



COUNCIL MATTERS DIGEST

22nd October 2021

Just when you thought it was over!



[Extended voting deadline for South Gippsland Council election](#)

“The close of voting for the South Gippsland Shire Council elections has been extended by one week to **6 pm Friday 29 October**, to ensure all voters in the Shire have the opportunity to cast a considered vote.

Electoral Commissioner, Warwick Gately, has requested printers to work through the weekend to reprint a number of ballot packs that have not been delivered. ‘Over the past 24 hours the VEC has identified that a number of voters across all 3 South Gippsland Shire Council wards have not yet received their ballot packs for the election. In order to ensure that all voters have adequate time to cast a considered vote and thus ensure the integrity of the election, I have made the decision to extend the close of voting by one week from 6 pm on Friday 22 October to 6 pm on Friday 29 October,’ Mr Gately said.” *(more available)*

Making news in this edition - Friday 22nd October 2021

You can click on the underlined titles to get the full story or letter.

[Don Hill accused of using South Gippsland Voices to boost council re-election campaign](#)

ABC Gippsland 22/10/21

The former mayor of a Victorian regional council has been accused of using his newspaper to promote his re-election campaign to the South Gippsland Council, two years after it was placed into administration.

The ABC understands two candidates have made formal complaints about the former mayor after the publication of material that allegedly contained misleading election information about them. *(more available)*



[9000 South Gippsland ballot packs 'not delivered'](#) Sentinel-Times 19/10/21

AROUND 9000 ballot packs failed to arrive in voters' mailboxes for the South Gippsland elections. As a result, the close of voting deadline has been extended by one week to **6pm on Friday, October 29.** *(more available)*

[Reduced reporting during 'Caretaker'](#) Sentinel-Times 19/10/21

DURING the Election Caretaker Period in South Gippsland Shire, likely to be extended to October 30 after voting was extended this week, council is required to ensure that its resources, forums, etc.,

are not used to raise or promote matters that may be considered electoral material. In order to satisfy this requirement, council will not be hearing Administrator Reports at its meeting this Wednesday. Councillors are expected to resume at the **new council's first meeting on November 24**.

[Time to start anew, MP says](#) Sentinel-Times 19/10/21

THE Nationals Member for Gippsland South, Danny O'Brien, has the following message – which was read out in Victorian Parliament - for the ratepayers of South Gippsland regarding the shire's election.

“After just over two years of administrators in charge, ballot papers are arriving in letterboxes for the election of new councillors at the Shire of South Gippsland. “The election, which is by postal ballot... is a chance for a fresh start after the chaos of the previous council which was dismissed by this Parliament in 2019.

“While I strongly supported that decision, I did so with a heavy heart, as one never wishes to see local democracy curtailed. “Now is the chance for local residents and ratepayers to start anew. “There are some excellent candidates in the three wards, giving good choice to all voters.

“I thank all candidates for stepping forward to take part in local democracy. “It is not my practice to recommend how residents should vote. “But I do hope that people will remember the chaos and dysfunction of the previous council, including those councillors who were only there for a short time but who were also the target of criticism by the Commission of Inquiry, especially over the appointment of a CEO shortly before the council was dismissed.

“We do not need any of the dismissed councillors re-elected. We must put the division, discord and conflict behind us. “I also caution voters to carefully consider the topics candidates are campaigning on or making promises about. “Councils have a clear role to support their communities and provide local infrastructure and services – they should not be distracted on national and international political causes that are beyond their remit. “Vote for candidates who will be focused on roads, rubbish and rates, not those grandstanding on political topics, or seeking to re-write history.”

[JTSG Responds to Nationals Member for Gippsland South, Danny O'Brien Statement](#)

Local state member Danny O'Brien's recent speech to State Parliament on the current South Gippsland Shire election was an unambiguous attempt to silence the community's voice.

In telling voters they “should not be distracted on national and international causes that are beyond their remit”, Mr O'Brien was clearly implying that those in the community who believe local government has a role to play in addressing climate change should not be listened to.

In fact, all levels of government have a role in addressing climate change. Saying that local government should limit itself to roads, rubbish and rates is like saying State governments should just look after schools, hospitals and trams, or that the federal government should focus only on quarantine, vaccination and defence.

Beyond that, Mr O'Brien doesn't seem to realise that the Councillor Code of Conduct in the Local Government Act 2020 specifies in its principles of good governance that:

- The economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, ***including mitigation and planning for climate change risks***, is to be promoted.
- Priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, ***including future generations***.

The Act explicitly requires that councils and councillors do exactly what Mr O'Brien tells them not to do.

