

7.5.1 Environment Council Plan Initiatives Quarterly Report

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Recommendation(s)

That Council note this report.

Attachments

1. Environment Council Plan initiatives quarterly report - July 2024 [7.5.1.1 - 12 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* and the *Biolink Plan*.

Weed control grant wrap up

Description	The weed control grant program helps landowners and community groups control noxious and environmental weeds on properties located in areas of high environmental value. Landowners on properties over 4,000m ² and community groups may apply for up to a maximum of \$1,500 (inc. GST) to help cover the cost of purchasing herbicides, engaging a contractor, or disposing of weeds at a green waste facility.
Funding	This program is fully funded by Council.
Update	This year, 66 grants were approved, totalling almost \$39,000. Grants covered a mix of activities, including engaging licensed weed control contractors, purchasing herbicides, and skip hire for the disposal of weed material. Successful properties were located within a biolink corridor, or within proximity of bushland or a natural reserve, where work funded by the grant complemented weed control being conducted by Council's Natural Reserves team.

Indigenous plant giveaway

Description	The aim of the Indigenous plant giveaway is to support residents, landowners, schools, kindergartens and community groups to use indigenous plants in and around their property. Small property vouchers (\$50) were available to residents and landowners on properties less than 4,000m ² (< one acre). Large property vouchers (\$125) were available to landowners with properties greater than 4,000m ² (> one acre), schools, kindergartens and community groups. Vouchers enabled residents to choose from a selection of indigenous trees, shrubs and grasses as tube stock from the Cardinia Environment Coalition nursery.
Funding	This program is fully funded by Council
Update	6000 indigenous plants were provided to residents across the shire for planting on their properties.

Gardens for wildlife pop up at reconciliation events

Description	As part of Reconciliation Week, local schools were provided with gardens for wildlife indigenous plant packs.
Funding	This initiative is funded by Council.
Update	In May 2024, Council invited local kinders, schools and community members along to the Civic Centre and the Hills Hub for Reconciliation Week. The community event provided many activities including a gardens for wildlife pop up stall and plant pack giveaway. The plant pack included 4-6 indigenous plants to be planted onsite at the kinder or school, along with information about the indigenous use of these plants, how these plants can attract local native birds and accompanying educational resources. Each kinder or school eagerly received their plant pack and shared their enthusiasm for planting a wildlife friendly garden at their kinder or school.

Wildlife gardening workshop and CEC open day

Description	On Saturday 1 June, Living with Wildlife presented 'wildlife friendly gardening' to help residents understand how to create suitable habitat for local native animals from the perspective of a wildlife carer.
Funding	This program is fully funded by Council.
Update	The Living with Wildlife presentation was hosted by the Cardinia Environment Coalition at the indigenous plant nursery at Deep Creek Reserve and coincided with Council's annual plant giveaway and one of the nursery open days. Attendees reported that the session was informative and provided a new perspective of wildlife gardening, there were many productive discussions between the 14 attendees during and after the presentation.

Community biodiversity incentive project

Description	Council provides up to \$6,000 grant funding to environmental community groups that support biodiversity and meets Council's Biolink plan outcomes.
Funding	This initiative is fully funded by Council
Update	Eight community groups were funded through the grant which achieved biodiversity outcomes over 18.2 hectares. Works were focused on enhancing connectivity of six biolink corridors in Gembrook, Garfield, Tonimbuk, Koo Wee Rup and Beaconsfield by undertaking weed control, deer exclusion fencing and bandicoot habitat planting. A total of 2500 plants were planted.

SwampWorks biolink initiative

Description	Bunyip Landcare proposed to develop a stakeholder working group tentatively called 'SwampWorks' to focus environmental initiatives in the lowland area from Koo Wee Rup to Bunyip.
Funding	Council funded the initial stakeholder working group meeting
Update	Council's Biolink plan identifies this as a priority investment and. Melbourne Water supports the concept. The Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Adaptation (DEECA) have indicated this area is a future Southern Brown Bandicoot (SBB) investment area. There are approximately 19 stakeholder groups that could be engaged in this initiative. Council helped to facilitate an initial stakeholder working group in June with 27 people attending including DEECA staff who provided in principle support to fund this initiative in 2025 onwards.

