

6.5 Activity Reports

6.5.1 Environment Council Plan Initiatives Quarterly Report

Responsible GM: Peter Benazic
Author: Desiree Lovell and Jacqui Kelly

Recommendation(s)

That Council note this report.

Attachments

1. Environment Council Plan initiatives quarterly report - July 2022 [6.5.1.1 - 8 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*

Biodiversity community engagement and education

Description	Providing community engagement and education opportunities for residents to improve their knowledge and understanding of the shire's biodiversity and how they can contribute to improving it.
Funding	This program is fully funded by Council
Update	<p>Council joined more than 20 local governments across Greater Melbourne to participate in one of the world's biggest community science events, City Nature Challenge (CNC). 30 observers contributed 454 observations identifying 257 different species of plants, fungi, insects and animals. The data collected by iNaturalist during this challenge contributes to scientific research and helps us better understand and protect our biodiversity.</p> <p>In preparation for the CNC event, Council engaged Sustainable Gardening Australia to host a face-to-face workshop at Deep Creek Reserve with focus on native bees and butterflies in the garden.</p> <p>Officers launched our new Gardens for Wildlife (G4W) teaching resources at the Puffing Billy Emerald Lake Park annual teacher open day. Council partnered with Gould League to produce lesson plans for grades 3 and 4. Council put on a G4W display to engage teachers and their families, as well as public visiting, to learn more about the benefits of gardening for wildlife in schools and at home.</p>

Maryknoll community planting day

Description	Council partnered with the Maryknoll Tracks and Reserves community group to hold a planting event in the Maryknoll Recreation Reserve
Funding	This event was fully funded by Council
Update	This community event was attended by 25 participants who planted 1,000 plants at Maryknoll Recreation Reserve to enhance a wildlife corridor that connects native vegetation to Barongarook Creek. The community enjoyed kids face painting and an environmental talk on the benefits in retaining vegetation for habitat on private properties, followed by a barbeque lunch.

Community iNaturalist tours

Description	iNaturalist citizen science program delivery
Funding	This project was funded by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Caring for our Country program
Update	Council collaborated with the Cardinia Environment Coalition to provide six guided walks with 56 community members to demonstrate the use of iNaturalist citizen science program. Citizen science is an international community empowerment program to encourage residents to upload plant and animal sightings in their backyards and the natural environment. The records provided by the community help inform scientists of the location of species, adapt conservation management actions and future university studies.

Environmental volunteer guidelines and new web portal

Description	Development of a guideline booklet for environmental friends groups
Funding	This project was funded by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning Caring for our Country program
Update	<p>Council is committed to supporting our environmental community groups to manage and protect our natural environment, while working to the highest safety standards.</p> <p>The Environmental Volunteer Guideline booklet provides information for our 9 environmental volunteer (Friends) groups to support their work in Cardinia Shire on Council-owned and managed land. Topics covered in this booklet include the Council support provided to volunteer groups, what groups need to be aware of when carrying out works, incorporation requirements, good group governance and administration and important information regarding occupational health and safety.</p> <p>The guidelines include template forms to support and streamline administration processes such as site hazard assessment, registration and event reporting, and information on child safe standards.</p> <p>A web portal has been developed for friends groups where they can find a copy of the guidelines, download the template forms and submit their Council contribution claim form. Two hardcopies of the guidelines have been provided to each group.</p>

Weed control grants

Description	<p>Weed control grants are available to help landowners (maximum amount \$350 inc. GST) and community groups (maximum amount \$750 inc. GST) to control noxious and environmental weeds on private property, both in agricultural areas and areas of high environmental value.</p> <p>Funding is available for the following categories of approved weed control works:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing herbicide • Disposing of weed material (eg: tip passes or skip hire) • Hiring of equipment, for example sprayers, mulchers etc • Hiring contractors <p>Neighbours and community groups are encouraged to work together on larger projects to control weeds collectively.</p>
Funding	The program is fully funded by Council
Update	<p>The weed control grant had a total of 159 successful applications received last financial year (2021-22), with the program fully expended by the end of May 2022.</p> <p>This grant program is currently being reviewed to ensure guidelines are accurate and provide further clarity to applicants around grant criteria.</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.

