

## **10 QUARTERLY ENVIRONMENT REPORT**

**FILE REFERENCE** INT1855469

**RESPONSIBLE GENERAL MANAGER** Michael Ellis

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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- 2018 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.

#### **Sustainable living workshops**

The sustainable living community workshops, at the Hewitt Eco House in Koo Wee Rup are ongoing. Having begun in February the workshops are held once a month and the remaining sessions include:

- Sustainable Gardening 21 July 2018
- Food Cycle 18 August 2018

Each workshop provides the community with valuable information and recommendations towards developing sustainable living practices and resilient communities. Last year the workshops focused on sustainable homes and drew in community members from all over the Shire.

### **Federation University partnership project**

A partnership has been formed with staff and students at Federation University. Over recent months, as part of course work, students have been developing an energy efficiency handbook. The handbook will provide the Cardinia community with information to improve household energy efficiency and reduce energy costs.

The handbook aims to support initiatives towards achieving the emissions reduction targets outlined in Council's Aspirational Energy Transition Plan; to stabilise community emissions by 2024, at 2012 emission levels.

The development of the handbook is intended to be an ongoing project between Council and Federation University. The contents will be updated yearly to include other aspects of community sustainability. The energy efficiency handbook is scheduled for completion in the coming months.

### **EcoDriver training**

EcoDriver efficiency training has been rolled out to selected areas of Council. The two part course consisted of theory as well as practical in cab training.

Independent audits from other organisations suggest that this training has achieved up to 9% reduction in fuel consumption and an 18% reduction in brake use. In Cardinia the opportunity to participate in EcoDriver was provided to staff members whose roles require the continuous use of vehicles.

In total, 30 officers completed the training, including staff based at the Depot. The training was held over a five day period and was facilitated by trainers from the South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCA). This training builds upon similar sessions offered several years ago. Officers will review results and consider the ongoing rollout of ecodriver training into the future.

### **Development and built environment**

#### **Energy efficiency upgrades**

Works continue at the Beaconsfield Community Complex, Pakenham library and Koo Wee Rup pool to reduce energy consumption and costs.

A 37kW solar PV system will be installed at the Beaconsfield Community Complex. This system will reduce energy related cost to the kindergarten, community hall and centre. It will also showcase the benefits of renewable energy to the wider community, and reduce energy emissions of the facility by 52 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e annually.

Works have commenced at the Koo Wee Rup pool and Pakenham Library Hall/ U3A upgrading to energy efficient lighting. The upgrades include the replacement of over 500 inefficient lights across both sites.

#### **Water conservation**

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

#### **Melbourne Water living rivers funding received**

Council has been successful in three grant applications from the latest round of Melbourne Water's, 'Living Rivers' funding program. The grants total to \$92,950 and are for the following projects:

- Employment of Water Sensitive Urban Design Officer 2018-19.
- Design of water quality treatment at Telopea St Steps, Emerald.
- Construction of water quality treatment at depot (design was funded through a previous round of funding).

#### **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.

#### **Changes to compost and worm farm rebates**

To further support the community to manage their green waste, the existing compost and worm farm rebate has been increased from \$30 to up to \$50 and has been expanded to include garden mulcher's. Renamed the Waste Reduction Rebates, these rebates allow residents to purchase a system that best meets their needs from any store and redeem the rebate with proof of purchase.

The expansion of this program is an action within Council's Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy (2017-26).

Residents can apply for 1 compost rebate and/or 1 garden mulcher rebate. This program also supports schools and community groups, who are eligible for up to 3 compost rebates.

The rebates support our community to reduce the amount of organic material going to landfill, and provide an alternative to burning off green waste material. Food waste and green waste makes up approximately 30% of the waste going to landfill in Cardinia Shire, and releases methane as it decomposes.

#### **Green waste drop off 2018-2020**

Following a successful trial in November 2017, a free green waste drop off service will continue to be offered over the next two years. Contractor, Cleanaway will provide the service at their Pakenham and Lysterfield transfer stations, with events to be held in the lead up to summer (November).

To ensure residents have access, the service will be offered Friday to Monday and on different weekends at the two sites. Residents of the shire can drop off trailer loads of green waste for free during this period.

The service works towards the action, "Implement a suite of options that prove alternatives to burning off" identified in Council's Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy (2017-26). The service will work towards reducing the impacts to human and environmental health caused by burning off, provide an alternative to residents paying to dispose of garden waste and reduce organic waste in landfill.

#### **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.

#### **2017- 2018 Biodiversity incentive scheme outcomes**

The audit of Council's Biodiversity Incentive Scheme grant over 2017/18 to the Western Port Landcare Network has revealed fantastic opportunities for biodiversity on private land. Over the

past 12 months, 4800 plants were revegetated and 1.7 kilometres of protective fencing were installed on several properties, all which had high strategic biodiversity importance for threatened species.

The grant also provided a subsidised for 22 land management courses to improve farm sustainability for 657 participants.

