

ACTIVITY REPORTS

14 QUARTERLY ENVIRONMENT REPORT

FILE REFERENCE INT1831907

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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 2017–18 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.

Residential scorecard

This free service is being delivered as part of Council's ongoing partnership with the South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA). The walk-through assessments are conducted by an accredited assessor and provide eligible homeowners with an energy star rating and recommendations for improving energy efficiency of their homes.

Residential energy efficiency assessments are ongoing and 25 assessments have been conducted in the Shire, with the households achieving an average 5 star energy rating. Assessors are currently

working towards a range of retrofit upgrades and test study results will be available in the coming months.

A SECCCA representative joined Council at the Pakenham Show, to further promote this free service and had four households sign up on the day.

Casey Cardinia Library Corporation Take2 pledge

Casey Cardinia Libraries has taken the pledge to join the Take 2 climate change initiative and reduce organisational emissions. The pledge came as a direct result of the energy and emissions savings achieved through the installation of a solar electricity system at the Emerald Library in November. Council officers will support Casey Cardinia Libraries to reduce their organisational energy consumption by 20 per cent and achieve an overall goal of emissions reductions in the Pakenham and Emerald libraries.

Solar savers

The solar savers initiative funds the installation of photovoltaic systems on pensioner households. Installations have been completed in the Shire on households in Pakenham, Emerald, Koo Wee Rup and Bunyip. The PV systems will improve the thermal comfort of the house, as well as reducing the energy costs of cooling the homes. The cost of the installation is repaid via a special charge scheme through the rates notice.

The photovoltaic system installations are complete on 10 of the eligible households. These households are now experiencing the benefits of the PV systems in reducing their carbon dioxide emissions and reduced energy bills.

The program promotes positive environmental outcomes by supporting the reduction of 36 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, equivalent to the annual emissions from nine average Australian vehicles.

Development and built environment

Pakenham Library, Hall and U3A solar energy system

A contractor has been appointed for the installation of the solar electricity system at the Pakenham Library, U3A and Hall is scheduled to start in early June. The installation of the 84kW system will support annual savings of approximately \$16,500 and emissions reductions of approximately 120 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually, which is equivalent to the annual emissions from 30 average Australian vehicles.

Sustainable design assessment in the planning process

The Sustainable design assessment in the Planning process (SDAPP) is not currently in Council's planning scheme and is being rolled out on a voluntary basis. The number of planning applications that have been reviewed continues to increase, as community interest and uptake is growing. SDAPP requires buildings of a particular size to address sustainability as part of their planning application. Sustainable design considerations in the planning process supports energy and water efficiency in the built environment.

Water conservation

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

Gembrook Park

Gembrook Park is a bushland reserve south of Gembrook. Most of the park is in excellent condition, but stormwater from the township has damaged the vegetation community through the north-east of the park.

Council received a grant from Melbourne Water's Living Rivers program to investigate solutions to the park's stormwater problems. The area affected by urban runoff previously supported indigenous species, but is now covered in weeds. Another issue is the ongoing erosion of roadside drains; erosion has made the drains deeper and wider, narrowing the access for vehicles and threatening to destabilise nearby trees.

Specialist stormwater and environment consultants have been engaged to design a solution to the stormwater problems so Council can begin the process of rehabilitating these areas of the park.

Waste minimisation and sustainable procurement

Council Plan action – promote practices that result in the reduction per household of the amount of waste going to landfill, particularly food waste.

Adoption of strategy

The Waste and resource recovery strategy (2017-26) (WRRS) was adopted at the December Council meeting. The WRRS replaces the Waste management strategy (2010-15) and the Litter strategy (2012-17). It is a roadmap for the future direction and actions of Council's waste and resource recovery services, waste related education and advocacy activities. It identifies the issues facing the municipality and sets out a plan for how we can keep services efficient and effective, minimise waste to landfill and other impacts on the environment, as well as keeping the costs low. Many of the actions outlined for the first year of the strategy are underway including, but not limited to:

- implementing a suite of options that provide alternatives to burning off
- trialling green waste drop off option for residents at two transfer stations (Nov 2017) (Complete)
- promoting green waste services and their benefits within the community to expand knowledge
- exploring options for gaining evidence of illegal dumping and littering and undertake trial.

