

6.5 Activity Reports

6.5.1 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 - April 2023 [6.5.1.1 - 6 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 includes updates on the implementation of the *Weed Management Strategy*

Replacement interpretation signs at Mount Cannibal

Description	Mt Cannibal Flora and Fauna Reserve is one of Cardinia Shire's most significant bushland reserves, renowned for its diversity of wildflowers and orchids. It is also one of the shire's most popular destinations for bushwalking and sightseeing, however, it was severely affected by the 2019 Bunyip Complex bushfires which burnt through the reserve and destroyed most of the infrastructure, including interpretation signage.
Funding	This project was fully funded by Council.
Update	<p>Six new interpretation signs have been installed at Mt Cannibal Flora and Fauna reserve, following the 2019 bushfires. Council officers have taken the opportunity to redesign the signs to meet current corporate branding guidelines and refresh the content. The content was reviewed in consultation with Friends of Mount Cannibal.</p> <p>The new signs include information on the local flora and fauna found in the reserve, the history of the reserve, orchids and the ongoing impact of the bushfires. The signage also includes new photos from local nature photographers.</p> <p>The signs help add to the visitor experience by assisting visitors to learn about the significance of the reserve and remnant bushland, and hopefully encourages behaviour and actions to help support both our wildlife and bushland.</p>

Thermal drone investigations for bandicoots (Evans Road, Bunyip project)

Description	Evans Road, Bunyip is to be constructed as part of Council's strategic road sealing program and is an area where the southern brown bandicoot is known to be found.
Funding	This project is fully funded by Council
Update	<p>An infrared drone survey was undertaken along the length of Evan's Road (the project site), to establish if there were any significant fauna species in and around the site.</p> <p>The done survey was completed in early March, with no endangered species found. This information will be used by our ecologist to meet EPBC Act requirements.</p> <p>The use of the drone survey, demonstrates to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) that endangered species surveys can be done in a more effective way than the standard guidelines, with a saving of approx. \$25,000.</p>

Heatweed trial at Emerald Lake Park

Description	A non-chemical trial to control the weed St Peters Wort at Emerald Lake Park
Funding	This initiative is fully funded by Council.
Update	<p>Council has engaged Acacia Environmental Management to trial Heatweed technology at Emerald Lake Park.</p> <p>The trial is focusing on the control of St Peters Wort (<i>Hypericum tetrapterum</i>), which is a declared noxious weed in Victoria.</p> <p>Emerald Lake Park has seen a rapid and unmanaged spread of St Peters Wort around the edges of Lake Treganowan, and into Wattle Creek. Due to the proximity to the water's edge, high use footpath and public activity, herbicide spraying was not viewed as a suitable option for large scale weed control.</p> <p>Developed by innovative Norwegian-based company with more than 35 years in the green and agriculture sector, Heatweed is the most effective, non-chemical weed control method available, using non-chemical, superheated natural water, heated at 99 °C, to manage and eliminate invasive species.</p> <p>Heatweed uses 100% natural water - the most effective conduit of heat - to distort a plant's cell structure. Compared to other thermal methods such as steam where the potential for heat transfer is low, hot water offers better control, accuracy and a lower water consumption. Acacia is only one of two companies in Australia to offer this award-winning service, to manage weeds safely and gently.'</p> <p>After two Heatweed treatments, the results, so far have been encouraging with a significant overall reduction in the prevalence of St Peters Wort.</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	Mercury vapour street lighting upgrade
Funding	This project is jointly funded by Council, AusNet Services and the Australian Government through the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure (LRCI) Program. Energy efficiency certificates (VEECs) are also being generated and sold to fund the works.
Update	The first stage which involved the upgrade of 845 streetlights with energy efficient LEDs is complete. AusNet Services funding has been received to support the works and funding from energy efficiency certificates is being obtained. The replacement light for the next stage of works has been approved by AusNet Services and planning is underway for the additional upgrades.

Waste and resource recovery

Council Plan initiatives

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

Christmas cardboard drop off and green waste drop off (March) events

Description	<p>Council runs several different drop-off events throughout the year to help encourage residents to reduce their waste sent to landfill.</p> <p>In 2023, Council has organised six green waste drop off events occurring every second month starting in March. Four events in Pakenham and two in Lysterfield. The green waste is transferred to composting facilities and becomes soil improver.</p> <p>The Christmas cardboard drop-off event in December 2022 was to assist residents to recycle their cardboard boxes and gift-wrapping paper.</p>
Funding	These events are fully funded by Council's garbage charge.
Update	<p>The Christmas cardboard drop-off event was held at Future Recycling Transfer Station in Pakenham from Wednesday 28 to Friday 30 December 2022. This was the first free cardboard drop-off event for the Cardinia community to recycle their Christmas waste properly and to avoid recycling bin overflow and illegal dumping of Christmas waste in the shire. This three-day event was well received by the community attracting 603 individual vehicles and successfully diverting 60 cubic meters of cardboard and paper to appropriate recycling and recovery.</p> <p>Council hosted the first green waste drop off event of 2023 in March. This four-day event was held at Future Recycling Transfer Station in Pakenham from Friday 24 March to Monday 27 March.</p>

Clean up Australia – staff clean up event

Description	Council organised a staff clean-up event on Tuesday 28 February 2023 near the lower Gum Scrub Creek area to celebrate Clean Up Australia Day.
Funding	This event was fully funded by Council
Update	With 45 volunteers in attendance, the event had representation from Councillors, organisational leaders, indoor and outdoor staff. Approximately 8 cubic meters of rubbish including 2 tyres, a bollard, a trolley, a bike, polystyrene, cardboard boxes, waffle pods, concrete rubble, and green waste was collected and removed from the Lower Gum Scrub Creek area.

