

## 6.5 Activity Reports

### 6.5.1 Environment Council Plan Initiatives Quarterly Report

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#### Recommendation(s)

That Council notes the Environmental Council Plan Initiatives quarterly report for the six months to December 2023.

#### Attachments

1. Environment Council Plan initiatives quarterly report - February 2024 [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

This environment quarterly report is focused on community education, engagement and outreach programs, to highlight what Council is doing to achieve the Thriving Communities Council Plan Strategic Indicator:

*Maintenance of the number of environmental education and capacity building initiatives delivered and/or supported by Council*



This report is a snapshot of what Council Officers have been up to over the past 4 months, both externally and internally.

The report outlines the *Sustainable Environment Policy (SEP)* theme each activity, workshop, program or initiative is linked to and the corresponding Council Plan initiative.

### **Biodiversity Blitz**

Description	Throughout September, Council collaborated with other eastern and south-eastern local governments to run a month-long bioblitz. Throughout the month residents were encouraged to log their nature sightings on the iNaturalist platform.
Policy theme	Biodiversity
Council plan	Implement initiatives in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</i>
Update	<p>To get residents excited about the biodiversity blitz and help them report sightings, two citizen science walks were held at Maryknoll and Guys Hill, this gave residents a chance to learn from Council officers about the special features of some of the shire's precious reserves and how to use the iNaturalist app.</p> <p>An introductory webinar was also held in partnership with other councils in the program. Feedback on the webinar highlighted the contribution from our Cardinia Shire resident guest, who spoke eloquently on the value of iNaturalist projects in helping land managers make better decisions.</p> <p>Cardinia Shire residents reported 2,135 observations, with the most observed plants being the golden bush-pea and common bird-orchid, and most spotted animals the laughing kookaburra and superb fairywren.</p>

### **Gardens for wildlife – spring workshop**

Description	Sustainable Gardening Australia (SGA) delivered a webinar on water-smart gardening in November.
Policy theme	Biodiversity and water
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement initiatives in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</i></li> <li>• Implement initiatives in the <i>Integrated Water Management Plan</i></li> </ul>
Update	<p>The water-smart webinar was held on the day of the Optus network outage; 18 people attended the evening webinar. Feedback from participants has been positive and SGA made the webinar available online until the end of 2023 for anyone who registered but was unable to attend.</p> <p>The webinar covered handy tips for helping gardens survive the summer, including adding a thick layer of mulch, best way to water different types of gardens (large garden beds down to pots) and how to minimise evaporation.</p>

**Trees for weeds swap event**

Description	The annual trees for weeds swap day was held at Emerald Lake Park on 3 September in partnership with Friends of Emerald Lake Park.
Policy theme	Biodiversity
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement initiatives in the <i>Weed Management Strategy</i></li> </ul>
Update	To highlight the impact that weed species have on the natural environment, Cardinia Shire Council and Friends of Emerald Lake Park held the annual Trees for Weeds day at Emerald. More than 50 community members brought in a range of environmental weeds for identification, and advice on control. In exchange, 300 indigenous plants were distributed to enhance biodiversity in Cardinia Shire.

**School weed-busters event**

Description	Natural Reserve Rangers assisting Friends of Emerald Lake Park to deliver their annual schools weed-buster event
Policy theme	Biodiversity
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement initiatives in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</li> <li>Implement initiatives in the Weed Management Strategy</li> </ul>
Update	<p>Friends of Emerald Lake Park (FELP) have conducted Weed-busters Week activities with Emerald Primary School and the community for fifteen years in Emerald Lake Park.</p> <p>On 14 September, 64 students and four staff attend the 2023 event. Seven FELP members were assisted by Council's 4 Natural Reserve Rangers to make the day a great success.</p> <p>Activities on the day included removing tree guards from last year's planting, undertaking new revegetation and hand weeding forget-me-nots and small sycamore maples.</p> <p>Interesting plants, fungi and orchids were shown to the students to further educate them on the importance of the work and appreciation for the reserve.</p> <p>Twenty-five large bags of weeds were collected, and 450 indigenous tube-stock were planted.</p> <p>FELP provided morning tea and provided activity folders for school staff, with follow up activities for the students.</p> <p>The day equated to 248 volunteer hours of co-contribution towards FELP's recent \$20,000 Victorian Landcare Grant to support the ongoing Emerald Lake Park Vegetation Management Project.</p>

**School education at Deep Creek Reserve**

Description	Primary and Secondary school excursions are run at Deep Creek Reserve and are delivered by Ecolinc, a state centre of excellence for environmental science, and Swinburne PrimeSci, a science outreach organisation.
Policy theme	Biodiversity and water
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement initiatives in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</i></li> <li>• Implement initiatives in the <i>Integrated Water Management Plan</i></li> </ul>
Update	<p>In 2023, 38 sessions were available on Tuesdays. Only 2 sessions were not booked. Bookings are well underway for 2024, with strong demand again.</p> <p>Topics covered included healthy rivers, healthy bay; chemistry and physics. Of fifteen schools participating in the program in 2023, five were local to Cardinia Shire. Others came from as far afield as Fitzroy North.</p>

**Bunyip Renewable Action Group – information session**

Description	On 30 October, Bunyip Renewables Action Group (BRAG) invited community groups to join a free workshop with an expert panel on how to save money by being energy efficient. Presentations were by Council's environment education officer, and Malcolm McKelvie from Baw Baw sustainability network.
Policy theme	Climate Change
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement initiatives in the Aspirational Energy Transition Plan</li> </ul>
Update	Council's Environment Education Officer gave a presentation on ways community groups can access assistance with their energy efficiency initiatives, and Baw Baw sustainability network outlined which aspects of buildings are good targets for energy efficiency improvements. There were fifteen attendees from six different community groups, and lots of lively discussion.

