

6.5.2 Environment Quarterly Report

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Recommendation(s)

That Council note the report.

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 Infrastructure and Environment 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 2020–21 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.

1. Cardinia Creek – Peri urban Weed Partnership Project

Description	<p>The Peri Urban Weed Partnership (PUWP) project is an initiative of the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) in partnership with Cardinia Shire and other agencies including Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Vic Roads and Cardinia Environment Coalition (CEC). Other stakeholders include environmental groups.</p> <p>The key objective of this 4-year project was to achieve effective control of environmental weed species that are invading high value bushland reserves within the Cardinia Creek corridor, by including works on Council land, crown land and private land.</p> <p>The bushland reserves that are included in the project contain high biodiversity values including threatened native plant and animal species; and are areas of natural scenic beauty.</p>
Funding	<p>This partnership project is jointly funded by Council and DELWP, along with contributions by other agencies. DELWP contribute \$150,000 to this project annually, with Council receiving \$76,000 per year. The remaining funds are distributed to Parks Victoria and the Cardinia Environment Coalition.</p>
Update	<p>The four-year Peri Urban Weed Partnership Project has now been completed and the final report has been submitted to DELWP.</p> <p>In June, an additional \$31,000 was made available by DELWP to extend the role of the Peri Urban Weed Partnerships Project Facilitator (contractor) until November 2020. The facilitator is conducting a review of the project outcomes over the past four years including the effectiveness of weed control, the response of biodiversity and native species, and the relationships built with agency and community stakeholders working together. The project sites will be mapped for the presence and species of weeds, with a comparison made to weed data collected at the commencement of the project. The results of this review will inform future planning for further works.</p> <p>This will enable the partnership to be ready should future funding become available.</p>

2. Emerald Lake Park Vegetation Management Project 2020-21

Description	<p>The Emerald Lake Park Vegetation Management Project aims to increase the biodiversity values in the native bushland areas of the park, predominantly by managing high threat weeds, encouraging natural regeneration and undertaking replanting with indigenous species. Priority zones were identified in Council's <i>Weed Management Strategy 2019-24</i>.</p> <p>The Friends group were successful in receiving grants that have assisted in the delivery of this project from the Australian Government and Melbourne Water.</p>
Funding	<p>The project is jointly funded by Council, the Australian Government's Communities Environment Program and a Melbourne Water Project Grant.</p>
Update	<p>The removal of large, invasive Sycamore Maples within the bushland and waterway area has been undertaken, resulting in significantly fewer future seed burden for the site. Sycamore Maples grow very quickly from seed to a large tree. The large trees create competition for indigenous species, produce approximately 10,000</p>

	<p>seeds a year and drop a large amount of leaf litter in autumn which smother indigenous vegetation.</p> <p>Works are underway across priority zones to treat noxious and environmental weeds such as holly, sweet pittosporum, red cestrum, blackberry, tree tobacco, ivy and Japanese honeysuckle.</p> <p>Revegetation works have been undertaken along the creek near Wishing Well track with 250 indigenous plants (tube stock) planted so far. More indigenous tube stock will be planted across the creek zone during the next planting season.</p> <p>Works are being undertaken with respect to the surrounding native vegetation.</p>
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3. Friends group strategic action plans

Description	Friends group strategic action plans
Funding	This initiative is funded by the Victorian Government's Caring for Our Local Environment (COLE) grant
Update	<p>Friends group strategic action plans have been finalised. Eight groups participated through onsite and virtual workshops. The ninth group already had a strategic plan and did not need to participate in the workshops. The project used an external facilitator to step each group through the creation of a 5-year plan.</p> <p>Each plan is tailored to the groups personal priorities which are then phased over the 5-year period. Council officers were able to provide input into the plans to ensure the volunteers goals and objectives met Council safety standards and procedures. The volunteers were highly complementary of the process.</p>

4. Friends group grants

Description	Annual grants paid to Council's nine volunteer friends groups that work in bushland reserves.
Funding	This program is fully funded by Council
Update	The annual Friends group grant has been paid to each of Council's nine Friends group, to support them in the work they do in bushland reserves, including small tools, first aid equipment, group insurance and administration costs. The Friends groups are made up of dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly to help enhance biodiversity in our bushland reserves. The groups also provide valuable surveillance role to alert Council of issues within the reserve and help to advocate the value of biodiversity and the merits of volunteerism to the broader community.

5. Western Port Biosphere report card

Description	The Western Port Biosphere (WPB) who represent each of the five Council's surrounding Western Port (including Frankston City Council) are refocusing their biennial report card around the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The goals aim to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice and tackle climate change by 2030.
Funding	The initiative is fully funded by the Western Port Biosphere
Update	The Biosphere report card is a biennial report that describes how each of the five councils are contributing to a sustainable environment. This year the 'report card', will document what each of the councils are doing to meet the variety of the 17 goals. Each council will be providing different information against different nominated SDG's so the report will be 'telling a storey' of environmental sustainability in the region, rather than a comparative assessment between the different Councils environmental contribution. The WPB will produce the report card every second year which over time will provide a comparative analysis on how the peri-urban councils are progressing towards the SDG's.

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.

