

6.5.4 Environment Council Plan Initiatives Quarterly Report

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Recommendation(s)

That Council note this report

Attachments

1. Environment Council Plan Initiatives Quarterly Report [6.5.4.1 - 7 pages]

Executive Summary

This quarterly report provides an update on projects, services and actions that are undertaken by Council to deliver on the Council Plan focus area number three: thriving environments and its associated initiatives.

Priority: We value our natural assets and support our biodiversity to thrive

We place a high value on our natural assets and biodiversity. We take action to help our natural assets and biodiversity thrive and build their resilience to climate change and natural hazards. We enhance green spaces and habitat links, support our communities to live sustainably, and champion sustainable development and waste management practices.

Initiatives

The initiatives 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

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 Environment and Infrastructure Group, most of the organisation is involved in environmental sustainability to some degree.

Council Plan initiatives and how they link to the Sustainable Environment Policy themes:

- Biodiversity
 - Implement initiatives in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy
- Climate change
 - Implement initiatives in the Aspirational Energy Transition Plan
- Water
 - Implement initiatives in the Integrated Water Management Plan
- Waste and resource recovery
 - Implement the action plan for the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy

This report also covers the Council Plan initiative *actively protect key heritage sites within the shire.*

Project update

Projects and updates are included in the attached report.

Biodiversity

Council Plan initiative

- Implement initiatives in the *Biodiversity Conservation Strategy*

This section also includes updates on the implementation of the *Weed Management Strategy*

Indigenous plant giveaway trial

Description	<p>Council ran a trial indigenous plant giveaway in September-October for schools, kindergartens, community groups and owners of properties more than 4000 square metres via a free \$100 native plant voucher for the Cardinia Environment Coalition Nursery.</p> <p>The vouchers encourage mass plantings of native species to help support local wildlife and to increase carbon capture and storage. The vouchers were funded through delivery of Council's Aspirational Energy Transition Plan.</p>
Funding	This program is fully funded by Council
Update	<p>Online voucher applications went live on Threatened Species Day 7 September and were gone within 24 hours. Applications were made by six schools/kinders, seven community groups and 97 landowners.</p> <p>Council was able to provide additional vouchers, following the initial allocation by working with the CEC. This provided an additional 50 vouchers.</p> <p>Due to the success of the trial the program will run again in 2022-23, however modifications may be made to, how the funding is allocated i.e.: increased number of vouchers by reducing the value to \$50, to ensure more residents and groups can participate.</p> <p>In April 2022, the annual giveaway of two free native plants per household, will be held again, for the first 1000 attendees at Cardinia Environment Coalition Nursery</p>

FeralScan app training

Description	<p>A webinar on the use of the FeralScan app was presented by Peter West and Emma Sawyers from the NSW Department of Primary Industries:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 August for Council staff wanting to understand how to use the data collected on deer for environmental planning • 26 August for the Cardinia community on how to use the app to collect observations on deer presence. <p>Council is seeking the community's support in detecting deer presence across the shire and helping to protect biodiversity by using the FeralScan app to collect as much data as possible. This tool is a useful addition to other monitoring tools used to track deer populations and can be done by anyone in the community.</p>
Funding	The webinars were presented by government representatives.
Update	Four Council staff and 15 community members attended the webinars. Ongoing support by the presenters will be provided to app users attending.

Biodiversity Blitz 2021 (Melbourne)

Description	<p>Cardinia Shire joined eight other surrounding councils in the Biodiversity Blitz 2021 – Melbourne Challenge. This event is for the whole community to participate in and involves using the iNaturalist App to collect and record observations of as many plants and animals found in the shire as possible. The council with the most observations is the Biodiversity Blitz 2021 champion.</p> <p>The data collected in the observations record in iNaturalist contributes to the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) – a scientific database used by state and federal government in biodiversity planning.</p>
Funding	This is a Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning initiative, with promotional support by the eight participating councils.
Update	<p>A training webinar on the iNaturalist App was run on 2 September for those wanting to find out more on using the app, before entering the challenge.</p> <p>A valuable addition to this project is a report to be prepared by researcher Luis Mater from University of Melbourne, that evaluates the Biodiversity Blitz 2021 program and its effectiveness by comparing ALA data on Cardinia Shire flora and fauna already captured to that captured after the Bio Blitz 2021 event. This will measure the effectiveness of the project and help to justify running the event in future.</p>

Climate change

Council Plan initiative

- Implement initiatives in the *Aspirational Energy Transition Plan*

This section also includes projects that are run by South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA), of which Cardinia Shire is a partner.