Kinder program wrap up

Description	Council provides a limited number of free environment education incursions to four-year-old kindergarten programs in the shire, to encourage children to connect with their local environment and teach them simple actions to improve and protect our environment.
Funding	This program is fully funded by Council.
Update	Chooktopia continued to deliver the kinder program covering topics related to biodiversity, water and climate change. In total, 10 sessions were delivered across 8 kinders. Topics covered included minibeasts, journey of water, saving water and energy and habitats. The most popular topic was minibeasts, followed by saving water and energy. Feedback from teachers was positive, praising educators' interaction with the children and the variety of information covered.

Climate change

Council Plan initiative

- Implement initiatives in the Aspirational Energy Transition Plan

This section also includes updates on the implementation of the *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and* projects that are run by South-East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA), of which Cardinia Shire is a partner.

Toun-nun child and family centre ESD

Description	<p>The new Toun-Nun Integrated Child and Family Centre in Officer boasts a high level of sustainable design.</p> <p>The centre includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • three kindergarten program rooms • community room, that is future proofed as an additional kinder room • three consult rooms to cater for Maternal and Child Health, and other allied health professionals • staff room with kitchen space and planning room • outdoor play space, shared common area/ waiting lounge and carparking.
Funding	<p>The Toun-nun Child and Family Centre received funding through the Victorian School Building Authority’s Building Blocks Capacity Grant Program, and from the Jobs, Precincts and Region’s Growing Suburbs Fund. The build also benefited from developer contributions.</p>
Update	<p>The centre was built following Council’s enhanced standard for sustainable buildings and was rated using the local government sustainable design assessment tool, the built environment sustainability scorecard.</p> <p>Key sustainable design features include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rooftop solar • a rainwater harvesting system • high energy efficiency rated heating, cooling and appliances • building orientation along an east/west axis to reduce exposure to the hot summer sun, helping to reduce energy use and costs for heating and cooling • natural light to improve indoor quality • construction materials that have low chemical content and; • automatic ventilation to improve indoor air quality, and sensors to control to ventilation levels to reduce the use of heating and cooling systems. <p>The building design has a focus on improving stormwater quality, with a stormwater filtration system designed to capture gross pollutants, such as sediment, litter, and oil and grease that may get washed from hard surfaces into the drains.</p> <p>The centre reflects Council’s focus on providing sustainable and healthy spaces.</p>

Climate change education at Deep Creek Reserve

Description	Council has engaged PrimeSCI to co-develop and deliver a climate change education program as part of Council's <i>Climate Change Adaption Strategy</i> . Onsite at Deep Creek Reserve, local school groups are given the opportunity to investigate the biodiversity of the demonstration wetlands, changes to temperature in man-made and natural environments and the use of renewable energy to reduce the impact of climate change. The environmental sustainable design (ESD) features of the building are also showcased in the program.
Funding	This program is funded by Council.
Update	In Term 2, three climate change education program sessions were delivered to local students from Officer Specialist School and Koo Wee Rup Primary School. There are 10 climate change sessions booked for Term 3 and 4 2024.

Energy resilience project

Description	The installation of three back up power systems for Worrell Pavilion Emerald, the Gembrook Community Centre and the Cockatoo Community Complex, Senior Citizens and Ash Wednesday Bushfire Education Centre. The systems include rooftop solar energy, batteries and back-up generators to provide a source of power during a prolonged power outage.
Funding	This project is funded by the Victorian Government
Update	Most of the works are complete on the back-up power systems with finalisation works currently taking place to test and commission them.

Heritage

Council Plan initiative

- Actively protect key heritage sites within the shire

Heritage walk at Emerald Museum

Description	As part of the annual Australian Heritage Festival the Emerald Museum Community Asset Committee ran a heritage walk through Nobelius Heritage Park.
Funding	This was a free event run by the Emerald Museum Community Asset Committee
Update	<p>On Sunday 5 May, 50 people joined the one-hour walking tour of the park, traversing centuries of horticultural history relating to the former Nobelius Nursery.</p> <p>The many maples, ash, cedars, beech and birches in the park provided a lovely backdrop for the event. Be sure to follow the Emerald Museum on Facebook to stay up to date with future events.</p>

New murals at Emerald Museum

Description	Murals depicting historical images painted on the outside of the fire shutters at Emerald Museum.
Funding	This project was funded by the Emerald Museum Community Asset Committee through fundraising and donations
Update	<p>This project has long been in the pipework for a while and is a key action from the <i>Emerald Museum Strategic Plan</i>. The committee engaged artist George Manioudakis, also known as Man of Darkness, to paint the murals.</p> <p>The historic images painted on the Emerald Museum fire shutters represent the key historical themes in the Emerald region, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nobelius Nursery proprietor Carl Axel Nobelius • Early agricultural practices • Gold mining • Timber industry • Railway.

