

## 6.5.2 Environment Council Plan Initiatives Quarterly Report

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### Recommendation(s)

That this report be noted

### Attachments

1. Environment Council Plan Initiatives Quarterly Report [6.5.2.1 - 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*



With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions this year, Council Officers have been able to get back into the community to provide environmental and waste education/engagement programs. 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.

### September Bioblitz

Description	<p>In September, Cardinia Shire joined nine other councils participating in the Biodiversity Blitz, to celebrate Biodiversity Month. This month-long event encouraged the community to get into nature and record observations of local plants and animals using the iNaturalist app.</p> <p>The Cardinia Shire community recorded more than 2,300 observations. The data collected through iNaturalist contributes to a scientific database used by state and federal government to better understand and protect local biodiversity.</p>
Policy theme	Biodiversity
Council plan	Implement initiatives in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</i>
Update	<p>A training webinar was held on 31 August, hosted by ecologist and entomologist Luis Mata, where the community learnt how to use the iNaturalist app. An additional webinar was held on the 15 September to celebrate residents from Cardinia Shire and surrounding councils using iNaturalist who shared their experiences and tips.</p> <p>Cardinia Shire partnered with Friends of Cardinia Creek to host a bush walk through Beaconsfield Flora and Fauna Reserve on 10 September. Participants learnt about our local plants and animals and practiced uploading observations to iNaturalist.</p>

### Community of Practice presentation

Description	The Marrung Community of Practice October meeting was held at Pakenham Primary School and was an opportunity to share environment education opportunities available to schools in the shire.
Policy theme	Biodiversity
Council plan	Implement initiatives in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</i>
Update	<p>Twelve teachers attended the meeting. The information presented by Council officers had a focus on local biodiversity, providing easily accessible information about animals and plants for teachers, all resources aligned with the Victorian Curriculum.</p> <p>Council promoted the Ecolinc and PrimeSci environmental science excursions that are available to schools at Deep Creek Reserve, Pakenham for 2023. These school programs are fully funded by the Victorian Government for all government schools.</p>

**Spring workshop series**

Description	<p>Cardinia Shire Council partnered with Casey Cardinia Libraries to host a series of workshops during Spring 2022. The workshops, held at Pakenham and Emerald libraries, included the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to start a worm farm</li> <li>• Ways to conserve and use water to maintain a healthy garden</li> <li>• How to reduce food waste and save on grocery bills</li> <li>• How to identify and control weeds safely at home</li> </ul>
Policy theme	Biodiversity, waste and resource recovery, water
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement initiatives in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</i></li> <li>• Implement the action plan for the <i>Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</i></li> <li>• Implement initiatives in the <i>Integrated Water Management Plan</i></li> </ul>
Update	<p>How to start a worm farm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pakenham Library on 3 September</li> <li>• Workshop was run by Chooktopia.</li> <li>• The session was fully booked with 20 participants</li> <li>• This workshop introduced residents to the basics of worms, how to choose and set up a farm and how to keep their worms happy. Engaged participants asked our worm expert lots of questions and were interested in future sustainability workshops.</li> </ul> <p>Ways to conserve and use water to maintain a healthy garden</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pakenham library on 5 November</li> <li>• Workshop was run by Sustainable Gardening Australia (SGA).</li> <li>• Participants asked many questions and learnt about reducing water usage, how to capture and use water and how to set up wicking beds.</li> <li>• All attendees made and took home wicking pots.</li> </ul> <p>How to reduce food waste and save on grocery bills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emerald Library on 12 November.</li> <li>• Open Table ran a live zero waste cooking demonstration</li> <li>• Participants learned how to make veggie fritters from leftovers and discussed tips to reduce food waste and save money on groceries. The demonstration finished with a taste test and one lucky audience member won a zero-waste door prize.</li> </ul> <p>How to identify and control weeds safely at home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emerald Library on 26 November</li> <li>• Workshop was run by Sustainable Gardening Australia (SGA).</li> <li>• Participants were given a different insight into the world of weeds, including how they grow and what impacts they have on our natural environment. Attendees learnt how to identify weeds, control and dispose of weeds responsibly, and were able to share their own experiences with the group.</li> </ul>

**Sounds of the forest events**

Description	A series of community educational and meditative sessions in key Council environmental bushland areas.
Policy theme	Biodiversity
Council plan initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement initiatives in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</i></li> <li>• <i>Support healthy communities</i></li> </ul>
Update	<p>A total of 75 attendees participated in 7 events held from September to December. Community members attended bushland areas with Council staff and an expert in bird identification where the group sat and listened to the sounds of the forest.</p> <p>Each event ran for approximately 2 hours and included meditative periods of quiet reflection and listening, followed by information where the group learned about the bird species that they heard calling in the forest.</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	Implement initiatives in the <i>Weed Management Strategy</i>
Update	Over 50 residents attended the event to exchange their weeds for free native plants. Council staff and volunteers from several community groups helped residents to identify 31 different weed species and offered advice on ways to manage and control troublesome weeds on their properties. The most common weeds swapped on the day were Blackberry, English Ivy and Spear Thistle.

