
- Slip Rd, Paynesville, \$1 million.
- Koala Discovery and Rehabilitation, Paynesville and Raymond Island, \$500,000.

The successful projects all have funding commitments from the state or local government and have the capacity to be delivered over the next 12 months.

Mayor, Cr Mendy Urie said the Federal Government funding would accelerate development on projects Council had already identified as high priorities.

"We welcome the funding announcement because it allows Council to bring forward projects we had already part-funded or secured grants from other sources," Cr Urie said. "These initiatives, across multiple towns, will support the social, economic and cultural life of East Gippsland and enhance our region as a place to live, invest in, and visit year-round."

The Forest Park Orbost upgrade will revitalise and modernise Orbost's premier passive recreation area, visitor rest-stop and gateway to the East Gippsland Rail Trail.



Community member Garry Squires, Deputy Mayor Cr Mark Reeves and Gippsland East MP Tim Bull join Federal Member for Gippsland Darren Chester for the Forest Park upgrade announcement.

Works will include a new toilet and amenities block, increased parking, an extensive adventure playground, installation of picnic area and refreshing the interpretation of the gateway to the East Gippsland Rail Trail (trail head) complementing the recently announced proposed \$3.4 million upgrade of the Snowy Bridge boosting the 'cycling economy' in Orbost.

We have committed \$500,000 to the project.

The Raymond Island Koala Trail project will deliver new visitor infrastructure, ecological restoration and education programs to create a world class koala visitor experience on Raymond Island. We have committed \$250,000 to a toilet upgrade.

Plan tweaked following feedback

A much-anticipated project in Paynesville is progressing, with the Slip Road Maritime Precinct concept plans recently updated based on community feedback.

As a result of the community consultation, some changes were made to the concept plan, such as increasing the amount of parking while still providing additional landscaping to beautify the area and provide shade.

The proposed bund will be removed but ground levels around the boat ramp will be increased to reduce

frequent inundation from the lake. Rather than widen the existing ramp, it is proposed to add a second boat ramp to the north next to Gippsland Ports. This will improve safety through more separation between marine industry use of the ramp and the public.

The project has received a \$1.1 million grant from the Victorian Government's Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions. In April, we were pleased to be advised that the Australian Government will contribute \$1 million from the Australian Government's 'Regional Recovery Partnership' fund to boost the regional economy – one

of five East Gippsland projects to receive funding.

Further feasibility investigations will be undertaken on the possibility of an openable bridge or tunnel across the canal. This element won't be considered through early delivery stages and is not currently funded. In the meantime, we will upgrade the footpath across King Street bridge, improve the laneway surface and provide signs to help pedestrians and cyclists find their way to the central business district.

Learn more about the project on our [YourSay page](#).

MAJOR PROJECTS UPDATE

Mallacoota seawall project begins

The project to replace a section of failing seawall adjacent to the Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park is scheduled to commence in April.

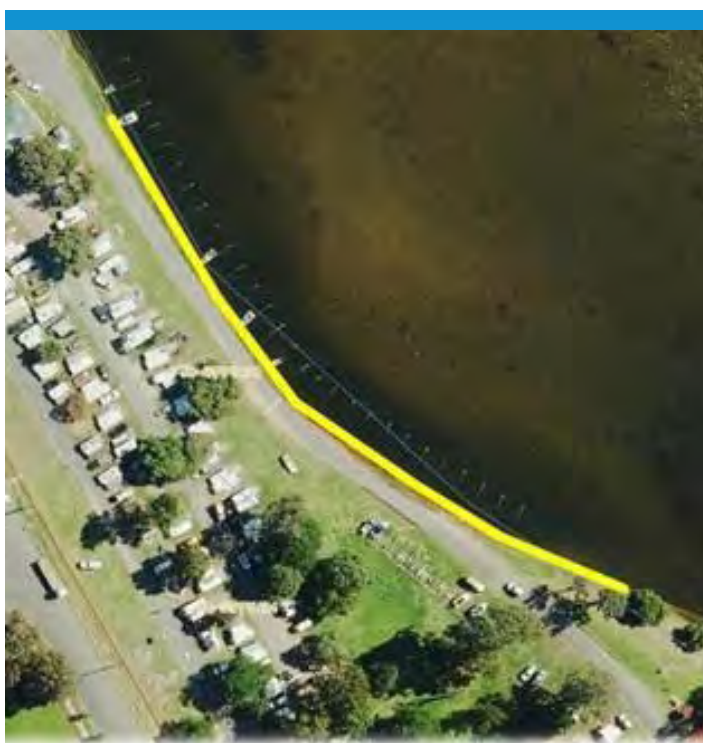
Initial works will include replacing a 200-metre section of the seawall with a new precast concrete wall and galvanised piles. The new wall will be constructed one metre in front of the existing seawall, which will be left in situ.

The project will provide higher flood protection for the foreshore and will greatly improve amenity of both visitors and Mallacoota residents with the provision of a new shared path that will be 2.2m wide.

The project, costing \$1 million, is being co-funded by Council and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). We have awarded the construction to local contractor Jarvis Norwood.

