

MAYOR'S MINUTE

25 April 2025



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

As the seasons change from summer to autumn, we're reminded of how special our corner of the world truly is. Our region is buzzing with activity and it's a joy to share some highlights from the past month with you all. Footy is back! The cold snap might have caught some of us off guard, but it's also a sure sign that football season is here. This weekend, the Hamilton Kangaroos are set to christen the newly redeveloped Melville Oval with a thrilling ANZAC Day clash against Portland. It promises to be a fantastic day, and we're expecting a big crowd to soak in the action and the new facilities. The transformation over the last 18 months has been profound. From a beautifully restored heritage grandstand to state-of-the-art amenities, netball courts, and newly irrigated oval, the site is now a true blend of tradition and modernity. Huge thanks to our local contractors and Ultrabuild for bringing this vision to life. These upgrades not only elevate our region's profile in the sporting world but also create a hub for community connection. Friday's blockbuster will be free entry for all, so if you're around, come down, cheer on the Kangaroos, and take in the fantastic redevelopment of these facilities which will benefit generations to come. As you read this, ANZAC Day will be upon us, so if you haven't already done so today, take a moment to pause and reflect on the sacrifices made by those who served our country. It's one of the most significant days on the Australian calendar, and our local services across the Shire provide an opportunity to gather as a community in remembrance and gratitude. I can't write this fortnight's column without mentioning the CBD London Plane trees. At this month's council meeting, as a Council we decided to take a measured approach and accepted a resolution to further investigate the trees and their impact on the CBD. The decision was made to ensure thorough consideration for each tree is achieved so the problematic trees can be evaluated and assessed.

We know that these trees are deeply valued by many, but they also present challenges for not only businesses, but infrastructure and pedestrians. At the forefront of all our decisions is our commitment to our local businesses, for which we know we need to prioritise and minimise the disruption caused by redevelopment works. To strike the right balance, we're asking for an updated plan from our architects. This will focus on retaining some trees while removing the most problematic ones. Additionally, we're developing a long-term tree maintenance and replacement strategy to ensure our CBD remains both vibrant and functional for the next 50 years. It's a big job, but one that's vital for our community's future. Roads is also front of mind this week with the Victorian Government awarding us a \$2 million grant via the Safer Local Roads Program. This funding will go directly towards improving key intersections and road safety infrastructure across the Shire. This is what our community has been asking for, safer roads and adequate investment in our community. Safer roads mean peace of mind for everyone – whether you're heading to work, school, or enjoying a weekend drive. This investment reflects our commitment to making the Southern Grampians a safer, more connected place to live and visit. As always, I'd like to take a moment to thank you, our incredible community. Your feedback and engagement provides the driving force behind everything we do. Whether it's through attending council meetings, sharing your thoughts, or simply showing up for events, you're shaping the future of our Shire in meaningful ways. If there's anything you need or want to discuss, don't hesitate to reach out. Let's keep working together to make our wonderful region even better. Take care and enjoy the autumn weather.