



Committee for  
**GIPPSLAND**

# Gippsland - Taking Care of Business

## MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

Dear Members

Thank you for keeping us informed on the impact COVID-19 is having on your business and community.

In early April, the Committee for Gippsland asked members to complete a short survey as a means to help us understand the challenges businesses across Gippsland were facing and how we best could support you through this period.

To date we have received more than 40 responses from a broad cross-section of the membership. Based on the feedback received, we have summarised the key priorities identified by members.

In response, we have summarised the actions C4G currently has in place, or is committed to putting in place, to address concerns and to support Gippsland business during this very difficult period.

Should you wish to discuss any of the following items, please email me at

[jane.oakley@gipps.com.au](mailto:jane.oakley@gipps.com.au)

**Jane Oakley**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Increase advocacy on local manufacturing

### Action

- Connecting Gippsland manufacturing businesses with Colin Young Industry Capability Network (ICN) [gateway.icn.org.au/](http://gateway.icn.org.au/) (make sure you register to capitalise on up and coming project opportunities).
- On the topic of COVID -19, there is a new National Gateway page that ICN have set up on behalf of the Australian Government for businesses to register either shortfalls in their supply chain or capability to manufacture essential supplies [gateway.icn.org.au/company/wizard?](http://gateway.icn.org.au/company/wizard?)
- Quite recently I caught up with Star of the South – offshore windfarm (Australia's first offshore windfarm) to be located in Gippsland around Woodside (see C4G's website for further information). They are seeking information about Gippsland's manufacturing potential – this type of information is critical to help inform Star of the South and it's supply chain contractors.

I have spoken with them about the potential of manufacturing the turbine blades and components in Gippsland. I have sent some information through to Star of the South about the manufacturing capability in the Latrobe Valley however I recognise our manufacturing reach goes beyond the Valley. Please make contact with me if you would like me to forward your capability profile to Star of the South.

- Gippsland Manufacturing Alliance – I have spoken with a couple of manufacturing businesses to see if we can work collaboratively on opportunities that may have previously relied on importing components. We need to do more of this and I am interested in your ideas.
- C4G has been very active with the Victorian and Federal Government about Gippsland's current expertise and capacity to be leaders in the re-processing of recycling products. We are actively advocating for re-processing investment opportunities and are directly working on a major opportunity with the Victorian Government.

### Keep Govt spending lines open

#### Action

- C4G has been actively advocating for major infrastructure projects to be started as soon as possible (i.e. Duplication of the Princes Highway, Macalister Irrigation District modernisation). Funding has previously been announced by the Federal Government and we are encouraging the Victorian Government to commission these projects by committing its funding contribution.

These major infrastructure projects have a large supply chain (for which we are also advocating the engagement of local contractors). In addition, we are advocating that the Victorian Government assigned a further \$500m to rail infrastructure and services improvement works between Traralgon and Bairnsdale.

- The Committee has been speaking with Minister Allan's senior adviser seeking an update on the Traralgon Bypass – status and next steps.
- We are also encouraging government to partner with industry where we know private investment is ready to go.
- C4G has provided government with an industry project pipeline (projects that are shovel-ready) as part of our economic recovery response to the bushfires. In response to COVID-19, C4G is building a regional industry project pipeline.
- Small Business Victoria has been kept informed of the cash flow challenges our members are experiencing as a result of COVID-19 and bushfires. Survey feedback was shared with Small Business Victoria to assist them determine the most appropriate support packages for Gippsland businesses.

### Gippsland needs a clear pathway to deliver outcomes

#### Action

- A plan has been established by the state government's economic recovery working group, of which C4G is a member, that outline of priorities and projects that will best kick start the regional economy following COVID-19.
- We know that major reform in traditional industries will have long-term economic implications if we are not organised and in a position to replace lost industry (and jobs) in Gippsland. C4G has engaged GHD to assist in a major body of work, Gippsland Future Directions, to help address this.
- C4G has established small working groups with business leaders from across Gippsland with the objective to prepare a response for government regarding what is required to re-activate our regional economy post COVID-19 and in response to bushfires and industry structural reform.

## Visa extensions but no award wage rise

### Action

- C4G recently responded to the Federal Government's senate inquiry about the economic and social impact of temporary migrants. The Committee has referred this matter to the inquiry lead for response.

## Community services organisations supporting the most vulnerable need greater Government support in terms of access to PPE for staff and other essential items

### Action

- I will follow this up with the Minister of Health (state and federal governments) and will prepare a media release.

## Government funding for Regional Tourism Boards beyond 30 June 2020

### Action

- A response/clarification will be sought by C4G from Minister Pakula's office.

## Government red tape

### Action

- Late last year C4G requested a roundtable with the Victorian Government's Commissioner for Better Regulation and Red Tape (Anna Cronin).
- We will invite the Commissioner to an online roundtable and will work with our members to identify red tape issues that can be presented to her on Gippsland's behalf.