Advanced waste processing update

Description	<p>Council is participating in a tender to explore advanced waste processing technologies as an alternative to landfill for improved environmental and social outcomes.</p> <p>Council's <i>Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2017-2026</i> included an action to procure alternatives to landfill. This work has been a priority for many years and has been driven by the impending closure of the only remaining landfill in the southeast metropolitan area. Contributing factors include no new landfills to be established and a desire for better environmental and social outcomes, than long haul transporting and landfilling for the future.</p> <p>Advanced waste processing technologies are utilised extensively in regions in Europe, USA and Asia, as a safe, trusted and reliable infrastructure solution to compliment other resource recovery systems, achieving good diversion from landfill outcomes.</p>
Funding	This project is managed and supported by the Victorian Government and participating councils.
Update	<p>This collaborative procurement project, involving 8 councils, and supported by the Victorian Government has now hit a key milestone, with a tender process underway.</p> <p>Following a comprehensive expression of interest evaluation process in 2020, three respondents were shortlisted, and the project team has been working closely with them to develop detailed solutions that meet the objectives of the project.</p> <p>The shortlisted respondents are all highly experienced with construction, delivery, and management of these facilities internationally.</p>

Dumped rubbish cameras: new location and results from Wenn Road

Description	<p>Council has been conducting ongoing trials of surveillance cameras at regular dumping hot spots to help deter dumping of rubbish and reduce clean-up costs of dumped material.</p> <p>Wenn Road, Rythdale has been a regular dumping hot spot, costing Council around \$1000 a month to perform major clean ups due to dumping of commercial and household waste.</p>
Funding	This initiative is fully funded by Council's garbage charge.
Update	<p>Since the cameras were installed at Wenn Road, Rythdale, they have helped deter dumping in the area, and significantly reduced the cost and resources required to regularly clean up the area.</p> <p>The surveillance has also provided evidence needed to pursue infringements for those caught dumping, with several infringements already issued.</p> <p>Following this highly successful camera trial, the cameras have been moved to another location where dumping is also prominent. This area, located in a new estate, has seen an increase in dumping of commercial and construction waste over the past few months and Council hopes to see the same result as the Wenn Road site.</p>

Community education and engagement

Council organised pop-up stalls at local events between January to March 2023 with a focus on community education to support and engage with the Cardinia community in terms of biodiversity, land management, climate change and waste recycling and recovery.

Council attended the following events:

- Australia Day- Thursday 26 January
- Upper Beaconsfield Village Festival: Sunday 19 February
- Pakenham Agricultural, Horticultural and Multicultural Show: Saturday 18 March
- Bunyip Agricultural Show: Sunday 26 March

These festivals present a great opportunity to engage with the local community and share knowledge on Council's key initiatives and projects.

Australia Day event

This event had a focus on emissions reduction and waste and recycling education. Activities included making emissions reduction pledges for 2023 and building cardboard electric vehicles and waste sorting games.

Upper Beaconsfield Village Festival

At this event officers provided information on weed control, planting with indigenous plants, and Council's Biolink strategy along with waste reduction initiatives. Activities included waste sorting games, colouring your own reusable calico bags and much more.

Pakenham and Bunyip Agricultural shows

Fun and engaging activities such as waste sorting games, colouring your own reusable calico bags and much more.

At the Pakenham Show attendees also had the opportunity to take photos with a garbage truck.

What is coming up?

- Kindergarten incursions by Chooktopia: environment education for 4-year-old kinder groups with a focus on biodiversity, energy/climate, waste and water delivered in Term 1 and 2
- School incursions by Chooktopia: primary and secondary school program: designed around Victorian curriculum F-10 framework with a focus on science and humanities.
- Green waste drop-off event: Friday 19 – Monday 22 May at Lysterfield
- Indigenous plant giveaway, currently underway from 14 April to 30 June
- Gardens for Wildlife workshops at Cardinia Environment Coalition nursery
 - Saturday 29 April: Attracting native bees and butterflies to your garden
 - Saturday 27 May: Cardinia's endangered bandicoots
 - Saturday 24 June: Growing veggies in a wildlife garden
- Heritage grants opened on 1 April, close 27 May 2023
- Energy information sessions for the Aging Well Groups on the 15 and 22 June
- Storytime with a waste truck driver: Pakenham library Wednesday 28 June (school holidays)
- Plastic free July events, throughout July
- Solar energy installations at the Pakenham Depot, Bunyip Hall and Koo Wee Rup community centre

For more upcoming events, please subscribe to Council's environmental newsletter – Down to earth
www.cardinia.vic.giv.au/downtoearth