

# MAYOR'S MINUTE

17 January 2025



## **Dennis Heslin** **MAYOR, SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE COUNCIL**

As the holiday decorations come down and we ease into 2025, I've been reflecting on the remarkable spirit of our community. While many of us might be feeling that familiar post-holiday reluctance to return to routine, recent events have given me a profound perspective on what truly matters in our beautiful corner of Victoria.

Our community has faced significant challenges with the recent Yarram Gap Road fire in the Grampians. Yet from this adversity has emerged an inspiring display of courage and unity. To our dedicated CFA members, Council staff, and the countless volunteers who sacrificed their Christmas holidays to protect our community – you exemplify the very best of the Australian spirit. Your selfless service, those long days away from family, and unwavering dedication have not gone unnoticed. We are profoundly grateful for your service.

Now, with the fire officially contained, our beloved region is ready to welcome visitors once again. Having heard from many of our tourism operators, particularly in Dunkeld, I can confidently say that our doors are wide open. The Grampians' majestic peaks, Rocklands' pristine fishing spots, and our world-class dining establishments are all waiting to be experienced. To our local residents – why not be a tourist in your own backyard? Take that hiking trail you've been meaning to explore, book that B&B you've driven past countless times, or treat yourself to dinner at one of our inviting restaurants. There's a reason people travel across the globe to visit what we're fortunate enough to call home.

Speaking of celebrating our region, our Australia Day festivities are just around the corner. There will be celebrations in townships across the region with the main event taking place in Hamilton. Join us from 10:30am on 26 January at the Hamilton Botanic Gardens for a truly special occasion. We'll be recognising our community heroes through various awards, from Young Citizen of the Year to Community Event of the Year. We'll also be welcoming our newest Australian citizens – individuals who have chosen our wonderful Southern Grampians as their home. Your presence will help make their citizenship ceremony even more memorable.

Lastly, our Community Partnership Grants program is now accepting applications. With funding up to \$15,000 available, these grants can turn your community-enriching ideas into reality. Our friendly Grants Officers will be available for in-person consultations at the Greater Hamilton Library on Fridays (January 17, 24, 31, and February 7, 14) from 10:00am to 2:00pm. Don't miss out – applications close at 4:00pm on 17 February.

As we step into 2025, I'm filled with optimism for our region's future. The strength we've shown in facing recent challenges only reinforces my belief in the extraordinary community we've built together. Here's to a year of recovery, growth, and continuing to support one another.

After all, that's what makes the Southern Grampians Shire truly special.