6. Environmental Upgrade Finance program

Description	<p>The Environmental Upgrade Finance (EUF) program offers long term, low interest loans via an agreement to owners of commercial and non-residential buildings, so they can upgrade the building to improve its efficiency.</p> <p>Finances can be used for energy, water and waste efficiency projects that will reduce operating costs and environmental impacts.</p>
Funding	<p>The EUF program is a Sustainable Melbourne Fund project and participation in the program comes at no expense to Council. An agreement between a building owner, a financial institution and Council is reached. Repayments are made by the property owner via the rates mechanism and Council functions as the collection agency.</p>
Update	<p>Patties Foods Ltd has entered into an environmental upgrade agreement. The agreement will provide Patties Foods Ltd with upfront project funding to undertake an LED lighting upgrade of their Pakenham facility. Council acts as a collection agent and repayments to the project financing are made back to the Sustainable Melbourne Fund through the Council rates system.</p> <p>This upgrade will support energy efficiency improvements and the reduction of 325 tonnes of carbon emissions. By participating in the EUA program Patties Foods Ltd becomes the second business in Cardinia Shire to take advantage of this opportunity and upgrade to newer more efficient technology.</p>

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

7. Emerald Library – reuse of water tanks

Description	The installation of 10,000-litre rainwater tank at Emerald Library, which had previously been in storage.
Funding	This project was fully funded by Council
Update	A rainwater harvesting system was installed in June at the Emerald library and provides water to the male, female and disabled toilets for flushing and will significantly reduce mains water use and costs for the site. The rainwater harvesting system also provides additional benefits by reducing site run-off and flood peaks. The tank has been installed and is operational.

8. Deep Creek Reserve wetland wonders project

Description	The ‘wetland wonders’ project includes three boardwalks that link to a central viewing platform located at the demonstration wetlands at Deep Creek Reserve. The three boardwalks represent the three creeks that converge at Deep Creek Reserve; Pakenham Creek, Deep Creek and Whiskey Creek. The boardwalk trail will include education interpretation elements about biodiversity of the wetlands, the importance of wetland systems in protecting Westernport bay and traditional owner stories.
Funding	This project is jointly funded by Council and Victorian Government through the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Update	<p>The demonstration wetlands, at Deep Creek Reserve, play an important role in the water management of the site, filtering water and creating aquatic ecosystems. They also provide education opportunities for schools’ programs offered onsite by Ecolinc.</p> <p>Currently there is limited linkage or access for people of all abilities from the car park and main building to the demonstration wetlands.</p> <p>Planning and design of the three boardwalks has commenced with engagement of key stakeholders, including Cardinia Environment Coalition (CEC), Ecolinc and Deep Creek Golf Club.</p>

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.

9. Bookable hard waste

Description	The bookable hard waste collection service maintains the previous shire-wide disposal amounts, but now with increased flexibility for residents; residents can still access two collections per calendar year, with the same 2m ³ size limit per collection.
Funding	This service is fully funded by the annual garbage charge.
Update	<p>On 1 July 2020, Council changed from a blanket hard waste service to the new bookable hard waste collect service.</p> <p>The changeover saw a successful implementation by Council and the new contractor, Cleanaway, including new vehicles, staff and call centre; moving all calls for hard waste enquiries and bookings from Council's Customer Service team to Cleanaway's.</p> <p>A comprehensive communication and behaviour change program began in July, showing a positive community response to the service change. Within the first eight weeks of launch over 1,700 bookings were made (and completed).</p> <p>The move to bookable hard waste will reduce waste sent to landfill in Cardinia Shire, increase the amount of material recovered and is expected to reduce illegally dumped rubbish.</p>

10. Food waste in green bins

Description	Council's new kerbside collection contract for the collection of residential kerbside rubbish, recycling and green waste services now includes the expansion of the green bin to include food waste.
Funding	This service is fully funded by the annual garbage charge.
Update	<p>The new kerbside collection contract commenced on 1 October 2020 and includes 16 new waste collection trucks, all with updated educational designs. Nine of these new trucks are on the road today, the remaining seven will be rolled out during November.</p> <p>These new trucks have improved efficiencies, are more environmentally friendly and are fitted out with the latest technology, including 360° camera views - to improve safety for the community and video playback to help investigate resident enquiries.</p> <p>Over the last few months collection routes have been reviewed and some bin days changed for areas of the community. Developing our most efficient routes to date and preparing for continuing growth in the shire.</p> <p>Food waste collection in the green bin launched 28 September 2020. Delivery of kitchen caddies and welcome packs (including a letter, flyer and sticker) has commenced for all 23,473 households who currently have a green bin. In the future all new green bin orders will be delivered with a caddy to ensure maximum diversion of food waste from landfill.</p> <p>An ongoing extensive communication plan for food in the green bin has seen a positive response from the community and will be ongoing to educate on correct use and encourage remaining residents to order a green bin.</p>

11. Waste community education

Description	Council provides waste education programs to residents through a variety of formats including online materials, talks, workshops, event stalls and school and kinder programs
Funding	This service is fully funded by the annual garbage charge.

Update	<p>During the COVID-19 restrictions, waste education continues to be adapted to a virtual format. Our most recent engagements included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ‘All Things Reusable’ virtual workshop held Sunday 12 July for Plastic Free July, in partnership with Casey Cardinia Libraries. 14 participants.• ‘Composting Correctly’ virtual workshop held Thursday 3 September in partnership with City of Casey. 36 participants• Two ‘Food in the Green Waste Bin’ virtual workshops to answer all questions around the changing service, held on Thursday 10 September and Saturday 12 September. 34 participants.• ‘Reduce your Impact and Save Money’ virtual workshop with tips to reduce waste, energy and water bills be in partnership with City of Casey, held on Thursday 22 October• ‘Beeswax Wraps’ virtual workshop to make sustainable food wraps in partnership with City of Casey, held on Saturday 24 October. <p>The waste education team has also designed a user-friendly printed <i>Waste and Recycling Guide</i> containing the new bookable hard waste service information, updated green bin service information and a reminder of all the other waste services offered in Cardinia Shire including kerbside bins, drop-off events, rebates, workshops etc. This guide will be posted out via unaddressed mail to all Cardinia Shire residents over the coming weeks.</p>
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