Water

Council Plan initiative

- Implement initiatives in the Integrated Water Management Plan

Westernport catchment IWM plan

Description	Adoption of the Westernport Catchment Integrated Water Management (IWM) Plan
Funding	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)
Update	<p>The Western Port Catchment IWM Plan was developed collaboratively over a two-year period by local governments, water authorities and the Victorian Government and adopted in March 2024.</p> <p>The plan will drive an integrated approach to water management that delivers clear objectives, targets and action outcomes for the catchment and Western Port Region, which Cardinia Shire forms part of.</p> <p>A key action identified in the plan is that Council and project partners will advocate to the Victorian Government for the development of the Koo Wee Rup biolink. This action was identified as a priority within Council's <i>Biolink Plan</i> and aims to protect and enhance habitat over a 28 km² area in Koo Wee Rup, which includes key waterways (for the conservation of threatened species and to improve water quality of receiving waterways and Westernport).</p> <p>The targets in the Westernport Catchment IWM Plan will be used in the development of Council's new IWM Plan to be developed in 2025.</p>

Waste and resource recovery

Council Plan initiatives

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

Detox your Home and drumMUSTER results (April)

<p>Description</p>	<p>The annual Detox your Home event provides a safe, easy and free disposal option for communities to clean out household chemicals without harming their health or the environment. This event accepts most household chemicals used in the bathroom, laundry, kitchen, shed, garage or garden.</p> <p>Supported by Sustainability Victoria, Detox your Home events are free and run throughout the year all over Victoria. The Cardinia Shire event is held once a year (usually in April) at the Cardinia Shire depot, Purton Road Pakenham.</p> <p>DrumMUSTER is a product stewardship scheme for agriculture and veterinary chemical producers supported by Council, held annually.</p>
<p>Funding</p>	<p>Detox your Home events are funded by Sustainability Victoria.</p> <p>DrumMUSTER is supported by Council through the provision of staff and recycling collection.</p>
<p>Update</p>	<p>Cardinia Shire Council’s Detox your Home event was held on 22 April 2024. This event completely booked out prior and was the highest attended Detox your Home event since 2014.</p> <p>A total of 250 vehicles attended on the day, dropping off more than 6.3 tonnes of household chemicals – around 1.77 tonnes more than the 2023 event.</p> <p>Flammable liquids made up the largest volume of all chemicals dropped off (2,031kg), followed by non-flammable liquids (1,231kg) and liquid pesticides (1,117.5kg).</p> <p>Other items dropped off included 233 fire extinguishers and 264 aerosols which can be recycled, instead of ending up in landfill or contaminating recycling bins.</p> <p>Many of these chemicals are also recycled, repurposed or used to create energy, with a small amount being responsibly disposed of in accordance with EPA requirements.</p> <p>Cardinia Shire residents represented 75% of all attendees (191) and most attendees were from Pakenham (77), followed by Beaconsfield Upper (18), Officer (17) and Beaconsfield (16). The remaining 25% of attendees were from outside Cardinia Shire, with some travelling as far as Lakes Entrance, Fish Creek and Christmas Hills.</p> <p>The drumMUSTER container drop-off also ran on the same day with 3 attendees dropping off a total of 31 chemical containers and drums. These drums are collected by drumMUSTER after the event as part of a national product stewardship program to save waste from landfill and help reduce illegal dumping.</p> <p>Some of the products drumMUSTER recycled materials go into producing are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wheelie bins • Fence posts • Irrigation pipes • Underground cable cover • Bollards • Barstools (concrete supports)

Green waste drop off event results (April and June)

Description	<p>Council conducts green waste drop-off events for Cardinia Shire residents throughout the year as part of Council Plan strategy 3.2 <i>'actively move towards zero waste through increasing recovery and reuse'</i> and Council's Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy action 11 <i>'provide alternative options to reduce burning off'</i>.</p> <p>Six events are organised for 2024, running in the second week of every second month. This year is also the first year the format changed from 4 days to 6 days per event, offering a longer drop-off period for residents.</p>
Funding	This project is fully funded by Council's garbage charge
Update	<p>The two most recent green waste drop-off events were held in April and June, both at Future Recycling Transfer Station, Pakenham.</p> <p>The April event was held from Monday 8 to Saturday 13 April and was the second event of 2024. A total of 401 vehicles dropped off 64 tonnes of green waste over the 6 days, with Monday and Saturday being the busiest days. The total cost of this event was \$10,220.</p> <p>The June event was held on Monday 3 to Saturday 8 June. A total of 412 vehicles dropped off nearly 90 tonnes of green waste over the six days, with Saturday being the busiest day (140 attendees). The total cost of this event was \$13,997.</p>

