

15 QUARTERLY ENVIRONMENT REPORT

FILE REFERENCE INT2033809

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RECOMMENDATION

That the Quarterly Environment Report be received and noted.

Attachments

Nil.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of some key projects, services and actions delivering environmental benefits across the work of Council. Projects have been categorised according to the *Sustainable Environment Policy (SEP) 2018–28* themes of:

- Biodiversity
- Climate change
- Water
- Waste and resource recovery

The SEP is the roadmap for the future direction of Council's environmental and sustainability strategies, plans and activities.

A similar report will be presented each quarter highlighting new programs or projects that have achieved significant milestones.

BACKGROUND

There are a broad range of projects, services and actions delivering environmental benefits throughout the organisation. While many of these occur within or are led by the Assets and Services Division, the vast majority of the organisation is involved in environmental sustainability to some degree. Below is a highlight of some of the key projects currently being undertaken.

All actions fall within the Council Plan 2019–20 under the key performance area of Environment 'we will continue to plan and manage the natural and built environment for present and future generations'.

Biodiversity

Council Plan action – Protect and improve biodiversity by increasing the area of natural ecosystems across the Shire.

Council Plan action – Preserve and improve our bushland and natural environment by implementing weed management strategy and programs and continuing activities on high conservation bushland reserves and roadsides..

Ragwort action project

Description	The Cardinia Hills Ragwort Action Project started in November 2019 and is focused in the areas of Cockatoo, Gembrook, Mt Burnett and surrounds. The aim of the project is to support landowners to control weeds on their property, through workshops, assisting with the formation of neighbourhood action groups and providing information and support for weed treatment. The project also aims to re-establish a Landcare group for the area.
Funding	This project is funded by the Victorian Government through the Caring for Our Local Environment (COLE) program.
Update	<p>Brochures about Ragwort and Blackberry, which are significant environmental weeds in the area, have been created and distributed to residents in the project area along with an information sheet about the project. Social media posts have been created, giving more information about identifying and controlling the environmental weed Ragwort to the community.</p> <p>A community weed control workshops was held in Cockatoo in February to provide information about identifying and controlling weeds to residents. The workshop was well attended and received positive feedback from attendees. Two neighbourhood weed action groups have been established in Cockatoo and these groups have been provided with specific weed control information and financial support. A number of individual property visits have been undertaken to give residents site specific information about weed control and native vegetation on their properties. These property visits have also received positive feedback.</p> <p>A second workshop was due to be held at the end of March, but has been postponed due to Covid-19 social distancing requirements.</p> <p>There have been a number of meetings with interested community members willing to be involved in establishing a local Landcare group. Interest for the new Landcare group is being generate through other actions of the project such as property visits and the weed control workshops. 'Weed warriors unite' articles, have been in the Ranges Trader Mail, to promote the project, the weed control workshops and new Landcare group to the community. The aim is to have the first Annual General Meeting for the new Landcare group by the end of June 2020.</p>

Cannibal Creek catchment – funding for fire effected roadsides

Description	The Bunyip fires of 2019 affected 85 percent of the Cannibal Creek catchment, including the roadside network throughout the area. This has resulted in some large woody weeds being burnt (such as Sweet Pittosporum), however some weeds have responded favourably from the fire heat and have germinated prolifically since the fires.
Funding	In December 2019, the Department of Environment Land and Water and Planning (DELWP) announced a funding stream called Reducing Fire Risk. Through a sub-category of this funding, Native Vegetation

	<p>Improvements, the Cannibal Creek Catchment Landcare Group received \$160,000 (2019-2021) for recovery related activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reinstating burnt fences • revegetation • protecting remnant vegetation through fencing • weed control works on private land <p>Of these funds, \$55,000 has been allocated to Cardinia Shire Council for the control of woody weeds on Council roadsides located within the burnt area.</p>
Update	<p>Council has engaged contractors to undertake the works, which have been underway since early this year on newly germinated woody weeds, including blackberry, Sweet Pittosporum and flax leafed broom.</p>

Climate change

Council Plan action - Adapt to the impacts of climate change by working in partnership with the South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA) and both Victorian and Australian Governments

Council Plan action – Reduce Council's energy consumption and help the community to do likewise.

