

5 QUARTERLY ENVIRONMENT REPORT

FILE REFERENCE INT1729730

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RECOMMENDATION

That the report be noted.

Attachments

Nil.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of some key environmental sustainability projects currently being undertaken by Council. Projects have been categorised according to the Sustainable Environment Strategy themes:

- Climate change and energy conservation
- Development and built environment
- Water conservation
- Waste minimisation and sustainable procurement
- Natural systems

A similar report will be presented each quarter highlighting new programs or projects that have achieved significant milestones.

BACKGROUND

There are a broad range of environmental actions taking place throughout the organisation. While many of these occur within or are led by the Environment Unit, the vast majority of the organisation is involved in environmental sustainability to some degree. Below is a highlight of some of the key projects currently being undertaken.

All actions fall within the Council Plan 2016-17 under the key performance area of Environment 'we will continue to plan and manage the natural and built environment for present and future generations'.

Climate change and energy conservation

Council Plan action – Reduce Council's energy consumption and help the community to do likewise.

1 *New home advisory service*

The new homes, new energy advisory service provides new home buyers with assistance and support to build homes that use less energy and provide a greater level of comfort.

The sustainable design information centre was opened in early March and is being run by SECCCA as part of the program and is funded through a \$330,000 Victorian Government grant. Parklea are hosting the information centre in their land sales office within the Timbertop Estate.

Staff are employed each weekend to manage the centre and provide guidance and advice to those looking at building new homes.

2 *Solar schools program*

In late February, Council assisted environmental consultant bhive Environmental and Powershop launch the solar schools program to Cardinia Shire schools. The solar schools program assists local schools access free solar electricity systems.

The program involves Powershop providing the financial contribution for the school's solar installation when the target number of people from the school community switch their electricity provider to Powershop. Powershop offers affordable electricity and has been ranked Australia's greenest power company for two years running, it is also Australia's first and only 100 percent certified carbon neutral electricity retailer.

The program will assist Council meet its community emissions reduction target of at least a 36 percent reduction on a per capita basis by 2024. bhive Environmental are currently promoting the program and discussing its details with local schools.

3 *VEEC program*

The Victorian Government's Victorian energy efficiency target (VEET) scheme allows energy saving activities to be completed free of charge for residents and businesses. Council has entered into a partnership with Energy Makeovers in relation to the VEET scheme. This involves Energy Makeovers offering and promoting free VEET activities to Cardinia Shire residents and businesses. Council's role is to also promote the offer.

Some of the activities being promoted include weather sealing homes to stop draughts, the installation of standby power controllers, water efficient showerheads and the upgrading of lights with LED globes. These activities save energy costs and improve comfort.

Council has been promoting this program via its environmental newsletter and website. Reporting from Energy Makeovers has indicated that from July 2016 to January 2017, 17 premises in the Shire had energy upgrades undertaken through the program. 276 LED downlights were installed at these premises to replace inefficient halogens. The program is resulting in cost savings for our community and greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

Development and built environment

4 *Solar electricity Gembrook Preschool*

Council officers have worked with the Gembrook Preschool to prepare and submit a grant application for \$10,000 to fund a solar electricity system for the site. The project has been shortlisted for funding through the Australian Government's solar communities program. If installed, the system will save the preschool approximately \$1,250 per annum on its electricity costs and also reduce its environmental impact.

Water conservation

Council Plan action – Plan to manage water in an integrated manner, including the reduction of potable water consumption by Council and households.

5 *Water efficiency audits*

The Integrated water management plan includes a detailed action plan for each of the ten years of implementation. In 2016-17 the plan identified the need for water audits of key council facilities. A consultant has been engaged to complete audits of both Cardinia Life and Holm Park Reserve. The audit analysis will include reviewing water use of swimming pools, amenities such as toilets, basins, showers and kitchen fittings, air-conditioning systems and cooling towers, grounds maintenance, fire services, leakage measurement through flow metering and any water reuse arrangements that may be in place.