The works will cause some level of disruption and parts of the foreshore and Panoramic Drive will be inaccessible. The Mallacoota Foreshore Holiday Park is currently contacting affected guests and will continue to liaise with visitors.

This project will be an important contribution to the park's assets, and we look forward to the completion of these initial works by end of August 2021. We apologise for any inconvenience during the construction.



Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas (right) at Bullock Island last week discussing improvements for the area with Chris Waites (Gippsland Ports CEO), Brad Duncan (Lakes Entrance Fishermen's Limited General Manager), Cr Mendy Urie (Mayor), Cr Arthur Allen, Tom Weatherall (Council's Manager Assets and Projects), and Bruce Hammond (Lakes Entrance Fishermen's Chair).

Minister tours Bullock Island

The Victorian Government Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas visited Bullock Island on Wednesday 14 April, touring the island to see the works being undertaken to improve the area first-hand.

Bullock Island is one of Lakes Entrance's most recognisable landmarks.

The upgrade to the island will enhance the visitor experience, maximise visitation, and contribute to the visitor economy of Lakes Entrance and the broader region.

We have recently built a new amenities block, roads have been sealed and bins provided for visitors and locals to enjoy the island.

Local Bairnsdale company Crossco are undertaking the detailed design work of the recreational areas. Upgraded parking, fishing platforms, barbecues and connecting boardwalks and interpretive elements will make Bullock Island a destination attraction.

Using local contractors, our intention is to develop a passive recreational area for public use. Development will be sensitively undertaken befitting the Ramsar-listed Gippsland Lakes, entrance to Bass Strait, and scenic surroundings.

The Victorian Government has invested \$1.3 million into Bullock Island and has also invested in projects across the region, such as Metung Hot Springs, Paynesville, Raymond Island and the Slipway in Lakes Entrance.

The combination of these projects will significantly enhance the visitor experience and our local economy for years to come.

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

Recovery centre changes

More than 12 months on from shifting from relief to recovery efforts and after a considered review, at the start of April we transitioned recovery support services from the Bushfire Recovery Centre at Service Street, Bairnsdale, back into the relevant parts of our organisation on 2 April 2021.

We worked with the agencies that have been using the Recovery Centre to ensure there is another appropriate location for them to continue to provide their support to the community.

People seeking recovery support from Council will still call the same number and be supported by our Customer

Service team and our Place Managers.

BRV hubs remain open to provide support and services. We will not be maintaining a presence at this Service Street facility ongoing. We will provide customer service ongoing through all customer service centres, call centre and online through the website.

Our staff, and the staff and volunteers of many other organisations, ensured this recovery service was up and running quickly (while our region was still being impacted by bushfire) in January 2020. Staff and volunteers worked weekends, late hours and through difficult times to support the community.



The Bushfire Recovery Centre in Service Street, Bairnsdale, closed its doors on 1 April and we held a morning tea to mark the occasion and acknowledge individuals and organisations involved for their great contribution to the community since the 2019/20 bushfires. RIGHT: The Business Recovery Advisory Services Program (jointly funded by the Commonwealth and Victorian governments) was one of our partners and thanked us for the shared office space at the morning tea.

Local Incident Management Plans review

Our Emergency Management Team is undertaking a two-phase review of East Gippsland community Local Incident Management Plans with the aim of strengthening the resilience and safety of communities.

A Local Incident Management Plan (LIMP) is a simple document developed by communities with our assistance to ensure residents and visitors know where to go, what to take and what to expect if a major incident impacts the area.

Below is a breakdown of the two-phase review process:

Phase 1 – Undertake a basic review to ensure the existing 30 plans are accurate and up to date. Phase 1 will be completed by September 2021.

Phase 2 – Work to modernise the appearance and content of LIMPs, improve the functionality of the plans, and investigate where new plans need to be created.

Community Conversations are currently underway and will help to inform further work by identifying

lessons learnt from experiences during the 2019/20 bushfires. There are several other council projects that contribute to community resilience and preparedness, including upgrades to community facilities and static water tank installations. To have your voice heard, keep an eye out for Community Conversation session in your area, contact your district's Council Place Manager, or Council's Emergency Management Team on (03) 5153 9500.

BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

Governor-General returns to region

Their Excellencies the Governor-General the Honourable David Hurley and Mrs Hurley have visited East Gippsland a number of times to see fire-affected regions and speak to residents.

They returned again on 24 and 25 March, this time visiting Clifton Creek, Swifts Creek, Omeo, Bruthen, Buchan, Wairewa, Orbost, Club Terrace and Cann River. Councillors were on hand to introduce the Governor-General and Mrs Hurley at each venue.

Their Excellencies spent time with residents, listening to their stories and discussing their recovery from the 2019-20 bushfires.

In each community they have thanked those involved in the response to the fires, acknowledged the many who are helping others recover and celebrated the richness of spirit that is on display.

The Governor-General and Mrs Hurley have been struck by the strength of residents and their determination to overcome challenges and support their neighbours.