There are several projects currently underway under the climate change area, including:

- Drafting of Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy – this document will direct Council's approach to strengthening the resilience of the shire to the adverse impacts of climate change.
- Council Asset Vulnerability Assessment – identifying and developing an understanding of the sensitivity of Council's roads, building and drainage assets to adverse climate impacts
- A new green power contract commencing 1 July 2022 – 100% renewable electricity procurement for Council use through the Victorian Energy Collaboration project (VECO)
- Small Business Energy Saver Program – actively promoting the uptake of the Victorian Energy Upgrades and other sustainability opportunities across the small businesses in the shire.
- Investigation into LED streetlighting upgrade – changeover of remaining mercury Vvpor streetlights to LED alternatives that provide energy efficiency benefits.
- Transitioning Council's fleet to electric vehicles investigation – this is a SECCCA project in collaboration with RMIT to understand the availability of suitable electric vehicle options for a smooth transition of Council's fleet.
- Federation University Climate Impacts Report – collaboration with Federation University has delivered a report to further the understanding of localised climate change impacts in Cardinia Shire.

Work continues on these projects, they will have more detailed updates in future reports, when a key milestone is reached.

Heritage

Council Plan initiative

- Actively protect key heritage sites within the shire

Emerald Museum – audit of collection

Description	The Emerald Museum volunteers have begun to audit the collection. Currently the museum's electronic database (ehive) holds 2800 objects, however the collection encompasses well over 8000 items in total. This includes materials like agricultural machinery, archives, books, clothing, maps and plans, objects and audio-visual material.
Funding	This activity is currently being undertaken by volunteers from the Emerald Museum committee.
Update	<p>The audit will have volunteers feed information directly into the electronic database to accurately record an items content and update correct location. Completion of the audit will inform other necessary tasks such as Australian Indigenous material to be flagged for a repatriation program.</p> <p>The Museum Officer is supporting the volunteers in this task by ensuring the existing data in the database is clean and accurate, along with educating the volunteers on how to enter new items into the database.</p>

Heritage grants – 2021-22 successful grant recipients

Description	The heritage grant program is available to all Cardinia Shire residents and groups to help repair or conserve places and sites covered by a heritage overlay in the Cardinia Shire Planning Scheme.
Funding	Grants are funded on a dollar-for-dollar basis (\$1 from Council and \$1 from the applicant) to a maximum grant of \$5000.
Update	<p>Additional community engagement was undertaken in Bunyip, with a flyer drop to businesses within the Bunyip Main Street precinct, to encourage tenants/owners to apply for grants to undertake work on the shops covered by the precinct heritage overlay. Unfortunately, this did not result in any applications for these locations, however this will be trailed again next year and expanded into another township.</p> <p>Applications closed at the end of May for the 2021-22 Heritage grant and have been assessed, with the successful applicants notified in July. Two applications were successful and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conservation works to Mallow House (home of Kooweerup Historical Society) • replacement of the original front fence at the Nar Nar Goon Union Church site.

Water

Council Plan initiative

- Implement initiatives in the Integrated Water Management Plan

Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) management plan implementation

Description	<p>Council currently has over 67 WSUD assts valued at \$17m, with only 30% considered to be in good or very good condition.</p> <p>Water sensitive urban design (WSUD) is an important part of water cycle management. It is an approach that integrates whole of water cycle management into urban planning and design. WSUD aims to create urban environments that allow the water cycle to function as it would naturally. This reduces the impact of development on the water cycle.</p> <p>The WSUD management plan outlines the difference between proactive maintenance and reactive maintenance. With proactive maintenance a wetland (WSUD) can have a life of 25-50 years in comparison to only 10 years with no proactive maintenance. WSUD assets require both proactive and reactive maintenance to secure long-term asset health and functional performance. The WSUD management plan has resulted in a commitment in the 5-year capital works budget for ongoing maintenance works for WSUD assets.</p>
Funding	This project is funded by Council
Update	<p>The implementation of the management plan has commenced with an audit of the current WSUD asset information, to ensure all assets have been captured and have been defined in a consistent manner.</p> <p>This will be followed by a condition assessment of all assets in accordance with Melbourne Water audit guidelines, followed by developing a program for proactive maintenance and works.</p>

Waste and resource recovery

Council Plan initiatives

- Implement the action plan for the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy

Food Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) update

Description	In October 2020 Council began the new kerbside collection contract which expanded the garden waste bin service to include food waste. This service delivered one of our key <i>Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</i> actions and has since been included in the Victorian Government's <i>Recycling Victoria Policy</i> as a mandatory action.
Funding	This service is fully funded by Council's garbage charge.
Update	<p>As of July 2021, there are 26,852 green bins across the shire, which is 61.8% of households. Since the introduction of food waste in Oct 2020, an average of 210 new and additional green bins are delivered per month. This service increase is higher than new and additional service additions in garbage and recycling (both average 160 per month).</p> <p>Over 8,000 tonnes of food and garden waste has been diverted from landfill and processed into compost within the first nine months of food waste in the green bin. This is an increase of 644 tonnes when compared to the nine months prior to FOGO - or an average increase of 2.8kg per household per month diverted from landfill.</p> <p>Council will continue to promote and encourage households to divert food and garden waste from landfill via this optional fortnightly kerbside service.</p> <p>Since introducing the service, some residents have requested food and garden waste be collected weekly however this requires the service to be compulsory for the remaining 40% of households, with the rubbish bin moving to fortnightly collections. Council believes that the optional service is ideal for our community, with a focus on increasing uptake over the coming years. Our optional services focus on quality over quantity, with a contamination rate of less than 3%, meaning lower processing costs, better quality compost and end market security and therefore a better outcome for the environment.</p> <p>Heading into warmer weather Council continues to provide free compostable caddy liners to residents as well as ongoing tips and suggestions for reducing smells as food breaks down.</p>

