

Young entrepreneurs meet with Minister Symes and Harriet Shing MP.

Gippsland's young entrepreneurs presented their ideas for a "thriving Gippsland" directly to Minister for Regional Development, Agriculture and Resources, Jaclyn Symes, on Thursday (18 July).

In a meeting facilitated by Committee for Gippsland (C4G), the attendees are all members of the Young Entrepreneurs Network Program, established by C4G.

C4G Acting Chief Executive Officer, Jane Oakley, said the program was in its infancy but its purpose was to give these innovative younger people "a seat at the table with government".

"If our region is to prosper, we need to listen to everyone, especially the younger generation who are the future," Ms Oakley said.

The young business people told the Minister of the challenges facing their region and also offered some solutions. They cited better access to affordable and fit-for-purpose facilities with a focus on collaboration and co-working space as a priority.

Because of the current skills shortage, they suggested skills of the future need to be aligned to future jobs with higher education providers working more closely with industry to build a suitable curriculum.

Other discussion topics included:

- Need for an independent processing facility in Gippsland
- Encouraging Gippsland businesses to think global
- Easier pathways to access funding opportunities
- Making the most of circular economy opportunities
- Better access to distribution networks
- More competitive freight prices in the early stages of business development
- Renewable energy solutions to drive operating efficiency
- Sharing workforce skills and capacity

Ms Oakley said the Minister and Labor MLC for Eastern Victoria, Harriet Shing, explored with the group how the government could assist in driving a healthy economic environment in Gippsland.

"The Minister appreciated the opportunity to engage with the young entrepreneurs and wanted to hear their stories," Ms Oakley said. "She reflected on government policies to help create vibrant towns and businesses."

"The government wants to ensure that navigating its services is easy and meets the needs of both business and the community."

Ms Oakley said it was important for C4G to get feedback from all sections of business and industry so it could advocate on issues that were important.

"We want to hear all views on how best we can leverage existing and new investment," she said. "Our objective is to work with our members, young aspiring leaders and these young entrepreneurs to shape a program that adds value to their professional development and business objectives."

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