Fleet carbon offset

Description	Council has offset 545 tonnes of carbon that accounts for around 40 percent of Council's entire fleet associated emissions.
Funding	This project is fully funded by Council
Update	<p>The purchase of carbon offsets is a practical option for offsetting unavoidable organisational emissions. The combined annual emissions of Council's heavy and light fleets is approximately 1300 tonnes. Council has offset 545 tonnes of carbon that accounts for around 40 percent of Council's entire fleet associated emissions.</p> <p>Council has taken a mixed portfolio approach purchasing 300 tonnes of offsets from a Gold Standard biodiverse revegetation project in Australia and 245 tonnes from a Verified Carbon Standard wind farm project in India. Carbon offsets projects are ranked according to the accreditation on the international carbon market.</p> <p>Biodiverse Reforestation Project (300 tonnes offsets) The Yarra Biodiversity Corridor, revegetation project is located in southwest Australia. Within the last 100 years over 90 percent of the region has been cleared for agriculture. Conservation International, a world authority on biodiversity conservation, globally recognises southwest Australia as one of only 35 internationally significant hotspots. Planting of native trees and shrubs for their specific carbon sequestration capacities also promotes the establishment of habitat stepping-stones and links for biodiversity to move and disperse back through the landscape.</p> <p>Chakala Wind Farm Project (245 tonnes) The Chakala wind farm provides a sustainable alternative to fossil fuel and coal fired energy production. The wind farm project supports the global transition to renewable energy, mitigating future greenhouse gas emissions and decreasing the dependence on coal and fossil fuels. In the absence of this project, fossil fuel powered generators would produce an equivalent amount of electricity. The Chakala wind farm supports the uptake of renewable energy alternatives and therefore reduces the global demand for coal; influencing the economic viability and lifespan of unsustainable on-shore projects such as the Adani mine.</p>

Civic centre energy and water efficiency improvements

Description	A NABERS (National Australian Built Environment Rating System) assessment of the Civic Centre was undertaken for both water and energy efficiency.
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Funding	This project is fully funded by Council
Update	<p>A NABERS assessment has been completed to assess the Civic Centre’s water and energy efficiency performance. The Civic Centre achieved a 6 star rating for water (the highest available) and a 4 star rating for energy.</p> <p>A rainwater capture system and storage tank has supported the achievement of such a high water rating. There has been an energy reduction since the 2018 rating and the resulting annual energy cost savings equate to approximately \$5,000 annually. These savings have been achieved through minor adjustments including changes to the programming of building lighting. Energy efficiency projects currently being worked on should assist in further improving the energy rating of the civic centre.</p> <p>Buildings use 40 percent of the world’s energy, emit 40 percent of the world’s carbon emissions, and use 20 percent of the world’s available drinking water. By conducting annual NABERS assessments, we are able to evaluate and enhance the sustainability of a building and develop actions to lower the environmental footprint.</p>

Heritage**'Link to our past' blog**

Description	The Casey Cardinia 'links to our past' blog covers the post contact history of people, places, organisations and events in the City of Casey and Cardinia Shire.
Funding	This is a Casey-Cardinia Library Corporation initiative
Update	A link to this informative blog (hosted on the Casey Cardinia Library Corporation website) is included on the 'our heritage' page on Council's website. The page includes a local history general enquiry form, where residents can ask questions about their local area or if they want information about past local residents

Water

Council Plan action – Manage water in an integrated way, including the reduction of potable water consumption by Council and households.

Council plan action - Promote water catchment management practices that improve the quality of our waterways

Lakeside wetlands – refresh works

Description	Maintenance of the Lakeside wetland, located off Clearwater Drive, Pakenham, including desilting and weed removal.
Funding	This project is fully funded by Council
Update	The wetland has been desilted and blackberry and willows have been removed. The spoil (removed during the desilting works) will be temporarily stored on-site to dry out. This brief period of on-site stockpiling makes it easier and cleaner to relocate the spoil (expected a total duration of four weeks, during April, pending weather conditions).

Waste and resource recovery

Council Plan action – promote practices that result in the reduction per household of the amount of waste going to landfill, particularly food waste.

Waste reduction rebates results

Description	Waste reduction rebates were introduced to support residents to reduce their waste to landfill. In September 2019, the existing rebates for compost, worm farms, food digesters and mulchers were expanded to include reusable nappies and sanitary items. Nappies and women's sanitary items are essential to healthy and inclusive living but are also items that contribute significantly to landfill.
Funding	This initiative is fully funded by Council.
Update	The nappy and sanitary rebates have been overwhelmingly successful, with a high level of demand from our community. The allocated budget of \$10,000 for these rebates was fully exhausted within 4 months, and the nappy and sanitary rebates closed on Friday 31 January 2020. The other rebates remain open. The increased awareness of the rebates during this time also saw a significant increase in uptake of compost, worm farm, food digester and mulcher rebates. The nappy and sanitary rebates are under review ahead of the next financial year.

Department of Justice litter program

Description	The waste team partnered with the Department of Justice (DOJ) in September 2019 on a program to collect litter in the shire. The Department of Justice provides work programs for people needing to complete community service hours as part of their court order. DOJ supplies supervision and transportation to work sites. Council provides work locations and litter bags, and covers the cost of the supervisor and waste disposal. The partnership provides a low-cost option for litter clean up, reducing pressure on the Operations department and reliance on external contractors.
Funding	This program is fully funded by Council.
Update	Litter collection has been focused around 20 litter hot spots in the growth corridor, usually with one collection held per week. The partnership has enabled timely response to resident requests for litter clean ups. In January and February in excess of 60 bags of litter were collected.