

## 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 three months to March 2024.

#### Attachments

1. Environment Council Plan initiatives quarterly report - April 2024 [6.5.1.1 - 10 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*

### **Roadside weed control program**

Description	<p>Council's roadside weed and pest control plan sets out our priorities for roadside management focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prioritising Council managed high conservation value roadsides where biodiversity values can be protected and enhanced,</li> <li>• prioritising areas adjacent to sites of high biodiversity value such conservation reserves, regardless of ownership of those reserves,</li> <li>• addressing community requests, particularly where landholders are actively addressing weed issues within their properties, or weeds are causing nuisance,</li> <li>• undertaking complementary works which benefit programs undertaken by community groups and/or other key agencies.</li> <li>• continue to monitor, identify, and record emerging weed infestations and current infestations.</li> <li>• continue to monitor, identify and record as well as report pest animal presence and impacts.</li> <li>• align program works to support and enhance the objectives from Council's <i>Biolink Plan</i> and <i>Weed Management Strategy</i>.</li> <li>• ensuring public safety and social implications are addressed.</li> </ul>
Funding	<p>This program is jointly funded by the Victorian Government's Roadside Weeds and Pests Program (RWPP) (\$32,500 pa) and Council.</p>
Update	<p>Works are currently being completed for Council's annual roadside weed control program.</p> <p>Priority works have included the control of declared noxious weeds such as blackberry, ragwort, gorse, and broom species on selected roadsides.</p> <p>This year a was undertaken using mechanical treatment of areas of substantial flax-leaved broom infestations around the Maryknoll area. The use of forestry mulching large infestations has reduced the need for manual handling, disposal costs and herbicide use, treating just under a kilometre of broom infestation.</p> <p>In addition, Natural Reserve Rangers continue to assess and respond to customer requests regarding roadside weed issues on vegetated roadsides.</p>

**Pepi's land willow removal project**

Description	The Pepi's Land Wetland Management and Ecological Restoration Plan, has willows listed as a very high priority for control.
Funding	This project has been fully funded by Council
Update	<p>Works have now been completed to remove willows from the areas surrounding the dams at Pepi's land.</p> <p>Willows have been selectively removed to make way for further indigenous planting and to encourage the reestablishment of indigenous vegetation. Large, dead willow trees have been habitat pruned to allow them to remain in situ. Some larger log wood has been left as ground habitat, while the remaining stems and branch material has been chipped.</p> <p>Follow up weed control will continue at the reserve as part of Council's annual weed control programming. Revegetation projects will be undertaken in 2025 following assessment of the success of natural regeneration of indigenous species.</p> <p>Signage remains onsite to inform the community of the project.</p>

**Biodiversity Incentive Community Group Grants**

Description	Council's Biodiversity Incentive Community Group grant provides 'Friends of' groups, Landcare and other community groups with funding and support to undertake large-scale biodiversity projects that will protect and enhance indigenous species within Cardinia Shire. Five applications were received this year.
Funding	This grant program is fully funded by Council
Update	<p>Council has funded three land management projects along biolink corridors, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friends of Gembrook Park <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a 50m corridor within Gembrook township, involving weed control and revegetation of 1000 plants.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Western Port Catchment Landcare: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lovers Lane paper road project involving weed control and planting of 500 plants along 650 metres of road corridor.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Cannibal Creek Landcare: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diamond Creek (Tonimbuk) 10-hectare project involving weed and animal control, fencing of remnant vegetation and revegetation of 1000 plants.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Council officers are working with the other two applicants to finalise their projects and funding.</p>

**Biolink project: indicator species monitoring**

Description	<p>Action 18 (Biolink Plan): Undertake monitoring of indicator species in priority natural resource areas.</p> <p>Council has commenced a fauna monitoring program for three of the Biolink Plan ‘indicator’ species to continue the ongoing monitoring of our natural environment.</p>
Funding	<p>This program is fully funded by Council</p>
Update	<p>The presence of the Powerful owl and Yellow-bellied glider will be monitored at 40 biolink property locations across the shire.</p> <p>Understanding the changing health of these species over time will inform the broader health of Cardinia Shire’s biodiversity and assist Council to target future conservation programs.</p> <p>The species monitoring program commenced in April and will be completed by 30 June 2024. Species records will be made available to the community via iNaturalist and the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas.</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.

