

6.5.3 Environment Council Plan Initiatives Quarterly Report

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Recommendation(s)

That this report be noted

Attachments

1. Environment Council Plan initiatives quarterly report - October 2022 [6.5.3.1 - 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 engagement and education opportunities for the community
Funding	These biodiversity education programs are fully funded by Council
Update	<p>Council ran an education program alongside Cardinia Cultural Centre's Creature exhibition from 28 June to 24 July. Creature was an immersive and interactive experience about the Australian bush and our relationship with it. Council engaged Animals of Oz during the school holidays to deliver daily presentations about our unique native fauna. Council Education Officers ran a range of fun activities for residents to connect with our local wildlife and learn how to protect and reduce our impact on our environment.</p> <p>To celebrate NAIDOC week, Council held a community event at Living and Learning Pakenham on 4 July. Residents were provided with an opportunity to learn more about our Gardens for Wildlife program and take home a free indigenous plant.</p> <p>The Department of Education, in partnership with Council hosted a Koorie Schools Event at Cardinia Cultural Centre on 15 September. Part of Council's involvement included holding biodiversity focussed workshops for over 200 students. The 24 schools in attendance took a 'showbag' of goodies back to school which included 4 indigenous plants, Gardens for wildlife lesson plans and information to help them establish an indigenous garden at the school.</p>

Roadside quality assessment project

Description	Environmental assessment of the shire's high-quality roadsides
Funding	The project is fully funded by Council.
Update	<p>Council engaged a consultant to re-assess the environmental quality of 240 environmentally significant roadsides. These roadsides contain rare and endangered flora species and provide valuable connective habitat for species such as gliding possums to move through the landscape. The roadsides provide a rare glimpse of the local natural vegetation structure and can help with revegetation planting designs on adjacent cleared private land.</p> <p>235 kilometres of road length were assessed which included a review of vegetation quality and weed extent. This assessment provides an update on the initial survey that was conducted in 2008 which used a different assessment method. A broad comparison of the data showed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a general similarity to vegetation quality with 80% of roadsides compared to 2008 results • 20% of roadsides were recorded as deteriorated compared with 2008 results. The deteriorated roadsides are overrepresented in the Bunyip area. <p>The roadside assessment will help to inform roadside weed management priorities and informs on five separate objectives in the Weed Management Strategy and two objectives in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.</p>

Emerald Lake Park vegetation management project; collaboration with friends group

Description	Emerald Lake Park vegetation management project is a joint project between Council and the Emerald Lake Park Friends Group.
Funding	The project is annually funded by Council, with matched external grant funds sourced by the Friends of Emerald Lake Park
Update	<p>The Emerald Lake Park vegetation management project is now in its 10th year and Council continue to work with the Friends' Group to deliver this important project at our environmentally significant park.</p> <p>Specialist ecological contractors and arborists have been engaged to undertake weed management works. Weed management has been focused on declared noxious weed species and highly invasive environmental weeds, including some weed tree species such as Sycamore Maple.</p> <p>A strategic and balanced approach is taken to ensure that the project takes into consideration a balance between ecological restoration and retaining important heritage values of the park, such as links to Nobelius Nursery and the presence of mature exotic trees.</p> <p>Revegetation following weed removal has also been undertaken by Council offices and Friends of Emerald Lake Park, in collaboration with school groups and community members.</p>

Revegetation projects and outcomes for 2021-22

Description	Revegetation projects undertaken across the shire in Council managed bushland reserves during over the last 12 months
Funding	These projects are jointly funded by Council and developer contributions fund
Update	<p>Over the last 12 months more than 5,500 indigenous tube stock plants were planted within Council managed bushland reserves. Plants were installed by Council Rangers, contractors and supplied to Friends Groups for community planting events and working bees. The rangers assisted Friends Groups by preparing planting sites, installing fencing plots and delivering plants to site.</p> <p>Planting sites were selected where significant weed management works have occurred, to infill remnant bushland and increase biodiversity, and to stabilise erosion.</p> <p>Planting site included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pepis Land, Emerald • Bunyip Sanctuary, Bunyip • Holm Park Reserve, Beaconsfield • Lilliput Lane Reserve, Pakenham • Maryknoll Recreation Reserve, Maryknoll • Alma Trelour Reserve, Cockatoo <p>Indigenous plants are sourced from various local indigenous nurseries such as CEC nursery at Deep Creek and Friends of Helmeted Honeyeater nursery at Yellingbo.</p>

Roadside weed management in Bunyip bushfire zone update

Description	Weed control works throughout Bunyip Complex Bushfire area
Funding	These works are funded by the Victorian Government (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning)
Update	<p>Roadside weed control has been undertaken throughout the Bunyip Complex fire affected area as part of the ongoing recovery effort. Post fire weed control is important to ensure emerging weeds are not able to dominate and prevent the natural regeneration of desirable indigenous plants.</p> <p>Regular management of high threat weeds has significantly aided in the re-establishment of a diverse range of indigenous species. Weed species being managed include blackberry, broom, ivy, watsonia, sweet pittosporum, and Spanish heath.</p> <p>Council has received further funding from the Victorian Government for follow up roadside weed control for the area utilising a specialist environmental contractor. Weed management techniques include foliar spraying and cut and paint of woody weeds. Larger woody weeds are being chipped and removed from the roadsides.</p> <p>These follow up works are currently underway and due to be completed by December 2022.</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.

