

SOUTHERN GRAMPIANS SHIRE COUNCIL

Unscheduled Council Meeting Minutes Wednesday 30 July 2025

To be held in Council Chambers
5 Market Place, Hamilton at 5:00pm



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1 Membership

Councillors

Cr Dennis Heslin, Mayor
Cr Afton Barber
Cr Albert Calvano
Cr Adam Campbell
Cr Helen Henry
Cr Jayne Manning
Cr Katrina Rainsford

Officers

Mr Tony Doyle, Chief Executive Officer
Mr Darren Barber, Director People and Performance
Mr Rory Neeson, Director Wellbeing, Planning and Regulation
Ms Marg Scanlon, Director Infrastructure and Sustainability
Mrs Karly Herring, Governance Coordinator

2 Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country

The Chief Executive Officer, Tony Doyle will read the acknowledgement of country:

“Our meeting is being held on the traditional lands of the Gunditjmarra, Djab Wurrung, Jardwadjali and Buandig people.

I would like to pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, and the Elders from other communities who may be here today.”

Please note: All Council meetings will be audio recorded, and may be livestreamed to Council's social media platform, with the exception of matters identified as confidential items in the Agenda.

By participating in open Council meetings, individuals consent to the use and disclosure of the information they share at the meeting (including any personal and/or sensitive information).

Other than an official Council recording, no video or audio recording of proceedings of Council Meetings will be allowed without the permission of Council.

3 Appoint Temporary Chairperson

Subrule 3.2.2 of Council's Governance Rules state:

Meetings conducted in person shall be chaired by a Councillor who is physically present, in the following order of preference:

- (h) 1. The Mayor; or
- 2. If the Mayor is not physically present, the Deputy Mayor;
- 3. If neither the Mayor or Deputy Mayor are physically present, a Councillor who is physically present and is appointed by a resolution of the Council.

As the Mayor is attending virtually and in the absence of a deputy mayor, a temporary Chair must be appointed under subrule 3.3.2(c) of Council's Governance Rules:

If the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor are not in attendance at a Council Meeting, Council must appoint one of the Councillors as a temporary Chairperson by resolution.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council appoint Councillor _____ as a temporary Chairperson for this Council Meeting.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Henry
SECONDED: Cr Campbell

That Council appoint Councillor Barber as a temporary Chairperson for this Council Meeting.

CARRIED

4 Apologies

Cr Manning is an apology.

5 Prayer

Cr Calvano will lead the meeting in a prayer.

“Almighty God grant to this Council, wisdom, understanding and sincerity of purpose for the good governance of this Shire.”

6 Declaration of Interest

Cr Manning declared an interest in item 7.1.

Cr Rainsford declared an interest in item 7.1

Cr Rainsford left the chambers at 5:04pm.

7 Management Reports

7.1 Drought Support Rate Relief Package

Directorate: People and Performance
Report Approver: Darren Barber, Director People and Performance
Report Author: Nick Templeton, Head of Finance
Robyn Ackland, Finance Coordinator Revenue
Attachment(s): Nil

Executive Summary

The Victorian Premier announced on 4 July 2025 that \$35.8m would be provided to selected south-west Victorian councils through the Primary Producer Support Payment program (PPSP). This program is a key component of a broader Drought Support Package.

In a letter from Local Government Victoria dated 10 July 2025, Council was advised of an allocation of funding for Southern Grampians Shire \$4,345,544, equivalent to a 40% farm property rate reduction for 2025-26 for the local government area.

Council was asked to provide the confirmation of the proposed approach for allocation of the funding – either a 40% rate reduction on farm/rural properties across the board or an alternative approach with a supporting rationale. This approach is to be included in the funding agreement.

This program is warmly welcomed by Council and will provide much needed relief to rural property owners in our region.

Discussion

Local Government Victoria are responsible for the distribution of the funds to the drought affected local government areas. Council has been provided with the funding to allocate to drought affected farming businesses and it is based on 40% of rates and municipal charges for ratepayers categorised as being in a rural location.

Several options were considered by Council for the distribution of the funding with the overarching objective of ensuring the intended recipients, being drought affected primary producers, are the recipients of the rate relief. The relief will be provided in the form of a credit applied to the general rates and municipal charge for properties classified as being in a rural location, which will be shown on the rates notice.

The funding advised by Local Government Victoria was \$4,345,544. Council has calculated the amount to be distributed based on the criteria and have identified a shortfall in funding of \$111,903. This has been communicated to Local Government Victoria and Council are currently awaiting confirmation of whether this amount will be added to the total funding amount. Should the shortfall remain, this will impact the allocation to primary producers with the rate relief percentage reducing to just below 39% instead of 40%.

The funding is to be allocated based on:

- Rate relief of 40% on both General Rates and Municipal Charge
- Properties classified as Rural location
- No funding shortfall
- 3115* properties identified

(* Subject to change due to supplementary processing & successful objections)

Financial and Resource Implications

Council is required to implement the principles of sound financial management detailed in Section 101 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Council Plan, Community Vision, Strategies and Policies

Support Our Community

1.1 An empowered and connected community

1.1.3 Provide opportunities for increased community engagement and participation in Council decision making and activities.

1.1.4 Ensure communication and engagement methods use inclusive practices and processes.

Legislation

A funding agreement will be prepared that stipulates how Council will distribute the funding from the Primary Producer Support Payments Program.

Gender Equality Act 2020

There are no direct implications to the *Gender Equality Act 2020* in preparing the methodology for the distribution of the primary Producer Support Payments Program, however, Council casts a strong gender lens across all its operations, programs and projects throughout the year and the budget allows for provisions that support gender equality initiatives.

Risk Management

In preparing the calculations for disbursement of the funding, Council considers relevant financial and reputational risks. The methodology for disbursement of the funding will ensure risk of payment exceeding funding is minimal and the timing of discounts to ratepayers will be on the first instalment notice.

Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

No impact on Climate Change, Environmental and Sustainability Considerations through the disbursement of Primary Producer Support Payment funding.

Community Engagement, Communication and Consultation

Due to the nature and timing of the funding there has not been community consultation about the distribution methodology of the funding. The methodology for allocation of funds to relevant ratepayers will be communicated and will also be identified on rates notices.

Disclosure of Interests

All Council Officers involved in the development and advice provided in this Report affirm that no general or material interests need to be declared in relation to any matters in this Report.

Robyn Ackland, Finance Coordinator - Revenue

Nick Templeton, Head of Finance

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Approve the distribution of \$4,345,544 funding amount to be calculated on a consistent percentage basis across each eligible property in the rating category of rural for general rates and municipal charges
2. Distribute any additional funding received from the state government for the subsidy on the same basis;
3. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to enter into a funding agreement for the Primary Producer Support Payments Program.

COUNCIL RESOLUTION

MOVED: Cr Henry
SECONDED: Cr Calvano

That Council:

1. Approve the distribution of \$4,345,544 funding amount to be calculated on a consistent percentage basis across each eligible property in the rating category of rural for general rates and municipal charges
2. Distribute any additional funding received from the state government for the subsidy on the same basis;
3. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to enter into a funding agreement for the Primary Producer Support Payments Program.

CARRIED

Cr Rainsford returned at 5:13pm

8 Close of Meeting

This concludes the business of the meeting.

The Unscheduled Council Meeting on 30 July 2025 closed at 5:14pm.

To be confirmed by Resolution at the next Council Meeting.