**Pollinator week events**

Description	The Environment Unit and Waste team held an interactive workshop on 17 November for Council staff to celebrate Australian Pollinator Week. The Busy Bees Workshop encouraged staff working at Civic Centre to make their own beeswax wraps and bee hotels while learning more about the importance of pollinators and reducing waste.
Policy theme	Biodiversity & waste and resource recovery
Council plan initiative	Implement initiatives in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</i> Implement the action plan for the <i>Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</i>
Update	<p>Thirteen Council staff attended the workshop and participated in the activities. Staff discussed why pollinator week is important, how to support pollinators and how to reduce waste to lower impacts on the environment.</p> <p>This internal event was beneficial for Council staff to learn more about sustainable living and to share these learnings when engaging with the community.</p>

**National Recycling week events**

Description	Council celebrated Planet Ark's National Recycling Week (7- 13 November) to encourage residents to brush up on their recycling knowledge. Officers organised a range of exciting activities & workshops with a focus on in-person community interaction with Council waste officers.
Policy theme	Waste and resource recovery
Council plan initiative	Implement the action plan for the <i>Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</i>
Update	<p>As part of this year's National Recycling Week celebrations, Council organised the following events:</p> <p><b>National Recycling Week pop-up stall</b> Two pop-up events were organised strategically in following shopping centres to encourage the community to interact with the waste education officers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wednesday 9 November, 10 am to 1 pm Village Lakeside Shopping Centre, 9 Lakeside Boulevard, Pakenham</li> <li>• Thursday 10 November, 9 am to 1 pm Pakenham Central Marketplace, 50/54 John St, Pakenham</li> </ul> <p>Residents were encouraged to ask tricky recycling questions and bust any recycling myths. Waste education materials and giveaways were available at the stall to engage with attendees. Both events were successfully delivered and attracted over 30 participants at each pop-up event.</p> <p><b>Free movie screening: 2040 Documentary   Join the Regeneration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2040 movie screening was organised on Friday 11 November between 5:30- 7 pm at Lakeview room Cardinia Cultural Centre.</li> <li>• This event presented a new opportunity to engage with the community.</li> <li>• The event was well received by 18 attendees.</li> <li>• Waste education materials and giveaways were also provided to those in attendance.</li> </ul>

**Energy efficiency sessions**

Description	Energy efficient homes sessions for Cardinia Shire's supported playgroups in November. These sessions focused on helping participants lowering power bills and improving internal comfort of their home.
Policy theme	Climate Change
Council plan initiative	Implement initiatives in the <i>Aspirational Energy Transition Plan</i>
Update	<p>Two sessions were held at Pakenham Springs Children's Centre and Henry Family Children's Centre, Pakenham. Council officers presented information about energy use in the home, how to best use energy and how to understand energy bills.</p> <p>Families were equipped with relevant information and resources to feel in control of their energy use and given an opportunity to ask questions. Sustainable energy themed activities were provided for young children to engage with during the sessions.</p>

**'Weed champion' training**

Description	To assist operations staff, identify common weed species in the shire, a weed training session was held at the depot.
Policy theme	Biodiversity
Council plan initiative	Implement initiatives in the <i>Weed Management Strategy</i>
Update	The weed training, not only helped get the message out about how important it is to control weeds, it also assists the Natural Reserves Team, by training some of the operations staff to report weed sightings across the shire.

**Staff tree planting event**

Description	Staff tree planting day at Toomuc Creek on Tuesday 25 October.
Policy theme	Biodiversity
Council plan initiative	Implement initiatives in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</i>
Update	<p>32 Council staff planted out 475 indigenous native trees, shrubs and grasses to complement the 7000 plants that have been planted by Toomuc Valley Landcare group over the past 8 years.</p> <p>Peregrine Falcons can now be seen in the revegetated corridor which demonstrates the success of rehabilitation efforts within the reserve.</p> <p>All staff that attended enjoyed the event and noted an interest to participate in an annual staff tree planting day. The Landcare group were also grateful for Council's efforts to enhance the reserve.</p>

**Green waste drop off**

Description	The Cardinia Shire community was provided with the opportunity to dispose of their residential loads of green waste at six free green waste drop off events. These regular events encourage residents to dispose of their residential green waste. The green waste collected from these facilities is turned into nutrient rich compost.
Policy theme	Waste and resource recovery
Council plan initiative	Implement the action plan for the <i>Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</i>
Update	<p>There were six free green waste drop-off events in 2022 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. Five green waste drop off events were organised between February- October 2022 and successfully 317.33 tonnes of green waste material. These events were popular in the community and has successfully attracted 1,454 vehicles during these drop-off events.</p> <p>The final event was held at Future Recycling Transfer Station between Friday 2 December to Monday 5 December.</p>