Earth Day event at Deep Creek

Description	Council partnered with Cleanaway and the Cardinia Environment Coalition to hold a community event at Deep Creek Reserve celebrating Earth Day.
Funding	This event was fully funded by Council
Update	<p>Council held the first Earth Day celebration at Deep Creek Reserve in Pakenham. To mark the occasion and promote this year's theme 'Invest in our Planet'.</p> <p>Council's Environment unit, Waste team, the Cardinia Environment Coalition and Cleanaway teamed up to share their knowledge through fun and engaging activities and help showcase the importance of protecting our planet.</p> <p>The day was a huge success with people of all ages getting their hands dirty planting seedlings, learning all about worms and the benefits of composting food waste.</p> <p>The sun was shining so visitors were treated to a special solar experiment and even had the chance to sit in a recycling truck while learning about the importance of correctly sorting waste and recycling!</p>

Civic Centre solar system

Description	A 75kW rooftop solar energy system is now operational on the Civic Centre.
Funding	This project was fully funded by Council
Update	The 75kW solar energy system (approximately 200 solar panels) has been installed and has been estimated to provide savings of up to \$20,000 a year in operational energy costs. This initiative is in line with Council's Aspirational Energy Transition Plan 2014–24 to improve the environmental performance of Council buildings and to achieve the target of net zero council emissions by 2024.

Resilient Communities Project

Description	Leveraging on the outputs of the South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA) Asset Vulnerability Assessment Project, the Community Climate Resilience project will also assess the vulnerability of the SECCCA region's community to climate change.
Funding	This project is funded by the Minderoo Foundation
Update	The Resilient Communities Project will help prepare communities in the SECCCA region for current and future changes to the climate, by improving community preparedness through practical actions, tools, and resources. The project will assist councils to identify the community services, demographics, locations, and communities that are exposed to the impacts of climate change.

Heritage

Council Plan initiative

- Actively protect key heritage sites within the shire

Heritage Festival at Emerald Museum

Description	Council held a community event at Emerald Museum to celebrate the Australian Heritage Festival.
Funding	This event was fully funded by Council
Update	<p>Council staff and museum volunteers were delighted to welcome approx. 100 visitors to the Emerald Museum on a cool autumn day.</p> <p>The event gave visitors an opportunity to learn more about the rich history of Emerald and surrounding district while having a bit of fun! Children explored the museum to find items listed on their scavenger hunt and enjoyed finding out what those items were used for.</p> <p>Many visitors made gold coin donations and purchased native plants with the proceeds being donated to the museum.</p> <p>The Victorian Salvia Society was also in attendance, selling plants and providing history about the beautiful salvia display garden in Nobelius Heritage Park.</p>

Water

Council Plan initiative

- Implement initiatives in the Integrated Water Management Plan

Water monitoring of Council's pools

Description	New water monitoring system helping to reduce Council's water consumption
Funding	This initiative is fully funded by Council
Update	<p>To help reduce Council's potable water consumption and meet water reduction targets, a new water monitoring system has been installed at Garfield, Koo Wee Rup, Emerald and Cardinia Life pools. The system monitors water consumption in real time and notifies staff when action is required to quickly respond to and prevent high-flow and overflow events.</p> <p>Since the system was installed, Council has been able to promptly address two events at its public pools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing water use at Emerald Lake Park wading pool by approximately 70,000 litres a day • saving 3.6 litres per second of excessive water use at Koo Wee Rup swimming pool and preventing any damage that may have been caused by overflowing water. <p>The system's data will also be used to establish trends of high-water use and identify which pools should be prioritised for future works to reduce water consumption.</p> <p>Officers are looking forward to expanding the water monitoring system to the Pakenham outdoor pool in the coming months. Following this, the system will be considered for other high-use water sites, including recreation reserves and new buildings.</p>