Streetlight upgrade

Description	Replacement of mercury vapour streetlights with energy efficient LEDs.
Funding	This project is jointly funded by AusNet services, Council, Victorian Energy Efficiency Certificates, and the Australian Government (Local Roads and Community Infrastructure program).
Update	The first 845 lights are currently planned to be replaced by the end of December 2022, with installations planned to commence in mid-September.

Small Business Energy Saver Program

Description	The Small Business Energy Saver Program is an initiative delivered by South East Climate Change Council Alliance (SECCCA) to assist small businesses in member council areas to upgrade their existing equipment with energy efficient alternatives.
Funding	The program was funded by Sustainability Victoria.
Update	Through this program 61 small businesses from across the shire accessed discounts of around \$70,000 on equipment and installation cost. These upgrades will deliver annual emission and cost savings of around 200 tonnes of greenhouse gases and approximately \$56,000 in energy related costs. This program highlights the financial and environmental benefits of upgrading to energy efficient equipment for both businesses and households

Energy Resilience Design Study

Description	The Victorian Government Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP) is funding Energy Resilience Design Studies in several bushfire and storm-affected towns across Victoria, including towns across Cardinia Shire.
Funding	This program is being funded by the Victorian Government (Department of Environment Land Water and Planning)
Update	<p>The aim of the study is to investigate potential energy resilience solutions, such as solar, battery storage and diesel generator systems to provide back-up power for strategically selected sites identified by Council. These sites may include public halls, sports stadiums, emergency service facilities or similar buildings that may be used as community-relief hubs during an emergency. The towns of Cockatoo, Gembrook and Emerald are being considered in this study.</p> <p>The next stage of the study will investigate the suitability of microgrid solutions in these 3 towns <i>microgrids</i> are developed for 3 main reasons – energy security, cost savings and sustainability. A microgrid is a subset of the broader electricity network, whereby a microgrid can break off and operate on its own using local energy generation from sources such as rooftop solar.</p>

Heritage

Council Plan initiative

- Actively protect key heritage sites within the shire

Koo Wee Rup platform works and interpretation signs

Description	Restoration and interpretation signage project on the historic Koo Wee Rup railway station and platform
Funding	This project was fully funded by Council
Update	<p>Restoration works have been completed at the former Koo Wee Rup railway platform, which once acted as a junction station as part of the Great Southern Railway line (from Dandenong to Port Albert) and the later Strzelecki line to provide transport of agricultural produce to Dandenong.</p> <p>The history of the station has been developed into a series of interpretation panels that are displayed at the platform and detail the importance of the railway line to the development of Koo Wee Rup and the surround agricultural regions.</p> <p>The restoration of the Koo Wee Rup platform was close to the heart of former Cr Ray Brown who passed away sadly before the works were complete. A memorial plaque for former Cr Ray Brown has been placed at the site to acknowledge his contribution to the restoration and his role as the last Koo Wee Rup station master.</p>

Water

Council Plan initiative

- Implement initiatives in the Integrated Water Management Plan

Eastone Reserve: desilting wetland project

Description	Eastone Reserve desilting of existing wetland to remove silt and sediment from wetlands
Funding	The project is fully funded by Council.
Update	<p>The desilting works commenced in July 2022. The works will remove approximately 600 cubic meters of silt from the sediment pond. In the process excess vegetation material is separated and disposed as green waste. The dried-out material will be used to form new garden beds in the eastern (upper) section of the reserve.</p> <p>Removing sediment and excess vegetation allows the wetland to function more efficiently, removing nutrients from the surrounding storm water runoff and allowing cleaner water to enter the water system.</p>

Waste and resource recovery

Council Plan initiatives

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

Dumped rubbish camera trial

Description	Installation of security cameras to help reduce the occurrence of dumped rubbish in some of the Shire's dumped rubbish hotspots
Funding	This trail is fully funded by the annual residential garbage charge
Update	<p>To help combat illegally dumped rubbish, Council has installed two site security cameras at a prominent dumping hotspot on Wenn Road, Cardinia. In the past three years Council has received nearly 30 requests for rubbish clean-up, with estimated clean-up costs of around \$25,000 - \$30,000 at this location.</p> <p>There has been a rise in commercial dumping over the past year with significantly increasing clean-up costs and the need for ongoing surveillance. This installation complements new signage installed at 16 hotspots across the Shire earlier this year and aims to help combat illegal dumping and demonstrate that Cardinia Shire is taking action against rubbish dumpers.</p> <p>The cameras will be relocated to other key dumping hotspots around the Shire based on customer service complaints data.</p>