**Dumped rubbish success**

Description	<p>Council has recently recruited a Litter Prevention Officer (LPO) to help strengthen the monitoring of dumping hotspots, develop projects for dumping prevention and act on non-compliance with hard waste. A key aspect of this role is also engaging with the community to inform them of waste requirements and advise of appropriate action where needed.</p> <p>There has been a rise in commercial and residential dumping over the past two years with significantly increasing clean-up costs and the need for ongoing surveillance. In addition to the installation of CCTV cameras and new dumped rubbish signage, the LPO role will continue to proactively interact with the community, develop specific communications tactics and manage community reported dumping.</p>
Policy theme	Waste and resource recovery
Council plan initiative	Implement the action plan for the <i>Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</i>
Update	<p>This role has already increased the visibility of Council in dumping hotspots and demonstrated how we are proactively managing dumped waste and non-compliant hard waste piles.</p> <p>There has been positive online feedback about Council's prompt response to litter and illegal dumping in the past few weeks, demonstrating the value of proactive initiatives including additional dumped rubbish signage, increased inspections and monitoring of hotspots and the building of relationships with a range of stakeholders and community groups.</p> <p>The LPO has also been proactively connecting with real estate agents and owner corporations, providing information to tenants and those moving house to manage their waste appropriately and offer solutions in instances of non-compliance.</p> <p>Building these relationships helps ensure a mutually beneficial outcome in reducing litter and illegal dumping as well as ensuring agents are aware of waste information and Council processes if dumping does occur.</p>



**Department of Justice Litter Program**

Description	<p>The litter picking program run by Department of Justice Community Service team was reinstated earlier this year after being suspended in 2020 and again mid-2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p>The program is focussed on cleaning areas such as reserves, parks and open spaces within Cardinia Shire which have been identified Council or the community as litter hotspots.</p> <p>Overseen by the LPO, the crew attend these sites on a weekly basis to undertake litter pick-ups as part of their unpaid community service work.</p>
Policy theme	Waste and resource recovery
Council plan initiative	Implement the action plan for the <i>Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy</i>
Update	<p>The litter picking program is a great resource for targeting hotspots, as well as providing a valuable resource that frees up operational staff in the parks and waste teams so they can focus on core business activities.</p> <p>These additional resources also provide an agile service to help Council proactively respond to weather events such as windy days and storms which have been more frequent in the past few months</p> <p>The ability to be more responsive has been praised by staff and community members and helped increase the visibility of Council's work. These regular clean ups have also focused on areas around creeks and wetlands improving local amenity and reducing the risk of plastic entering waterways or harming wildlife.</p> <p>The crew collects an average 20 bags of litter per week.</p>

**Cardinia Creek Catchment Deer Control Partnership**

Description	Council has received funding from DEWLP to administer deer control activities in the 2022/23 financial year.
Policy theme	Biodiversity
Council plan initiative	Implement initiatives in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</i>
Funding	<p>Council has received funding through the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP) Peri Urban Deer Control Program, to work with agencies and stakeholder groups to implement cross tenure deer control activities in the Cardinia Creek catchment. This funding is the first year of the \$1.1 million in total available to councils across Peri Urban Melbourne, with a similar amount of future funding available each year for the next 4 years. Applications will be through a competitive process. This will allow for the continuation of deer control action by the various agencies/stakeholders across targeted priority areas where the biodiversity impact of deer is high.</p>
Update	<p>Activities being delivered by Council under this project are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an awareness campaign, including a shire wide survey on deer awareness</li> <li>• developing a Deer Information Pack for landholders</li> <li>• working with Latrobe University researchers in testing samples of Samba Deer tissue to understand their DNA and give insight into relationships of deer populations living in the Cardinia Creek corridor i.e., kinship.</li> </ul>

**Emerald Star Bush survey**

Description	Members from the Emerald community worked with Council officers to survey for the endangered Emerald Star Bush over September and October. Eleven sites were surveyed with the numbers being added to a population database to assess the overall health of the species.
Policy theme	Biodiversity
Council plan initiative	Implement initiatives in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Strategy</i>
Update	<p>Population analysis is still being reviewed and there appears to have been highly successful germination at Council bushland reserves that were recently burnt as part of Council's fire management/ecological burn program.</p> <p>Council officers created a phone app and provided access to several community members which helped them to efficiently capture species population information via their phone. The technology greatly increases the efficiency of the data collection process because population locations can be easily mapped within 30 seconds, with data being immediately uploaded and saved to a central database. The community were highly impressed with the time saving which eliminated the historic 20-minute process of data sharing which is now reduced to less than a minute.</p> <p>An assessment of the collected data at each of the surveyed sites is still being undertaken. An update of the species health will be provided in a future report.</p>