The Governor-General and Mrs Hurley visited Clifton Creek Primary School.



The Governor-General and Mrs Hurley met with Orbost SES and other agencies involved in the bushfire response.



Buchan hosted a lunch for the Governor-General.

Recognising contribution and service

The National Emergency Medal is an award available to persons who provided either significant or sustained service (or both) during a nationally significant emergency.

The bushfires of 2019/2020 were declared a nationally significant emergency for the purpose of the National Emergency Medal on 2 December 2020.

The Medal is managed by the Office of the Governor General and is open to members of the community, volunteers or agency staff that have provided sustained service being:

- service in the protection of lives and property; or in the service of interests, that are not their own; in direct response to the emergency (including support

that enables or facilitates the emergency response).

- in East Gippsland (or other fire impacted municipalities).
- between 21 November 2019 and 20 February 2020
- the minimum duration of service of 5 days

This is an opportunity to recognise the significant contribution made by so many in East Gippsland throughout the 2019/20 bushfires.

To learn more about the Medal and its history, eligibility criteria, or to apply, please visit the **Governor-General's website**.



What a mix! The T20 match participants.

Cricket a hit

East Gippsland welcomed a diverse group of former State and Australian cricket players over the weekend of 26 to 28 March.

The tour aimed to support bushfire affected communities in East Gippsland by reconnecting communities through sport and community and attracting visitors.

The tour kicked off with a cricket clinic at Wy Yung Cricket Club on the Friday evening, two cricket clinics at Paynesville and Lakes Entrance Cricket Clubs on Saturday morning, and closed off with a T20 match and Sporties Night at Orbost Cricket Club in the afternoon and evening. Club clinics were supported by Cricket Victoria and their staff.

The feature event of the weekend was the T20 match, in which the touring players played a friendly game against a mixed group of local senior and junior players from Bairnsdale Cricket Association teams, one of whom was Member for Gippsland East, Tim Bull MP.

Cr Mark Reeves tossed the coin for the match, which started with a bang with the ACA player Mark Cosgrove hitting a 6 on the first ball.

The Sporties Night was by all reports a great success as well, with face painting and a DJ, adding to the family-friendly and fun atmosphere.

The ACA tour was supported by us and jointly funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth governments.



Cr Mark Reeves opening the T20 match in Orbost.

Events are returning

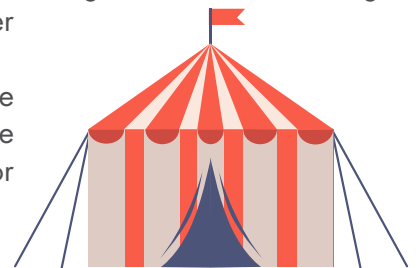
Communities across East Gippsland have been enjoying getting together again and reconnecting at local events.

With the recent easing of COVID-19 restrictions community events have been in full swing across the municipality. Events have included a community and family fun day in Buchan with live music, jumping castles, children's entertainment, massage therapist sessions and great food all free of charge.

A family fun day was also held in Mallacoota with pop up sports events, a petting farm, face painting and more bringing together the children and youth in the district. East Gippsland communities also recently enjoyed a weekend of cricket, with clinics, a T20 match and dinner attended by the visiting Australian Cricketers' Association Masters Cricket Tour and the nail-biting "Sandhill Ashes" between Sarsfield and Clifton Creek community recovery teams.

We acknowledge the excellent work communities have put into organising these (and other) events. A reminder that funding is available to support events that bring communities together from a range of sources, including Council, BRV and other agencies.

Contact your Place Manager to find out more and discuss an event for your community.



Improving facilities

Our Community Resilience and Development Program will improve community facilities across the shire through ember protection, switchboard upgrades and AV equipment.

As a first step we have awarded the Bushfire Attack Level Assessments (BALs) component of the Community Resilience and Development Program to Fire Risk Consultants, who will commence assessment of about 37 community facilities this month.

The assessments will determine the BAL rating for a facility and include information to help inform ember protection works. This is an important process that will assist us in understanding the condition of a facility and its suitability. We are writing to each of the Committees of Management for the nominated facilities advising of the assessment timelines and seeking an opportunity for representatives to meet with us.

Our Councillors



Cr Mendy Urie – Mayor

Direct - 0436 324 179
cr.urie@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr Mark Reeves – Deputy Mayor

Direct - 0419 016 581
cr.reeves@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr Jane Greacen OAM

Direct - 0428 478 219
cr.greacen@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr Arthur Allen

Direct - 0429 630 474
cr.allen@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr Trevor Stow

Direct - 0439 285 111
cr.stow@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr Sonia Buckley

Direct - 0429 567 229
cr.sbuckley@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr Kirsten Van Diggele

Direct - 0429 629 950
cr.vandiggele@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr Tom Crook

Direct - 0429 554 064
cr.crook@egipps.vic.gov.au



Cr John White

Direct - 0498 001 531
cr.white@egipps.vic.gov.au

Note: When emailing a Councillor, type "Att Cr (their last name)" in the subject line.

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