## Education, training and skills development at the forefront of recovery (bushfires, COVID-19 and industry reform)

### Action

- C4G is partnering with GHD, Federation University and Delta Pearl Partners to prepare a response / recovery plan for Gippsland (Gippsland Future Directions – previously known as the industry-led transition plan). The objective of this action-based plan is to identify opportunities that will assist our region move forward and minimise long-term economic shock. It aims to understand the political environment required to bring these opportunities to life which will, in turn, inform C4G's advocacy on behalf of Gippsland business and industry.

Education plays a critical role in ensuring a displaced workforce is skilled and trained to capitalise on new employment opportunities and curriculum continues to be contemporary and in alignment with new and emerging industry sectors.

- The Committee has strong higher education representation and sector diversification representation on its Board.

## Water management to support Gippsland's future productive capability

### Action

- C4G is fortunate to have Gippsland Water and Southern Rural Water as members and early discussions are underway regarding how to maximise productive capability while protecting our region's natural assets and environment.
- Gippsland Water is undertaking a body of work to define its value proposition which strongly complements Gippsland Future Directions.

## Effective targeted support for non-essential business to maintain core staff (so we can quickly recover post pandemic)

### Action

- C4G will continue to work with government at all levels.
- We will continue to seek clarification of key government assistance programs i.e. JobKeeper.
- C4G will continue to represent the needs of its members. I have been in contact with members regarding the barriers and needs being experienced by business and industry. This will ensure the issues I raise on behalf of Gippsland with government ministers, senior bureaucrats and Small Business Victoria are accurate, constructive and reflect your feedback.

## Keep focus on people spending leisure or work time in Gippsland

### Action

- The Committee welcomes and supports the great work done by Destination Gippsland to build the visitor economy. A number of successful campaigns were deployed prior to COVID-19 which C4G promoted on our social media platforms and website.

It is our intention to do the same with any future tourism campaigns in order to help activate the region post COVID-19.

- C4G's work on Gippsland Future Directions will focus on defining the region's comparative advantage (liveability choices underpinned by access to high valued/grade services) to attract families to move to Gippsland.

## Ensure a measured response – manage the balance between health and economy

### Action

- A meeting with the Latrobe Health Advocate's Jane Anderson earlier in the month provided opportunity for us to share information on how businesses were holding up through COVID-19. She was keen to ensure business feedback was presented back to government.
- C4G continues to share with government information from its members from an economic impact perspective.

## Keep members informed of any assistance available – the process must be streamlined, easy to access and avoid too many conditions

### Action

- In response to bushfires and COVID-19, we have developed a page on our website dedicated to information about assistance programs and packages, and we will look to secure guest speakers (online meetings) from government to help explain what's available and how to access it.
- C4G has been speaking with government about clarifying the conditions associated with JobKeeper and packages (ie. paying tax and reimbursements etc).

## Advocating for Gippsland's essential services

### Action

- C4G has written to the Minister for Regional Development (early April 2020) emphasising the role Gippsland's essential services play in supporting the state and national economy.

## Advocate for relief for commercial and residential landlords who are trying to look after their tenants

### Action

- C4G has dedicated webpages to COVID-19/bushfire response to make it easier for our members to access information about the latest support programs.
- The matter of relief for commercial and residential landlords has been raised by us with Small Business Victoria.
- The Victorian Government has announced a \$500m support package for residential and commercial tenants and landlords, with emergency legislation put to Victorian Parliament (April 23). Included is a six-month moratorium on evictions and rental increases, \$420m of land tax relief for landlords who discount rents for tenants in pandemic-related hardship, and \$80m in rental assistance for tenants who remain under financial stress after mediation. The latter will be paid directly to landlords.

## Council to have processes in place to ensure planning approvals continue to progress. Standard practices need to be adapted

### Action

- We have spoken with councils and Regional Development Victoria about this matter and will engage with the Gippsland Local Government Network.
- C4G understands through its broad discussions with members that Wellington Shire Council has very good planning process and response in place. We will speak with Wellington Shire's CEO and explore the potential for a consistent regional approach.

## Promote online opportunities to small businesses – supporting each other buying/shopping local

### Action

- C4G has set up and will soon commission a 'Gippsland - Taking Care of Business' page on its website. It is aimed at highlighting Gippsland business services that can assist business and community through the COVID-19 period. [LINK](#)
- We are also hosting fortnightly webinars with local Gippsland businesses for local Gippsland businesses.

## Advocate for the provision of legal frameworks to assist employers manage employee working arrangements

### Action

- C4G will liaise with the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) on this matter.
- The Committee has invited VCCI to participate at its forthcoming webinar.

## Keep boarders open with consistent handling for freight vehicles

### Action

- On March 26 I wrote to the Premier of Victoria seeking a balanced response to protect the health and wellbeing of Victorians whilst ensuring the economy continues to function. I outlined to the Premier a number of priorities vital to our region's recovery post COVID-19 and emphasised the importance of keeping our essential services operating during these challenging times.