Waste and resource recovery

Council Plan initiatives

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

New recycling processing contract

Description	New collaborative recycling processing contract.
Funding	Recycling processing is fully funded by Council's garbage charge.
Update	<p>Cardinia Shire has been working closely with our colleagues at the Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group (Victorian Government), Knox City Council and Glen Eira City Council to review and extend the current collaborative recycling processing contract.</p> <p>The current short-term arrangement with Polytrade Recycling (now Polytrade Operations Pty Ltd) was established after the collapse of our previous recycling processor, SKM, and was set to end in Dec 2022. This three-year extension of the collaborative contract comes with renegotiated pricing that will provide a more efficient and effective service for our community.</p> <p>The management of the contract will continue after MWRRG is folded at the end of June 2022 and be passed to the new Victorian Government authority, Recycling Victoria. There is not expected to be any impact to collaborative contracts by this change.</p>

Bookable hard waste update

Description	Council is continuing to improve the delivery of the bookable hard waste collection service
Funding	The hard waste service is fully funded by Council's garbage charge.
Update	<p>Council has been proactively working with our contractor, Cleanaway, to ensure resources levels can handle the continuing high demand for hard waste collection bookings.</p> <p>This has reduced the backlog of bookings from up to 5 weeks to 1-2 weeks and allowed the service to move from the contingency plan phase to business-as-usual principles.</p> <p>To date, we have collected around 65,000 individually booked items since the contract commenced in 2020.</p>

Alternative waste processing – keeping the community informed

Description	Cardinia Shire Council has joined with other south-east Melbourne councils and the Victorian Government's Metropolitan Waste and Resource Recovery Group (MWRRG) to seek proposals from industry for proven advanced waste processing solutions.
Funding	Jointly funded by the Victorian Government and Council
Update	<p>Alongside recycling, and separating food and green waste for composting, advanced waste processing is a smarter solution for household rubbish compared to burying it in the ground. Waste to energy is the most common form of advanced waste processing technology, with hundreds of facilities operating safely and reliably around the world.</p> <p>As the Advanced Waste Processing project progresses, Council aims to keep our community informed. The Waste team and Communications team have worked closely together to develop a new webpage about the project outlining what advanced waste processing is and why it is being considered as an alternative to landfill. The webpage will be regularly updated with project milestones and information as the project progresses. www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/advancedwasteprocessing</p>

April drop off event results (Green waste, Detox Your Home and DrumMuster)

Description	<p>As part of the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy actions including; <i>to implement a suite of options that provide alternatives to burning off</i>, Council offers free green waste drop-off events throughout the year. Council has increased these events in 2022 from four (held close together in April and November) to six, occurring every second month. Four events in Pakenham and two in Lysterfield. The green waste is transferred to composting facilities and becomes soil improver.</p> <p>Detox Your Home is a Sustainability Victoria program supported by Council, held annually. A free service for residents to safely dispose of unwanted household chemicals.</p> <p>drumMUSTER is a product stewardship scheme for agriculture and veterinary chemical producers supported by Council, held annually.</p>
Funding	<p>The green waste drop-offs are fully funded by Council's garbage charge.</p> <p>Detox Your Home, including event staffing, is funded by Sustainability Victoria</p> <p>drumMUSTER is supported by Council through the provision of staff and recycling collection.</p>
Update	<p>April was the second free green waste drop off for 2022, held at Cleanaway Lysterfield. A total of 138 residents attended this 4-day event, with 37.28 tonnes of material dropped off.</p> <p>Detox Your Home was held in April with 168 attendees. More than 3.8 tonnes of chemicals and other toxic items were collected on the day with nearly 70% of collected material able to be recycled. Flammable liquids were the most common item dropped off, followed by pesticides and other toxic oils, solvents and acids. Both number of attendees and volume of chemicals increased in comparison to the 2021 event.</p> <p>drumMUSTER collected 42 drums from 5 attendees.</p>

