

Councillors hear of action group concerns

At the general meeting of the East Gippsland Community Action Group on September 26, members were pleased to welcome Crs John White and Colin Toohey, who had been supported as part of 'The Change Team' when they stood as candidates for council.

Secretary of EGCAG, Jeanette Wagner, in thanking the councillors for their attendance, said it was important for community groups to have opportunities to interact di-

rectly with their representatives as one-way formal presentations could be very limiting.

Matters discussed included:

- * Concern with the processes of council's intention to adopt a permit system for the movement of stock on roads. Legal advice on record since 2005 would have shown that there was no statutory requirement or legal liability under the present situation covered by VicRoads, EGCAG said.

- * In the interests of genuine trans-

parency, there is a need for council briefing sessions / assemblies of councillors to be open to the public. The group says this is where incomplete information can be given to councillors as the basis of their decision making.

- * Changes to meeting times of council. Serious concern was raised that by changing meeting times from 6pm to 1pm any councillor having to work full time could be excluded from participation in council. This also applies to people

who also work full time who are not able to attend public meetings during working hours. Added to this, the group says, is the timing of the weekly briefing sessions for 1pm where a councillor not able to attend cannot be fully informed.

"Since amalgamation local government has promoted greater inclusiveness in councillor representation through financial allowances for disability needs, childcare, and special allocations for overnight ac-

commodation for councillors living beyond 50 kilometres of meetings. However, it appears that full time workers, a large overlooked class, are currently being discriminated against," Ms Wagner said.

- * Fingerboards Mineral Sands Mining Project. Speakers at the meeting, in explaining aspects of potential effects, are deeply concerned that the public needs to be alerted and that council needs to take a proactive leadership role in opposing the sand mine.