At completion of the audits, the consultant will provide officers with a report outlining practical and innovative actions to further reduce water use at these facilities, including the costs of actions, the savings they will achieve, and the payback period.

Waste minimisation and sustainable procurement

Council Plan action – reduce the amount of waste going to landfill to meet the State governments waste and resource recovery policy targets.

6 November Biannual Green and Hard Waste Collection

Council's contractor, WM Waste Management delivered its first collection in November, resulting in a significant increase in material recovered to an impressive 25 percent of all materials. This was made possible through inclusion of the new streams of TVs and computers and couches, and improved processes to maximise recovery. The previous contract delivered recovery rates in the range of 3 – 13.5 percent, so Council is looking to continue these improved results with future collections.

7 Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy update

The Waste and resource recovery strategy is currently under review, with a draft strategy due for released for community consultation in June. It is intended to review the feedback and adopt the final document by the end of 2017. The strategy will identify the key achievements of the previous strategy, the challenges moving forward and will include an action plan. The actions are planned to fall under the categories of regional actions, reducing waste, green waste, education, litter and Illegal dumping, leading the Way, advocacy, development and contracts.

8 New bin infrastructure for public places

Public Place litter and recycling bins have been upgraded at sites across the shire, through installation of new bins with improved national branded signage that enables users to separate litter from recycling more easily. These upgrades will continue with recycling bins installed at suitably selected locations. These upgrades aim to increase recovery in public places and also reduce contamination levels, which can be an issue in public places. Recycling currently makes up an average of 26 percent of tonnes collected from public place bins.

Natural systems

Council Plan action – Preserve and improve out bushland and natural environment by implementing weed management strategy and programs and continuing activities on high conservation bushland reserves and roadsides.

9 Mount Cannibal achieves state significance

The Friends of Mt Cannibal Reserve have successfully advocated for Mt Cannibal Reserve to have state environmental significance. This is due to the wide diversity of indigenous plants including over 52 species of orchids and several endangered orchids such as the Wine Lipped Spider Orchid. The distinctive steep elevation of Mt Cannibal has created a unique diversity of five different vegetation classes over 53 hectares. The friends group and Council are working together to implement a weed control strategy to help conserve the reserves rare flora. This includes making application to external grant organisations in an effort to bolster Council funds for critical weed control works. The revised listing as State significance increases Council's chances of raising external funding.

10 Indian Myna program improvements

Council currently sells Indian Myna Traps for \$50. The handmade Pee Gee Traps have proven both cost effective and successful at catching Indian Mynas. Council is currently selling approximately two traps per week.

With the success of the trap selling program, the trap loaning program has come to an end. This is due to a range of factors including staff resources to administer the program and the cost of traps reducing from \$400 to \$50, making trap purchase more affordable.

Residents can purchase a trap at any time. Those few remaining residents who were still on the loan waiting list have all been contacted and many have opted to buy a trap given the reduced cost. The last of those residents wishing to loan the traps, now have a trap.

11 Cannibal Creek biodiversity project

This collaborative project currently involves nine stakeholders to engage and encourage sustainable land management among the local community and improve biodiversity values along Cannibal Creek.

The group has been successful in extending the project area over 2017/18 financial year and has received a Melbourne Water grant of \$42,000. This builds on the \$50,000 grant over the 2016/17 financial year.

The works involve engaging land holders along Cannibal Creek to educate them on the local biodiversity assets that exist in the area and to address local weed threats. Extensive weed populations that are worthy of Melbourne Water capital works projects are also mapped by the community to assist Melbourne Water to prioritise these tasks.

Pest animal fox control also occurs in this project and involves 40 properties over a 2400-hectare area. 194 foxes have been controlled over the life of the program which is a model for community coordinated pest animal control in the Port Phillip and Western Port region.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

RELEVANCE TO COUNCIL PLAN

Nil.

CONSULTATION/COMMUNICATION

Where internal and external consultation has taken place it is captured in the background information above.

FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Nil.

CONCLUSION

This report provides a summary of some of the current projects. Initiatives continue to focus on both improving council services as well as leading and assisting the community to reduce their impact on the environment.