E-waste campaign

Description	<p>Electronic waste (e-waste) has been banned from Victorian landfills, and therefore kerbside bins, since 2019.</p> <p>Due to a recent increase in truck fires (5 within the last 6 months) within Cardinia Shire, Council ran a 4-month education and awareness campaign to help address the increasing safety and environmental risks posed by the incorrect disposal of e-waste and batteries.</p>
Funding	The project is jointly funded by Sustainability Victoria and Council's garbage charge.
Update	<p>The campaign covered a wide range of communications channels and platforms aimed at reaching as many residents as possible. This included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social media posts and advertising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media release • Newspaper advertisements • Community noticeboard banner • Local bus advertising <p>There was also a range of other collateral created that will be used for years to come including a new waste truck design, pull-up banners, folding cardboard trucks, and flyers and handouts to promote the message at events.</p> <p>An evaluation of the social media posts and advertising showed the ads reached more than 29,000 residents with over 3300 post engagements, 16 shares, 32 comments and 67 reactions. A total of 970 people clicked through to the website where we saw a significant increase in website traffic throughout May, showing the effectiveness of the campaign during this time.</p> <p>In addition to raising awareness within the community around the dangers of incorrect e-waste disposal, the campaign has provided an opportunity to trial new communications channels and create consistent designs that align with the broader Sustainability Victoria campaign and assets being used across Victoria.</p>

Good sort bin inspection – 12-month review

Description	<p>Council’s kerbside bin inspection program has reached it’s one-year anniversary since rebranding to the ‘Good Sort’ program. The program started in May 2023 with a new contractor and brand refresh and aims to reduce contamination by providing direct and specific feedback to household.</p> <p>The bin inspection educators audit kerbside bins before they’re collected from the kerbside. Providing positive reinforcement to households doing the right thing and information for those with incorrect items in their bins.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If no contamination is found, bins receive a green “Thanks for being a good sort!” tag and go into a draw to win a gift card. • Minor contaminated bins will receive an orange “Oops!” tag with information to improve next time. • Highly contaminated bins will receive a red “Oh no!” tag and will not be emptied until the contamination is removed. <p>The Good Sort Program supports Council Plan, strategy 3.2 <i>‘actively move towards zero waste through increasing recovery and reuse’</i> and Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy, action 15; <i>“Continue to provide a kerbside bin inspection program to enhance community waste sorting behaviour.”</i></p>										
Funding	<p>The project is funded by Council’s garbage charge.</p>										
Update	<p>Between May 2023 and May 2024, Good Sort Program created measurable impact on kerbside recycling and waste sorting behaviour which are summarised below.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="360 1061 1425 1384"> <tr> <td>Total Recycling Bins inspected</td> <td>8,338</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total Food and Garden Waste Bins inspected</td> <td>547</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total green tags applied (Recycling+ FOGO)</td> <td>8,420</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total orange tags applied (Recycling+ FOGO)</td> <td>441</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Total red tags applied (Recycling+ FOGO)</td> <td>24</td> </tr> </table> <p>The Good Sort Program is a great way to manage bin contamination and reduce the impacts of hazardous items, such as gas bottles and e-waste from ending up in collection trucks or landfill.</p> <p>The contract for this program has recently gone out to tender to increased contract duration and get the best price and value for our community as more providers are now available. The new contract is likely to commence from 1 August 2024.</p> <p>Council will continue delivering this project as it is a proven program to address and reduce kerbside bin contamination, encourage individuals to adopt more sustainable behaviours, and help Council make informed decisions to improve kerbside bin contamination management strategies.</p>	Total Recycling Bins inspected	8,338	Total Food and Garden Waste Bins inspected	547	Total green tags applied (Recycling+ FOGO)	8,420	Total orange tags applied (Recycling+ FOGO)	441	Total red tags applied (Recycling+ FOGO)	24
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Light globe drop off service- Pakenham Library