Storm response (kerbside, bookable and drop off)

Description	In response to the severe storm event that hit the community on 9-10 June 2021, impacting many Cardinia Shire residents, Council provided immediate and ongoing support including waste service support for the large clean-up required.
Funding	Victorian Government emergency event funding
Update	<p>Kerbside waste services were disrupted on 9-10 June due to access issues and safety concerns following a severe storm. As a result, approximately 2,000 properties missed their usual collection.</p> <p>Waste trucks returned the following week to collect all missed bins and provide extra collections for additional waste such as spoiled food from power outages. Over 3,000 additional collections were provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2398 general waste bins • 685 recycling bins and • 40 Food and garden waste bins. <p>Other additional waste services provided included bins at drop-in centres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 bins at Emerald, collected once to manage household waste • 7 bins at Cockatoo, collected every few days, for two weeks to manage spoiled food waste • 4 bins at Emerald SES, collected as required to manage food and green waste and material from volunteers. <p>Additional services were also provided to residents to assist with green waste clean-up on properties. This included extra hard waste bookings for green waste, (utilised by 10 households) and a free Green Waste Drop-off service operating out of Cleanaway Lysterfield Transfer Station. The drop-off began on 12 July for several weeks but due to Covid-19 lockdowns this service was cut short.</p> <p>Despite the shortened timeframe, there were 80 transactions and 20.2 tonnes of green waste dropped off/recovered. This material was turned into compost aligning to the <i>Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</i> action of offering alternatives to burning off. There are more Green waste drop offs scheduled for Oct/Nov.</p>

Recovery of unpaid waste services

Description	<p>Council's new kerbside collection contract commenced October 2020 and included the rollout of 16 new kerbside waste trucks. In addition to being more sustainable these trucks also have significant technology improvements from the previous fleet.</p> <p>Over the last few months Cleanaway have been working with Council and using this technology to identify and report discrepancies in Councils records, revealing a gap of around \$39,000 per year in unpaid waste services.</p>
Funding	This service is fully funded by Council's garbage charge.
Update	<p>Drivers have been identifying and reporting unpaid waste services and non-council bins during their day-to-day operations throughout the shire, as part of the Garbage Charge Service Auditing and Recovery Program.</p> <p>Council cross-checked this data against waste levy information and the Working for Victoria (WV) team conducted physical inspections of 350 addresses. WV removed all non-Cardinia Shire Council bins and confirmed any additional unpaid services for charges to be applied.</p> <p>This first round of audits involved a significant amount of work from the waste team, WV team and rates team, highlighting a gap of \$39,000 in yearly revenue across kerbside waste charges for 177 properties.</p> <p>These recovered charges are in addition to the \$13,600 in garbage and green bin charges recovered during the rollout of bookable hard waste and food waste service.</p> <p>These audits are an ongoing process and data will be reviewed every few months to ensure we are delivering an efficient and cost-effective waste service for our residents.</p>

Working for Victoria update

Description	<p>Council created 60 new contract roles for local residents as part of the Victorian Government's Working for Victoria fund. The \$500 million Victorian Government initiative is supporting people who have lost their jobs – either due to the impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19), or for other reasons. Commencing January 2021, four waste management officers and one waste management leading hand were employed for six months.</p>
Funding	Victorian Government's Working for Victoria fund, facilitated by Council.
Update	<p>The engagement of this team has been a real success for Cardinia Shire, their contributions have significantly benefited the community, the environment, and had improved economic outcomes. Projects completed by this team over the last eight months include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dumped rubbish and residential hard waste audits • community education of the new bookable hard waste process, delivering brochures and talking to residents with unbooked hard waste piles. • public place bin infrastructure auditing. • garbage charge service auditing and recovery program, (as above - removal of non-Cardinia branded bins and confirming unpaid services) • food and green waste sticker distribution. • targeted litter picks and clean ups of 54 sites including Hilltop Reserve Beaconsfield, McGregor Rd, Eastone Reserve Cardinia Lakes, Lower Gum Scrub sound wall, with approximately 105 cubic metres of waste removed. <p>The program provided the Waste Management team and Parks team with the resources to undertake many additional projects that would otherwise not have been resourced. It highlights the opportunity for a dedicated additional resource to provide litter prevention resources and assist in litter enforcement.</p>