### **Deep Creek Reserve – new interpretation and way finding signage**

Description	New entry signs, maps, way finding signage and interpretation elements have been installed at Deep Creek Reserve.
Funding	This project was funded by the Australian Government’s Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program
Update	<p>The new interpretation elements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it a bird? Is it a plane? NO! It is an eco-building – the interactive element allows visitors to discover many of the sustainable initiatives that have been used in the construction and operation of the building.</li> <li>• What is in a name? – located in front of the tadpole artwork, at the front of the building, includes the significance of the reserve to the Bunurong people and where the ‘Deep Creek Reserve’ name came from.</li> <li>• Café signage upgrade – what Council is doing and what you can do to help our environment.</li> </ul> <p>The site maps and wayfinding signage will help visitors easily navigate around the reserve and to ‘choose their own adventure’.</p> <p>Heather Kennedy, a Bunurong artist, was engaged to paint a picture for the project, and you will find elements of the image on the entry sign and ‘what’s in a name’ sign.</p> <p>This project is now complete</p>

### **Energy resilience project**

Description	<p>The installation of back-up power systems at the Gembrook Community Centre, Cockatoo Community Complex (with a connection to the Ash Wednesday Bushfire Education Centre) and Worrell Reserve Pavilion (Emerald).</p> <p>The systems include solar panels, batteries and diesel generators to provide back-up power for the community during prolonged power outages. The systems will provide additional benefits to user groups through the daily generation and storage of renewable energy, helping to reduce utility costs.</p>
Funding	The project is funded by the Victorian Government as part of the Energy Resilience Systems program
Update	The resilience systems are nearing completion, with commissioning and testing progressing at Worrell Reserve Pavilion in Emerald and Gembrook Community Centre. The back-up generator installation is being organised at the Cockatoo Community Complex.

## ***Heritage***

Council Plan initiative

- Actively protect key heritage sites within the shire

### **Heritage grant program – summary of 2023 program**

Description	<p>Council's heritage grant program aims to assist the community in preserving places/sites of heritage significance that are covered by a heritage overlay in the Cardinia Shire Planning Scheme.</p> <p>This year the program was open to both publicly accessible places and privately owned places/sites. Works to privately owned places are only funded if the works are visible from the street e.g. front facades.</p>
Funding	<p>This grants program is fully funded by Council</p>
Update	<p>This year Council's heritage grant program funded four heritage projects across the shire. The projects included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refitting the workroom at the Koo Wee Rup Museum to store their growing collection of photographs, documents and objects.</li> <li>• Replacement of the front fence at St James Church in Nar Nar Goon.</li> <li>• Maintenance of the overgrown historic hedge at Bunyip Primary School.</li> <li>• Replacement of corrugated iron roof on the front veranda of an 1880's private residence.</li> </ul> <p>Applications are now open for the 2024-25 heritage grant program.</p>

### **Digitisation of pre-WW1 and WW1 Nobelius ledgers**

Description	<p>The Emerald Museum was successful in receiving funding from the National Library of Australia's Community Heritage Grant program.</p> <p>This funding will assist in the digitisation of pre-WWI and WWI Nobelius Nursery catalogues, sales ledgers, account books and correspondence for access and preservation purposes.</p> <p>The grant application required a statement arguing for the collection's national significance, which was supported by reference to Carl Axel Nobelius' horticultural innovations, impact on international relations, and legacy left on Australia's food supply.</p> <p>This grant will enable the nationally significant collection of Nobelius documentation to be preserved for future generations, long after their physical forms deteriorate. It will also enable the Emerald Museum to share these documents on their online collection database, which will increase the museum's reach and foster public access beyond the museum's walls.</p>
Funding	<p>This project is fully funded by the National Library of Australia's Community Heritage Grant program.</p>
Update	<p>Digitisation has commenced with support from a specialist contractor to complete digitisation of the ledgers.</p> <p>The project is on track to be completed by November 2024.</p>

## ***Water***

Council Plan initiative

- Implement initiatives in the Integrated Water Management Plan

### **Deep Creek Reserve - raingarden and interpretation signs**

Description	Council has installed two new raingardens next to the Deep Creek Reserve building that demonstrate a small-scale example of how a wetland works to naturally filter and treat stormwater.
Funding	This project was fully funded by Council
Update	An interpretation sign has also been installed next to the raingarden closest to the main entry door to explain how a raingarden works.  The project is complete

### **Raingarden workshop**

Description	Council hosted a raingarden workshop as part of the Myli (Library) summer school holiday program at Pakenham library.
Funding	Council partnered with Myli to fund the workshop.
Update	The workshop was fully booked with children keen to make their own up-cycled self-watering planters. Council staff delivered an interactive raingarden demonstration for the group, showing how 'water walks' through our environment and the important role plants play in reducing pollution.  Council continues to build community resilience to climate change through education and engagement activities.