Description	<p>In partnership with Pakenham Library, Council has setup a free light globe drop-off service for residents.</p> <p>This service was established in response to community feedback regarding limited options in the shire to safely dispose of light globes.</p> <p>The service supports Council Plan, strategy "<i>2.1 Advocate, plan for and deliver accessible community infrastructure and services that address community need.</i>" "<i>3.2 Actively move towards zero waste through increasing waste recovery and reuse.</i>" Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy, action 23, "<i>Continue to support a range of resource recovery options outside of the kerbside system and advocate for new recovery and reuse programs/opportunities.</i>"</p>
Funding	The project is funded by Council garbage charge.
Update	<p>Light globes (such as CFLs, halogen globes, LED lamps etc) cannot be put in any household bins as they contain toxic substances that are hazardous to the environment. There were limited options to safely dispose of light globes in the Ssire earlier, such as Koo Wee Rup Hewitt Eco House, Ikea Springvale.</p> <p>To make light globe disposal more accessible to the community, and to keep light globes out of landfill, Council setup its first free globe drop-off location at Pakenham Library. The drop-off service commenced in March 2024 and approximately 100 globes have been collected for recycling and recovery so far.</p> <p>Light globes collected through this drop-off service are recovered by Ecocycle. The material recovered from globes includes mercury, aluminium and phosphor, and are repurposed into new products, using a fraction of the energy that mining virgin materials would require. A great example of circular economy in action.</p> <p>Due to the success of the service so far, Council is currently working to expand with another drop-off location at Emerald Library.</p>

Highlights for 2024-25

Strategy delivery

- **Implementation of the Aspirational Energy Transition Plan**
 - Purchase of fleet carbon offsets
 - Transition away from gas appliances for Council facilities.
 - Continued investigation and delivery of rooftop solar energy installations on Council facilities.
 - Household energy efficiency education sessions through Maternal Child Health.
 - Continued involvement in project development in the South-East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA).
- **Implementation of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy**
 - Participate in regional climate adaption and resilience projects through SECCCA.
 - Support the expansion of the gardens for wildlife program into growth areas, focusing on urban properties.
 - Support environmental groups and organisations working to establish and protect seagrass and mangrove communities and other threatened Ecological Vegetation Communities found in the council are.
- **Implementation of Biodiversity Conservation Strategy**
 - Liaise with local aboriginal groups over the annual Council natural resource area works plans.
 - Coordinate revegetation on public and private land to improve biodiversity value.
 - Continue to support Eastern Region Pest Animal Network initiatives.
 - Development of the Pest Animal Local Action Plan.
 - Conduct a mid-term strategy review.
- **Implementation of Weed Management Strategy**
 - Continue to lead the Peri Urban Weed Partnership Program.
 - Continue to collaborate with partner agencies, community groups and landholders, to plan and implement weed programs.
 - Review the weed grant program to identify improvements to land management outcomes.
 - Conduct a mid-term strategy review.
- **Implementation of the Biolinks Plan**
 - Collaborate with community groups and networks to implement priority biolink corridors.
 - Undertake monitoring of indicator species in priority natural resource areas.
 - Collaborate with Melbourne Water to find synergies in areas where their priority works align with Biolink Plan priorities.
 - Engage with Traditional Owners to establish cultural land management practices on private land.
- **Implementation of the Integrated Water Management Plan**
 - Continue to participate in the Westernport Integrated Water Management Forum.
 - Liaise with stakeholders to investigate incorporating water re-use opportunities into new recreation facilities at the design phase.
 - Implement water efficiency saving measures in Council facilities.
- **Implementation of the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy**
 - Endorse Public Place Guidelines document and review the Kerbside Guidelines document.
 - Continue to advocate for more Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) locations outside on the growth corridor.
 - Missing waste charges revenue recovery review and action plan.
 - Dumped rubbish awareness campaign.

- Audit and educate waste sorting behaviour at Council owned/operated facilities such as kindergartens.
- Campaign to increase FOGO awareness and number of opt-in services.
- Conduct a tenement/population growth assessment.
- Complete public place infrastructure audit.
- Progress advanced waste processing options.
- Prepare for tendering out recycling processing.

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 to improve biodiversity on public and 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.
 - Kindergarten environment education program.
 - School environment excursions at Deep Creek Reserve.
 - Community plant giveaway from indigenous plant nursery.
 - Indian myna trapping program (sale of traps).
 - Cat and dog management for wildlife conservation awareness program.
 - Targeted energy use information sessions for vulnerable groups.
 - Schools and kindergarten waste education program.
 - Community support for managing green waste/fuel loads on private properties.
 - Community waste education program.