Many in the community would be interested to hear Mr O'Brien's justification for telling those on the incoming Council that they should ignore the principles laid out for good governance.

Just as interesting would be his motivation for doing so.

We seem to be living in an ever more divided society, with growing narratives of division and blame. And despite Mr O'Brien's claim to be seeking to "put divisions, discord and conflict behind us", his statement does just the opposite.

Dog-whistling about "those grandstanding on political topics", which can be taken to mean climate change, does nothing to promote community cohesion and cooperation and everything to fan the embers of suspicion and antagonism. And what's the point?

Why not instead at least listen to those voices that are, after all, only echoing what every credible authority on the matter of climate change is saying: that we all need to be working together, with empathy and understanding, to move to a low-carbon world that's fairer and inclusive and equipped with solutions for a better, cleaner, brighter future for all now and for those that follow.

As we are on the cusp of the next major meeting of world leaders, at the Glasgow global climate talks to discuss our future, it seems worth noting that the last such meeting - the Paris Climate Agreement - recognised the importance of authorities at the local and municipal level as key drivers in strengthening local resilience to climate change.

The Paris Climate Agreement notes that "regions may be powerhouses of ambitious mitigation and adaptation measures that are hard to legislate and implement at the national level."

Rather than trying to undermine the many voices in the community who are concerned about climate change, why not listen to what they're saying and lead the way with the people you say you represent.

Mr O'Brien should recognise that people all over the country are forming and joining groups like Just Transition South Gippsland because they're feeling frustrated and helpless about the lack of action, the lack of leadership and the stark failure of politicians and institutions to engage honestly with the question of how we build a safe and just future.

Their concerns about the future of the region and its people are reasonable and sensible. Danny O'Brien shouldn't be fighting against them; he should be joining them.

Just Transition South Gippsland

[Leongatha intersection fix is priority number one](#) Sentinel-Times 19/10/21



ROSEMARY Cousin, Greens-endorsed candidate in the Tarwin Valley Ward, has called on South Gippsland Council to advocate for VicRoads to urgently install safety measures on the Roughead Street/South Gippsland Highway intersection in Leongatha. "It is critical that council advocates for VicRoads' action now, before a major accident occurs here," Ms Cousin said. *(more available)*

[UPDATE: O'Brien calls for inquiry into 'lost' ballot papers](#) Sentinel-Times 19/10/21

The State Government has been called on to provide a full investigation and explanation for the bungle that left a third of South Gippsland Shire residents without ballot papers until this week.

The Nationals Member for Gippsland South, Danny O'Brien said he was very concerned that one of three batches of ballot papers had not been mailed to voters ahead of the South Gippsland Shire Council election. *(more available)*

[Australia's decision not to boost its 2030 emissions reduction will disappoint key allies](#)

One Papua New Guinea 19/10/21

Australia's decision not to boost its 2030 emissions reduction target will disappoint key allies that have called on Prime Minister Scott Morrison to do more ahead of next month's United Nations climate summit in Glasgow....

Liberal-aligned think tank Blueprint Institute, which surveyed voters in resources seats over the past two weeks, found 67 percent of respondents in Capricornia and 68 percent in Flynn – both central Queensland electorates – backed a halving of Australia's emissions by 2030. In the NSW seat of Hunter, 74 percent were in support **along with 76 percent in Gippsland, Victoria.** *(more available)*

Letters to the Editor

[New vision for Coal Creek](#) Sentinel-Times 19/10/21

The last time the South Gippsland Shire Council reviewed the operations of Coal Creek was 2013 – that is eight years ago. Over that time, it has probably cost the community around \$4 million. It is time for the community to be assisted to come on board and plan for a “new vision” for Coal Creek so that is a self-sustaining facility and not a continual drain on the budget. *(more available)*

Lindsay Love, Leongatha.

[Andrew's pitch to voters](#) Sentinel-Times 19/10/21

Dear voters of Tarwin Valley Ward, I am standing in the current council elections for South Gippsland and hope you are aware of this and know that ballots must be posted by Friday, October 22, 2021. I am a resident of Mirboo North and, along with my wife, made South Gippsland our retirement location 11 years ago; we have not regretted the decision. *(more available)*

Authorised by Andrew Corcoran, Tarwin Valley Ward, 28 Golf Links Drive, Mirboo North.

[It's your choice, voters](#) Sentinel-Times 19/10/21

I read with interest some of the comments from other candidates on the use of how to vote cards, comments such as the Gang of Four have joined together to ensure women will struggle to get elected because of the cards. What a load of rubbish; the how to vote cards are not telling you how to vote - it is a suggestion only. You are not obliged to follow the suggested sequence; it is purely your choice in which way you want to vote. *(more available)*

Leslie Harmer, candidate for Tarwin Valley Ward, Mirboo North.