Hard waste satisfaction survey

Description	A community engagement survey was developed in partnership with the engagement and social research teams to determine service awareness and knowledge levels, barriers, satisfaction with delivery style, convenience, and the way the service is being currently used (both correctly and incorrectly).
Funding	This project is fully funded by the annual residential garbage charge
Update	<p>The community engagement satisfaction survey opened on 7 July 2022, two years after the bookable service was first implemented. The survey was open for 5 weeks and sought feedback via targeted engagement with registered users as well as broader general community engagement.</p> <p>A total of 2,003 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 969 from email invites sent to known service users (12,500 email invites sent) • 1,034 from the open access survey available through the Creating Cardinia website and promoted through standard Council communications channels. <p>Results from the user list mostly preferred the bookable service format, (53% bookable, 8% no preference, 2% don't know, 38% set time), noting convenience as a major driving factor for positive viewpoints; specifically, for those moving house or buying new appliances.</p> <p>Those who responded through the open access survey were more cynical about the bookable service model and as such more commonly reported issues, such as waste out in the streets year-round, people putting waste out without a booking, not all items been collected, as such these results showed preference for the blanket service of 2 set times per year (81% set time, 2% no preference, 1% don't know, 16% bookable).</p> <p>More cynical results are typical of research distributed through Council networks: the sample tends to be skewed towards those with a strong opinion on the topic and those more engaged with Council.</p> <p>Further results to be presented in December.</p> <p>The social research team has recommended that decisions about the ongoing format of hard waste collection not be made based on these results alone as results are not representative, rather two extremes of the opinion spectrum. Representative survey results should also be considered to understand broader community preferences better.</p> <p>Such as the recent Community Satisfaction Survey, which show satisfaction with the current hard waste service as "excellent" or 7.8 out of 10. Out of 556 responses for satisfaction 68.5% of respondents were very satisfied and only 8.9% were dissatisfied.</p>

Green waste and Red Cross drop off events

Description	<p>Council offers a range of drop-off events throughout the year to support residents to dispose of their waste.</p> <p>There were six free green waste drop off events in 2022 to provide residents with options for managing green waste. Four events in Pakenham Future Recycling Transfer station and two in Lysterfield Cleanaway Resource Recovery Centre. This regular service is organised every second month as part of the <i>Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</i>. The green waste collected from these facilities is turned into nutrient rich compost.</p> <p>Council also partnered with Australian Red Cross to hold the first drop-off event for clothing and homewares. Enabling residents to donate unwanted quality items and support a worthwhile cause.</p>
Funding	These programs are fully funded by the annual residential garbage charge
Update	<p>June was the third free green waste drop off for 2022, held at Pakenham Future Recycling Transfer Station. This four-day event was held between Friday 17 to Monday 20 June 2022. A total of 368 individual drop-offs and 62.38 tonnes of green waste material collected for composting from the location.</p> <p>In addition to this, a fourth drop off event in August was organised at Pakenham Future Recycling Transfer Station. This four-day event was held between Friday 19 to Monday 22 August 2022. The event attracted 292 individual vehicles and successfully diverted 72.96 tonnes of green waste material for composting from the location.</p> <p>Two additional green waste drop off events will be delivered in October and December 2022.</p> <p>The Red Cross donation drop-off held on 10 September was highly successful attracting 126 cars and more than 32 cubic metres in donated items. Donated clothing, accessories and homewares will be sorted and distributed to Red Cross stores to help raise funds for Red Cross programs.</p> <p>This project was established in response to the removal of many illegal and unsightly clothing donation bins throughout Cardinia Shire. These bins often attract low quality items and lead to illegal dumping which is expensive and requires significant resources to manage and remove. The Red Cross donation drop-off also supports item 23 in the Waste Action Plan 2022-2025:</p> <p>Council continues to support a range of resource recovery options outside of the kerbside system (such as Detox Your Home) and advocates for new recovery and reuse programs/opportunities for our residents</p>

Dumped tyre clean-up

Description	Removal and recovery of dumped tyres in the shire
Funding	This program is jointly funded by the annual residential garbage charge and Victorian Government (Department of Transport)
Update	<p>There has been a significant increase in dumped tyres throughout the shire in the last few months. Cardinia Shire is working with our colleagues in Local and Victorian Government to respond appropriately to dumped tyres in the shire.</p> <p>There have been more than 22 significant dumping between May and August 2022 totalling 867 tyres collected by our dumped rubbish management contractor. Cleanaway have also removed 753 tyres through the Hard Waste booking system between May and August 2022.</p> <p>Additionally, we have worked with the Department of Transport to remove and recover 1,638 tyres from a roadside storage site.</p> <p>The total number of tyres removed from the environment during this four-month period is 3,258.</p>