

21.02 MUNICIPAL PROFILE

15/10/2015
C77(Part 3)

21.02-1 Location

28/11/2013
C68

The South Gippsland Shire covers an area of approximately 3297 square kilometres and is located about 100 kilometres south east of metropolitan Melbourne. It is situated on the south western boundary of the Gippsland region and abuts five municipalities: Baw Baw and Latrobe City to the north, Wellington to the east, Bass Coast to the south-west and Cardinia to the west. The Strzelecki Ranges form much of the Shire's northern boundary, while the coastline delineates the southern boundary.

21.02-2 History

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South Gippsland has a rich and diverse cultural heritage. The land was originally occupied by Aboriginal people from the Gunnai, Bun wurrung and Wurundjeri clans, however few places of aboriginal cultural heritage remain from the pre-contact period, and almost none from the post-contact period. The remaining places are therefore highly significant in demonstrating the indigenous history of the Shire. Examples of remaining aboriginal heritage places include the evidence of shell middens along the coast, artefact 'scatters' and 'scarred' trees.

The post-contact cultural heritage places in the Shire reflect the area's development and can be described through themes which provide an historical explanation of the existing physical fabric and land use patterns. The majority of post-contact heritage places reflect four key historic themes:

- Early pastoralism and settlement
- The development of railways
- The development of agricultural industries (particularly dairying)
- Coal and gold mining, which had a significant influence at Korumburra and Foster respectively

These key historic themes are demonstrated by a variety of cultural heritage places including rural homesteads and farm buildings, public and community buildings such as halls, churches and schools, railway infrastructure, and commercial and industrial buildings such as butter factories. Other examples include war memorials, which include Avenues of Honour, routes of early explorers such as McDonalds Track, and significant cultural landscapes such as Mossvale Park and the former Mossvale nursery.

21.02-3 People and settlement

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The Shire's population of 27,937 (ABS Estimated Resident Population 2014 update) is spread across 26 settlements and 41 localities. The largest town within the Shire is Leongatha with a population of 5,332 (2011 ABS Census). Other significant towns are Korumburra 4,373, Mirboo North 2,296 and Foster 1,667 (2011 ABS Census).

Key demographic characteristics for South Gippsland are as follows:

- Population density in the Shire is greatest within the urban centres and in the area between Korumburra and Leongatha.
- There is considerable seasonal variation in the number of persons within the municipality due to the holiday homes (especially in the coastal towns) and the large influx of tourists during the summer months
- The proportion of the population in older age groups is increasing, consistent with an Australia-wide trend

- Household sizes are decreasing, in keeping with the trend for Victoria
- Just over half the Shire's population live outside urban areas
- There is also strong demand for dwellings outside the town areas by those seeking a more remote rural lifestyle
- The proportion of persons employed in the agricultural sector is considerably higher than for the Gippsland region
- Unemployment rates are lower than for both the Gippsland region and Victoria
- The proportion of people in the Shire born overseas is slightly lower than for the Gippsland region, and significantly lower than Victoria

21.02-4 Environment

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The Shire's natural beauty attracts residents and tourists from around the world.

South Gippsland is home to a diverse range of indigenous plants and animals. The Strzelecki Ranges contains warm temperate rainforest; the hills and plains are the home of the unique Giant Gippsland Earthworm; areas such as Corner Inlet support a wealth of marine, estuarine and freshwater plants and animals; and there are a large number of parks and reserves containing flora and fauna of State and national significance. The Shire contains areas of State, national and international natural significance, such as Wilson's Promontory National Park, Cape Liptrap Coastal Park, the Strzelecki Ranges, and Corner Inlet and Nooramunga Marine parks.

The Shire is characterised by a diverse topography of ranges, plains, low lying land and coastal areas. This has created some of Victoria's most picturesque landscapes ranging from the natural ruggedness and beauty of the coastline and beaches (including Wilson's Promontory, Cape Liptrap, Andersons Inlet, Waratah Bay and Corner Inlet), to the rolling hills of the agricultural districts and the tall tree forests of the Strzelecki Ranges.

A number of environmental challenges face the municipality, including:

- The loss of biodiversity (native flora and fauna)
- Land and water degradation
- Ensuring sustainable land use and development occurs
- Managing the environmental impacts resulting from climate change

21.02-5 Natural resource management

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The South Gippsland Shire's natural resources are essential for biodiversity, agriculture, industry and recreation. The Shire contains some of the most productive agricultural areas in Victoria and provides a substantial proportion of Victoria's milk and milk products as well as beef, prime lamb and timber products. Other forms of agricultural production include vegetables (for example, potatoes and snow peas), cereal cropping and grape growing. The relatively abundant rainfall and high quality agricultural soils of the area will likely continue to make the Shire attractive to agricultural producers.

21.02-6 Built environment and heritage

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The South Gippsland Shire is characterised by a variety of built heritage places including rural homesteads and farm buildings, public and community buildings such as halls, churches and schools, railway infrastructure, and commercial and industrial buildings such as butter factories. Other examples of heritage places include war memorials, which include Avenues of Honour, routes of early explorers such as McDonald's Track, and significant cultural landscapes such as Mossvale Park and the former Mossvale nursery.

21.02-7 Economic development28/11/2013
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Agricultural and associated manufacturing and service industry underpin the Shire's economy. The agricultural industry is supported by large dairy processing plants at Leongatha and Korumburra, with some value adding such as cheese production occurring on farms. Major saleyards are located at Koonwarra and abattoirs are at Foster and Poowong. Boutique farming is a small but emerging sector with activities such as alpaca rearing, olives, native bush food and organic food production have been introduced into the municipality in recent years.

Other important industries are timber production, the ESSO terminal at Barry Beach (which services the off-shore oil and gas platforms in Bass Strait) and extractive industry (sand and gravel). Manufacturing and retail sectors provide employment in the major towns and through value-adding activities.

Tourism also plays an important role in the Shire's economy, particularly within the major towns and coastal areas. The Shire's outstanding natural features, heritage significance and agricultural production leave it well placed to achieve growth in agri-tourism and eco-tourism.

21.02-8 Transport15/10/2015
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Three State highways—the South Gippsland, Bass and Strzelecki highways—serve South Gippsland. V-line buses serve commuters along the South Gippsland Highway to and from Melbourne throughout the week, and services also connect Leongatha to the Latrobe Valley via Mirboo North. Council community buses and cars in some towns provide additional services. Part of the former Great Southern Railway line still exists through much of the Shire and a tourist train operates between Nyora and Leongatha. The Shire contains one aerodrome located in Leongatha.

Although rail services to Melbourne remain discontinued, it is essential for the long term economic and social planning of the Shire that the option remains to return rail services in the future.

21.02-9 Infrastructure28/11/2013
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The towns of Korumburra, Leongatha, Foster, Mirboo North, Toora, Welshpool and Port Welshpool are serviced by reticulated sewerage and water. Other towns and coastal areas are only serviced by reticulated water or are not serviced.

21.02-10 Community services28/11/2013
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The Shire contains a range of community facilities and services to meet the needs of the community. Hospitals are located within the larger towns of Korumburra, Leongatha and Foster, while family, maternal and child health services are also provided in some of the smaller towns. Aged care facilities, such as nursing homes, are located at Korumburra, Leongatha, Foster, Mirboo North, Loch and Toora. A range of other facilities and organisations are provided throughout the Shire, including childcare centres, schools, community houses, libraries, public parks and reserves, community halls, sporting clubs and youth groups.