**Garfield Community Garden open day**

Description	On 18 November, Garfield Community Garden hosted an open day to get residents down to the garden and involved with setting up a new wicking bed.
Policy theme	Biodiversity
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement initiatives in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</li> </ul>
Update	Council's environment education officer provided a Gardens for wildlife display and indigenous plant giveaway. Local stallholders included authors, crafts, Pakenham community garden and local farmers. Council gave away 100 indigenous plants to encourage residents to plant local natives to support wildlife.

**School visits to the Civic Centre**

Description	Students from Chairo Christian School and Officer Specialist School visited the Civic Centre to find out more about how Council works.
Policy theme	Biodiversity
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement initiatives in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</li> </ul>
Update	<p>Chairo Christian School attended on 20 October. After a presentation from the Mayor and Deputy Mayor on what Council does, students heard a presentation on the role of the Environment and Heritage unit, and how Council works to preserve habitat connectivity for native animals across the shire. They finished off with a game of musical habitat patches.</p> <p>Officer Specialist School attended on 20 November. After a tour of Council's customer support functions to find out what they can visit council for, students undertook a habitat garden design activity to understand how the decisions we make in our backyards can help our local animals.</p>

**Terracotta pot painting at Emerald Museum**

Description	The Emerald Museum Community Asset Committee hosted a school holiday event at the Emerald Museum on Wednesday, 27 September 2023. Two one-hour terracotta pot painting sessions were delivered to increase opportunities for the community to visit the Museum, in line with the Emerald Museum Strategic Plan.
Council plan initiative	Actively protect key heritage sites within the shire
Update	<p>A total of 26 participants aged between 5-12 years attended on the day; the vast majority came from Cardinia Shire and Casey. Many were first-time visitors to the Museum.</p> <p>Each child went home with a 12cm painted terracotta pot complete with a planted marigold, as a nod to the history of the Nobelius Nursery.</p> <p>Exceptionally positive feedback was received on the day and on social media, with a common thread commending the entertaining activity, welcoming atmosphere, and friendly volunteers.</p>

**Seniors' week event with Friends of Emerald Lake Park**

Description	The Emerald Museum Community Asset Committee partnered with Friends of Emerald Lake Park to deliver a guided walking tour and morning tea as part of Senior's Week 2023.
Policy theme	Biodiversity
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Actively protect key heritage sites within the shire</li> <li>Implement initiatives in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</i></li> </ul>
Update	<p>On Wednesday 25 October 2023, the Emerald Museum hosted a local walking group on a one-hour guided walking tour of the Nobelius Heritage Park. The tour traversed the park, highlighting significant trees, the history of the Nobelius Nursery, as well as the work of the park's first Curator, Gus Ryberg OAM. After the walk, the group gathered at the Emerald Museum for a casual afternoon tea.</p> <p>Positive feedback was received at the end of the event, many of whom were in awe of the rich history of the park and its surrounds.</p>

**Emerald Museum open day**

Description	To maximise visitation opportunities during peak periods, the Emerald Museum Community Asset Committee hosted an open day to coincide with the Victorian Salvia Study Group's annual salvia plant sale on Sunday 19 November 2023.
Council plan initiative	Actively protect key heritage sites within the shire
Update	<p>The open day featured colouring-in for children, a plant sale, and "guess the number of lollies in the jar" competition for all patrons. 35 people attended on the day and approximately \$250 was raised from donations, the plant sale, and sales of the Emerald Museum calendar.</p> <p>Between November 2022-October 2023, the Emerald Museum recorded a total of 1,376 visitors. Audiences are classified as local, metropolitan Melbourne, wider Victoria, interstate, and international. This was the first-year official visitor numbers were recorded. This will continue moving forward to assess if the activation activities are seeing an increase in visitor numbers.</p>

**Walk against violence and bring your bills day**

Description	The annual walk against violence event was complimented with a bring your bills day, with Council officers providing information about Council services.
Policy theme	Climate Change Waste and resource recovery
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement initiatives in the Aspirational Energy Transition Plan</li> <li>Implement the action plan for the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</li> </ul>
Update	<p>Council officers from the Environment and Heritage unit and Waste team attended the Walk Against Violence event on 24 November, offering information about free Council services and engaging with different communities on various waste and environment topics.</p> <p>Attendees were able to bring along their utility bills, to get help reading and understanding the account, talk about how to save money and improve the energy efficiency of their homes.</p>

**Mini waste guide**

Description	Council's annual waste and recycling guide contains relevant waste information for residents including what can go in household bins, information on the bookable hard waste service, upcoming drop-off events and more. The waste guide is often sent out to households at the beginning of each year and copies are available throughout the year from customer service, pop-up stalls and libraries. Digital copies can also be downloaded from Council's website.
Policy theme	Waste and resource recovery
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the action plan for the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</li> </ul>
Update	The 2024 waste and recycling guide was included in the summer 2023-24 edition of Connect as a removable insert. The 2023 waste guide contained more information than previous editions and there have been very few changes in the residential services since the 2023 design was distributed to residents. As such a smaller insert was included in Connect as a refresher on kerbside waste services as well as free upcoming drop-off days.