Projects planned for 2022-23

Strategy delivery

- Implementation of the Aspirational Energy Transition Plan
 - Purchase of fleet carbon offsets
 - Transition away from gas for Council facilities
 - Continued investigation and delivery of rooftop solar energy installations e.g. Depot
 - Household energy efficiency education sessions through MCH etc.
 - Commencement of renewable energy contract
 - LED streetlighting upgrade
 - Presentation of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for consideration for adoption
 - Continued involvement in project development in the South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA):
 - BriefEzy for Council buildings- previously known as the ESD Matrix, BriefEzy produces ESD requirements that can be included in architectural tender/quotation documentation to outline the sustainability requirements of each Council project.
 - Blue Carbon Mapping project
 - Minderoo Climate Resilient communities' project
- Implementation of Biodiversity Conservation Strategy
 - Liaise with local aboriginal groups over the annual Council natural resource area works plans
 - Prepare guidelines for developers to encourage indigenous plantings
 - Coordinate the planting of 10,000 plants on public and private land to improve biodiversity values
 - Undertake biodiversity monitoring on private property to inform biodiversity health indicators
 - Undertake monitoring of biodiversity values in priority natural resource areas
 - Continue to support Eastern Region Pest Animal Network initiatives
- Implementation of Weed Management Strategy
 - Subject to grant approval, provide leadership to the Peri Urban Weed Partnership Program
 - Work in partnership with DEDJTR to deliver the Weed Spotters Program for public and private land managers
 - Continue to collaborate with partner agencies, community groups and landholders, to plan and implement weed programs.
- Implementation of the Integrated Water Management Plan
 - Continue to participate in the Westernport Integrated Water Management Forum
 - Liaise with internal stakeholders to investigate incorporating water re-use opportunities into new recreation facilities at the design phase.
 - Continue implementation of Interpretation Plan at Deep Creek Reserve
- Implementation of the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy
 - Continuation of kerbside food waste diversion service and behaviour change program
 - Continuation of bookable hard waste collection.
 - Review of bookable hard waste service
 - Continuation of public place waste and recycling collection and disposal contract
 - Implementation of Litter Prevention officer
 - Expansion of management of dumped rubbish.
 - Expansion of green waste management and recovery programs
 - Expansion of waste rebate program

- Continued education and engagement of community on usage of waste services
- Emergency response and service adjustments for COVID related waste concerns in the community
- Participation in group procurement (metropolitan Melbourne wide) for landfill services
- Participation in group procurement (Victoria-wide, regional subgroups) for recycling processing services
- Recycling Victoria Policy – kerbside transition planning
- Development of procedures for key waste processes for planning and development
- Develop Kerbside Waste Services Guidelines
- Continuation of garbage charge service auditing and recovery program
- Reengage with community on waste service after 2-year shutdowns of public engagement
- Nar Nar Goon former landfill EPA maintenance requirements
- Continuation of work towards Advanced Waste processing options

Annual programs

- Coordination of grants:
 - Annual Weed control grants to reduce weeds on private and public land
 - Annual Heritage grants to conserve places protected under the heritage overlay
 - Biodiversity Incentive grants on private land
 - Distribute annual friends group maintenance contribution
 - Trust for Nature rate reimbursement scheme
- Continued community collaboration and awareness programs:
 - Annual trees for weeds swap day
 - Gardens for wildlife program
 - Kinders biodiversity education program
 - Schools environment excursions with Ecolinc and Primesci at Deep Creek Reserve
 - Community plant giveaway from indigenous plant nursery
 - Indian Myna trapping program (sale of traps)
 - Schools and kindergarten waste education program
 - Community support for managing green waste/fuel loads on private properties
 - Community waste education program