### ***Waste and resource recovery***

Council Plan initiatives

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

#### **Community events wrap up**

Description	<p>Councils waste team participated in a series of community events between February and April 2024. The team provided information and education to event attendees, raising awareness about the importance of recycling and composting, and promotion of waste and environment projects delivered by the Council.</p> <p>The events are organised to support Council Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy action item 14; <i>"Provide education to promote correct kerbside service use, including correct sorting and presentation behaviour and any emerging policy changes."</i></p>
Funding	<p>The project is funded by Council's Garbage Charge.</p>
Update	<p>Each event had a range of activities to keep the community engaged, such as, waste sorting games, opportunity for children to take photos with the Council waste truck and Kerby the bin mascot, recycling quiz, prizes and much more.</p> <p>The waste team participated in the following events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upper Beaconsfield Village Festival- Saturday 18 February</li> <li>• Berwick Show- Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 February</li> <li>• Parklea Pakenham Show- Saturday 16 March</li> <li>• Bunyip Show- Sunday 24 March</li> <li>• Yakkerboo Festival- Sunday 21 April</li> </ul> <p>Attending local events plays an important role in promoting sustainable practices and waste minimisation strategies; the team will continue attending local events where opportunities arise.</p>

**Children’s Clothing and Top Swap event wrap up**

Description	<p>Council hosted the first Children’s Clothing and Toy Swap event on Sunday 7 April at Beaconsfield Community Complex. Under the program, parents/ guardians of children aged 3-8 years were given the opportunity to swap good quality clothes and toys with other participants.</p> <p>This event supports Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy action item 23: <i>“Continue to support a range of resource recovery options outside of the kerbside system (such as Detox Your Home) and advocate for new recovery and reuse programs/opportunities.”</i></p>
Funding	<p>The project is funded by Council Garbage Charge.</p>
Update	<p>Council partnered with The Clothing Exchange to provide an environmentally friendly way to help parents/guardians of children aged 3-8 years swap up to 6 good-quality pre-washed items of clothing and/or 6 good-quality toys to the event.</p> <p>The event was free to attend and attracted 23 families and 66 individuals. Approximately 560 items were brought into the swap with a 60:40 split between clothes and toys. 72 clothing items and 27 toys were left after the swap. The leftover clothes and toys were donated to Sacred Heard Op Shops.</p> <p>In addition to the swap, activities such as the presence of Cardinia’s local toy libraries (Pakenham Toy Library and Puffing Billy Toy Library), waste sorting games, reusable bag colouring, and many more activities by the waste team created an engaging atmosphere for all participants.</p> <p>Overall, the event saw good participation numbers and plans are underway to host similar events in the future.</p>

**Clean up Australia day event wrap up**

<p>Description</p>	<p>Clean Up Australia Day is the nation’s largest community-based environmental event, which started 35 years ago.</p> <p>The community was encouraged to sign up for the Clean Up Australia Day on Sunday 3 March 2024. Schools and local businesses were also encouraged to sign up for Business Clean Up Day on Tuesday 27 February and Schools Clean Up Day on Friday 1 March.</p> <p>Council helped participants by collecting and disposing of the rubbish collected from community events and participated in the Business Clean Up Day.</p> <p>Clean Up Australia Day event supports Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy action item 29: <i>Continue to support community led litter-reduction initiatives such as “Clean up Australia Day”.</i></p>
<p>Funding</p>	<p>The project is funded by Council Garbage Charge.</p>
<p>Update</p>	<p>In Cardinia Shire, 41 registered clean-up events were organised with over 200 volunteers helping clean our local parks, reserves and open spaces. Some clean-up events were attended by Councillors and staff who contributed to the success of the day.</p> <p>Of the 41 registered sites, 23 groups were local schools, 2 business groups, and 16 community groups. Council assisted 17 sites with rubbish collection and disposal.</p> <p>Soft plastic pieces, cigarette butts, vapes and single-use plastic beverage bottles were amongst the commonly reported items collected by volunteers. Other bulky items such as tyres, bikes, a lawn mower, green waste and timber were also collected and removed from the shire’s local environment.</p> <p>Overall, Clean Up Australia Day 2024 was a success and Council will continue to support clean up events throughout the year.</p>

***What is coming up?***

- Heritage grants opened on Monday 8 April
- Kindergarten and Primary School waste incursion with a focus on waste and recycling to be delivered in Term 3 and 4
- Plastic Free July
- Good Sort Bin Inspection Program- 12 months review

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)