Reducing Dumped Rubbish through camera and signage project

Sustainability Victoria (SV) has part funded a project which will trial the use of roving CCTV cameras and signage, along with media promotion to help reduce the illegal dumping of rubbish at 10 identified hot spots within the Shire.

This project was identified as an action within Council's Waste and resource recovery strategy (2017-26), to "explore options for gaining evidence of illegal dumping and littering and undertake trial"

A key element of the project is to gain community feedback regarding illegal dumping "hot spots" and a Facebook poll will be developed to allow residents to nominate sites. New designs for roving signage are also being developed. Signs and cameras will be installed once the hot spots have been identified, with the camera locations changing intermittently during the 6 months of the trial. It is anticipated the trial will be complete by March 2019, and will provide important data on their effectiveness.

Natural systems

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

Biodiversity conservation strategy

Council is developing its Biodiversity conservation strategy (BCS), with the aim to provide clear long term strategic direction within the Shire to conserve biodiversity on both private and public land; working in partnership with the community. The strategy will outline an agreed action plan for future conservation programs and projects which will improve the health and resilience of our natural biodiversity. The BCS will also assist Council to appropriately target future biodiversity initiatives.

A detailed community consultation process will be undertaken prior to drafting of the BCS strategy, to understand how land managers and the community value biodiversity. The outcomes of the consultation process will inform directions for future programs and projects. Consultation has started with a survey undertaken at the Pakenham Show.

Internal and community stakeholder workshops are planned for mid year to help inform the strategy objectives. It is anticipated that the BCS will be complete by June 2019.

Pakenham show

Six staff attended Council's Waste and Environment stall at the Pakenham Show on Saturday 17 March. The Environment team commenced the consultation for the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy by conducting a survey with an indigenous plant giveaway. Great feedback on the day was received with 125 surveys completed. The results will provide valuable information on community knowledge of assets and threats in relation to the natural environment. An additional 57 residents also signed up to Council's environmental newsletter 'Down To Earth' at the show. Information was also available for attendees on Council's waste and recycling services and Gardens for Wildlife program.

Pest plant management strategy review update

The Pest plant management strategy 2012-2017 is currently undergoing a major review. The strategy aims to reduce pest plant infestations across Cardinia Shire through the implementation of an action plan targeting community education and engagement, planning controls and enforcement, and on ground works and monitoring

The strategy highlights the combined role of all land managers including Council, private landholders, and state and federal agencies to control weeds collaboratively. There is an emphasis on community education and extension programs to ensure private landholder participation.

The community consultation phase of this review is running concurrently with the development of the new Biodiversity conservation strategy to capture the communities' values and priorities on the shire's natural values.

It is anticipated that the strategy will be complete by June 2019.

Heritage

Heritage grants program

Applications for Council's annual Heritage Grant Program 2018-19 will be opening in May. The grant offers matching 1:1 funds (up to \$5,000) for the restoration and enhancement of heritage places that are included in the Cardinia Shire Planning Scheme Heritage Overlay.

The funding aims to assist and encourage owners or managers of heritage properties in Cardinia Shire to carry out maintenance and restoration works that are integral to the long term protection and life of the site. Heritage assets can include heritage-listed buildings, significant trees and

gardens, war memorials and other community heritage assets that are included in the heritage overlay on both private and public places. Interpretive signage is also included in the grant criteria.

The application form, grant guidelines and other information will be available on Council's website.

Consultation/communication

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

Conclusion

Council continues to work hard toward reviewing, developing and adopting a number of important strategies which will help it to continue to deliver effective and innovative programs and initiatives into the future. This will ensure Cardinia Shire can continue to demonstrate the type of environmental leadership evident in this report.