**National Recycling week events**

Description	Council celebrated Planet Ark's National Recycling Week (13-19 November) with a range of exciting activities to encourage residents to brush up on their recycling knowledge. The waste team hosted several pop-up events and workshops with a focus on in-person community interaction with Council waste officers.
Policy theme	Waste and resource recovery
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the action plan for the <i>Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</i></li> </ul>
Update	<p>This year the National Recycling theme was 'what goes around comes around' to help highlight the value of our precious resources and the need to improve our recycling and recovery. In recognition of the week, Council hosted a Rethink Recycling education station, two community pop-up sessions, and a clothing swap event for the local community.</p> <p>Council hosted its first ever clothing swap event where residents could refresh their wardrobe by swapping rather than shopping. Attendees were encouraged to bring up to 6 quality, pre-loved items and take home the same number of items in exchange.</p> <p>The event was hosted in partnership with The Clothing Exchange with 37 people in attendance and 158 items collected on the day. Out of the 158 items, 98 good quality items were swapped, 49 items were donated to local charity and op-shops such as Avalon Centre for homeless and the Mecwacare op-shop in Malvern. 11 unsuitable items were sent for textile recycling.</p> <p>Residents were also encouraged to meet waste officers in-person at the pop-up stalls that were organised during the week at major shopping centres: Pakenham Marketplace and Village Lakeside Shopping Centre. Over 60 residents interacted with Council officers at these pop-up events.</p> <p>Residents were also provided with an opportunity to brush up on their recycling knowledge via social media posts and stories.</p> <p>Overall, each engagement activity received positive feedback from the community and lead to valuable conversations about recycling and waste reduction.</p>



**Green waste drop off**

Description	The Cardinia Shire community was provided with the opportunity to dispose of their garden waste at six free green waste drop off events. These regular events encourage residents to drop-off excess residential green waste throughout the year and help reduce the need for burning off. All green waste collected from these events is processed and turned into nutrient rich compost.
Policy theme	Waste and resource recovery
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement the action plan for the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</li> </ul>
Update	<p>There were six free green waste drop-off events in 2023 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.</p> <p>The six green waste drop-off events were strategically organised to align with the open fire burning policy. 2,461 individual vehicles attended the events diverting a total of 503.32 tonnes of green waste material for composting. The total cost to deliver these events throughout 2023 was \$93, 630.91 which included collection and processing of material as well as the staff costs for Sunday events held at Future Recycling Transfer Station in Pakenham.</p> <p>The event in March 2023 was the busiest drop-off with 822 individual vehicles in attendance with 146 tonnes of green waste collected. December 2023 was the second busiest event with 471 vehicles attending the event.</p> <p>Council will be holding six green waste drop-off events in 2024. Dates for these events will be communicated to the residents through a comprehensive communication and engagement plan.</p>

**Container deposit scheme**

Description	<p>Victoria's Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) launched on 1 November 2023, allowing Victorians to receive a 10c refund for every eligible drink container returned to a designated drop-off point.</p> <p>Accepted containers include most aluminium, glass, plastic and liquid paperboard (carton) drink containers between 150ml and 3L. Eligible containers have a 10c logo on the packaging.</p> <p>Upon return, residents can choose to receive their refund as cash, EFT, voucher, or a charity donation.</p>
Policy theme	Waste and resource recovery
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the action plan for the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</li> </ul>
Update	<p>Collection points can be found across Victoria. Cardinia Shire has many locations and are a mix of over the counter, reverse vending machines and the return-it depot on Bald Hill Road, Pakenham, with more to launch in the coming months.</p> <p>As a Victorian Government initiative, Council's role in the CDS has focused on connecting the CDS operators with local sites, and going forward this will move to educating the community about what containers are accepted and directing residents to the CDS website for return locations and further information.</p> <p>In 2024, Council's annual kerbside recycling material audit will also include eligible CDS containers in reporting, to determine the volume of diverted containers from the kerbside recycling stream.</p>

***What is coming up?***

- Bin standardisation project (all rubbish bin lids swapped to red in Feb)
- Clean Up Australia Day (March)
- 2024 drop-off dates (Green waste, Detox your home in April)
- Upper Beaconsfield Community Festival (16 Feb)
- Pakenham Show (18 March)

For more upcoming events, please subscribe to Council's environmental newsletter – Down to earth  
[www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/downtoearth](http://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/downtoearth)