[Shining a light on democracy](#) Sentinel-Times 19/10/21

Democracy is always well served when voters have plenty of opportunity to 'meet' the candidates in more depth and get below the surface level of information candidates provide in brochures. In this South Gippsland [Shire] Council election, voters have had two very important opportunities. One is

through a 45-minute podcast created by Craig Privett with each willing candidate. These podcasts can be accessed at craigprivett.com.au. The second was..... *(more available)*
Noelene Cosson, Korumburra.

[Disgusted by 'grading scale' anomalies](#) Sentinel-Times 19/10/21

We seem to have entered a world akin to Alice's Wonderland. In the October 11 iteration of the South Gippsland Voices, it appears Don and Barbara Hill are slinging mud by the handful. Not content with using the paper to simply raise Mr Hill's profile, Mrs Hill, as recently appointed editor, has now made it clear they're out to attack anybody who stands in his way. It's a topsy-turvy time we live in when.... *(more available)*

Adrian Darakai, Leongatha, Candi-date for Tarwin Valley Ward.

[Get cracking, he says](#) Sentinel-Times 19/10/21

I notice some candidates are regurgitating the old concerns about lack of equity, proportionality, in the way rate money collected is expended. That's an old chestnut that only serves to ferment discontent within the community. Councillors must step away from divisive parochialism and act in the interests of the community as a whole. Every shire has a 'lead' town where services and facilities are..... *(more available)*

John McCombe, South Gippsland Action Group member, Leongatha.

[Reject the groups, vote for the people](#) Sentinel-Times 19/10/21

I believe this election is very important, not only for South Gippsland but for the whole Gippsland region for the next decade. Preferences are being directed via 'How to Vote' cards in the Tarwin Valley Ward by two distinct groupings. Heaven help us, this may bring back more polarised rather than collegiate thinking in the new council. *(more available)*

Rosemary Cousin, Allambee South, Tarwin Valley Ward candidate.

[Who will use the chargers?](#) Sentinel-Times 19/10/21

Your 'In Brief' article (Sentinel-Times, page 4, September 28) on the proposal for three 50kW chargers across South Gippsland Shire could read 'Charging South Gippsland for the future' rather than under the 'Charging South Gippsland for Future Transport Project'. With a proposed contribution of over \$150,000 from ratepayers and a total cost of half a million or so, who is going to use this "asset", anyway? A dozen wealthy tourists from the city whose cars don't have the range to get home? And who pays the costs of the electricity to power their vehicles and the cost of maintaining these facilities? Be great to hear from our council candidates on spending our money, and green pie in the sky projects.

Steve Finlay, Leongatha.

A reminder, if you have any insightful articles, editorials, letters, social media posts that have been missed, please send them to [Council Matters](#) for inclusion in the next Digest. We will circulate the Digest weekly for the moment.

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2021 ELECTION TIMELINE

Council primary enrolment data	JUL 12	MON	(Date fixed by VEC)
Public notice of Close of Roll Date (Published during this period)	AUG 7	SAT	
	AUG 13	FRI	
Close of Roll	AUG 27	FRI	Enrolment closes at 4 pm
Publication of Election Notice (Published during this period)	AUG 30	MON	
	SEP 4	SAT	
Opening of election office	SEP 15	WED	
Certification of voters' roll Opening of nominations	SEP 16	THU	
Nomination Day	SEP 21	TUE	Nominations close at 12 noon Ballot draw to follow
Lodgement of candidate statements, photographs and questionnaires	SEP 22	WED	Candidate statements, photos and questionnaires close at 12 noon
(AFL Grand Final public holiday)	SEP 24	FRI	
Mail-out of ballot packs	OCT 5	TUE	
	OCT 6	WED	
	OCT 7	THU	
Mail-out of re-issued ballot packs	OCT 18	MON	
Election Day	OCT 21	THU	Election office open until 8 pm
	OCT 22	FRI	Election office open until 6 pm
	OCT 23	SAT	
	OCT 28	THU	Election office open until 8 pm
CLOSE OF VOTING	OCT 29	FRI	Election office open until 6 pm Voting closes at 6 pm
Postal vote receipt period	NOV 1	MON	
	NOV 2	TUE	Melbourne Cup Day public holiday
	NOV 5	FRI	Postal vote receipt closes at 12 noon

All elections to be declared by Friday 12 November.

Please note:

The close of voting for the South Gippsland Shire Council elections has been extended by one week to 6 pm Friday 29 October 2021.
The postal vote receipt period for the South Gippsland Shire Council elections has been extended by one week to Friday 5 November 2021.