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Protecting, preserving and future-proofing our community

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We acknowledge the Gunaikurnai people as the Custodians of the lands and waters on which we live and work and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present

Strategic Benefit Sharing vs Traditional Benefits Sharing

Gippsland will play a significant role in Victoria's response to climate change and its commitment to achieving a Net Zero emissions targets. The communities of Golden Beach and Paradise Beach will be one of the most impacted areas of Gippsland, with many of the following proposed infrastructure projects located within 10 km of them;

- 12 licenses issued for offshore windfarms,
- an onshore windfarm behind us at Dutson Downs,
- carbon capture and storage programs being built by both CarbonNet and Esso, and
- offshore gas storage facility built by GB Energy.

Although infrastructure projects are typically completed over several years, the moment the first communication occurs between key stakeholders, there is an impact on our community. It is imperative that the development of these infrastructure projects occurs "with" our community rather than "to" our community, therefore we must ensure that we work in partnership with the various infrastructure projects to achieve desired outcomes.

Traditionally, each developer of a proposed infrastructure project would need to engage with a community, then design and implement a benefits program independently of any other developer. From this perspective it is a time-consuming, cumbersome and expensive process which results in short-term, small-scale activities that do not accurately represent the developer's contributions.

From a community perspective, the numerous consultations from multiple developers often result in an overload of information, community disinterest and consultation fatigue. Additionally, these activities often fail to address the wider community's objectives or long-term goals, both for current and future generations. For example, it is easier to sponsor a local festival or paint a clubhouse without incorporating more material long term legacy type projects such as a community battery.

Given the large number of stakeholders involved from both the developers and the community, engaging with a single representative entity will mitigate some of the aforementioned concerns. It will reduce the number of engagement exercises required, saving time and money by acting as the conduit between the community and the developers.

Following consultation with the nine local community groups, the Golden Paradise Beach Community Development Fund (GPBCDF) has been endorsed to act as the entity to represent their interests when engaging with the developers to pursue a more strategic approach to Community Benefits.

The Fund will coordinate the creation and maintenance of a long-term, living Community Development Plan (CDP) through a grass-roots engagement process with key community stakeholders including community groups, owners, renters, residents and businesses in Golden Beach and Paradise Beach. This plan will be a reflection of the community's immediate needs as well as ensuring a legacy for the future. Being a living document, this plan will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that it accurately reflects the needs of the current community. The CDP will serve as the community's vision and road map for the future.

By acting as the conduit between developers and the community, the GPBCDF can combine resources from multiple developers, which will enable the community to undertake significantly larger projects than would be possible following a more traditional approach.



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Developers are proactively invited to support the community-led vision for the future, that has been well-thought out, prioritised and has the community support. This will allow developers to support the community in delivering meaningful outcomes for current and future generations.

This shift in approach means that small grants for events like BBQs, footy jumpers, or club signage are no longer the primary focus, as we acknowledge and deliver the long-term, agreed-upon community goals. A traditional approach usually supports individual groups rather than supporting the community's collective plan. These smaller funding requirements for the community will be met by the provision of annual stipends or grants managed by the GPBCDF.

In a traditional approach, applicants are often kept in silos, lacking coordination and communication between different community groups. Consequently, there is a lack of transparency regarding the commitments made by various developers to the community. This approach is inefficient for both the developers and the community, it causes division within the community and distracts people from the concept of benefits for the wider community.

Conversely, adopting a strategic approach conveys positive support for the important goals determined by the community.

Summary:

Victoria's response to climate change and the Net Zero initiative involves infrastructure projects like wind farms and carbon capture, heavily impacting communities like Golden Beach and Paradise Beach. Traditional benefits sharing, with multiple developers engaging the community independently, leads to consultation fatigue and short-term, small-scale activities. A strategic approach, using the Golden Paradise Beach Community Development Fund as a conduit and fund manager, involves a community-led plan for long-term, meaningful outcomes at a larger scale than possible individually.

Table 1:

Traditional vs Strategic Benefit Sharing	
Traditional	Strategic
Starts with a project's call for grant applications	Starts with community's vision/roadmap for future
Each project looking for things to fund (fatigue)	Proponents proactively invited to support roadmap
Small grants - BBQs, footy t-shirts, non-profits	Combines funds - long-term agreed important goals
Support individual groups	Support community's collective plan
Applicants in silos - no coordination, discussion	Community has already collaborated on roadmap
Can run out of small things to fund	Funding needs known and prioritised
Can feel like bribes, not commensurate with impacts	Feels like positive support of important work done by community
No potential for broader region benefits	Potential to collaborate with other LGAs on large priorities