### Schools and kinders biodiversity program

Council's 2017–18 primary school and kinder biodiversity programs were a success.

Six primary schools participated in the Leap into Nature biodiversity education program. One grade 5 or 6 class at each school received an introductory presentation about the importance of biodiversity. The students then joined the presenter for a walk around their school to discuss the plants, trees, and other habitat features such as rocks and logs in different areas of the school and the animals that could be using them. The session concluded with a classroom discussion on ways to improve the existing habitat for native animals, such as planting indigenous plants, making bug hotels, and installing nest boxes or bat tubes.

Each participating school has been notified they can apply for 100 tubestock indigenous plants through our biodiversity incentive grant scheme, to implement actions suggested by the students to improve biodiversity in their school grounds following the education session.

Five kindergartens and preschools participated in the, Animals of Oz biodiversity education program, a local provider based in Officer. Animals of Oz are licenced wildlife handlers, so each session began with a hands on demonstration of some different native animals that live in our Shire, including a wombat, ringtail possum, blue tongue lizard, grey-headed flying fox, and diamond python. The presenter told the children what the animals eat, where they live and what can harm animals. She also included a snake safety talk.

This was followed up with an interactive talk about indigenous plants explaining how they germinate, the children were given some tiny Eucalyptus seeds to hold while learning how they grow into the huge trees they could see outside their window, which really amazed them. They also handled different plants, seed pods and a hollow log to encourage children to think what benefits each could provide to animals such as food and shelter. The presenters then took the children outside and helped them plant indigenous tubestock into their kindergarten garden, talking about the importance of water, sun and mulch to help plants grow big and strong.

All participating schools, kindergartens and preschools provided outstanding evaluations for these programs.

### Landholder conference: Managing your rural property

On Saturday the 19 May Yarra Ranges Shire in partnership with Cardinia Shire facilitated a 'managing your rural property' conference in Lilydale. The aim of the day was to offer a learning opportunity to landholders e.g. tree changers, hobby farmers and owners of small acreage farms. Essential property management principals such as the importance of protecting biodiversity, soils and weed control, pasture management, keeping animals on small properties, property management planning and pest animal control were discussed.

This conference was conducted as a trial to gauge landholder interest, and was funded through a grant obtained by Yarra Ranges Council. It received an overwhelming response of approx. 150 participants for the day.

Discussions will commence shortly between the two Council's in regards to running the conference annually, holding it in alternative shire areas each year.

### **Emerald Lake Park vegetation management project.**

The Friends of Emerald Lake Park have been successful in securing a State Government Grant through the Community Volunteer Action Grants Program of \$49,325 for the continuation of the Emerald Lake Park Vegetation Management Project. This project is auspiced and managed by Council.

### **Projects planned for 2018–19**

- Ongoing development of the Deep Creek Ecocentre and indigenous nursery
- Review and finalisation of the Pest Plant Management Strategy 2012–17
- Continued development and adoption of Council's first Biodiversity Conservation Strategy.
- Implementation of the Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) including:
  - upgrade works outlined in the water efficiency audits of Cardinia Life and Holm Park
  - Employment of a Water Sensitive Urban Design Officer to manage WSUD projects, provide ongoing internal training and review of proposed WSUD assets.
- Implementation of the Aspirational Energy Transition Plan (AETP) including:
  - Solar electricity system on the Beaconsfield Neighbourhood House and Pakenham Library complex.
  - Continuation of community engagement programs such as the New Home Energy Advisory Service, Energy Efficiency Community Handbook and the Sustainable Living Workshops.
  - Energy efficiency lighting upgrades at The Koo Wee Rup Pool and Pakenham Hall Library and U3A.
  - Stage 3 decorative street lighting upgrade
  - continued support and involvement in projects delivered by the South East Councils Climate Change Alliance (SECCA)
- Continued implementation of the following biodiversity projects:
  - Peri Urban Weed Partnerships Project 2016–20 working across tenures to reduce effects of high threat weeds along Cardinia Creek Corridor
  - Emerald Lake Park Vegetation Management Project 2017–18 weed control
  - Pepis' land wetlands restoration project 2015–20 weed control and revegetation works
  - Participation in the development of the Eastern Region Pest Animal Network
- 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 on private land
  - Trust For Nature rate reimbursement scheme
- Continued community collaboration and awareness programs:
  - 2018 National Tree Day at Pepi's Land.
  - Annual Trees for Weeds swap day
  - Gardens for Wildlife program
  - Schools and kinders biodiversity education program
  - Indian Myna trapping program (sale of traps)
  - Schools Recycling education program

### **Consultation/communication**

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

### **Conclusion**

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The 2017–18 financial year has been very successful for Council in the environment area, with major projects being completed, partnerships forming and great outcomes for the community in energy reductions and biodiversity conservation.

We are looking forward to another successful year in 2018–19 with the adoption of a new strategy that will frame Council's direction in biodiversity conservation and the continued implementation of the Integrated water management plan (IWMP) and Aspirational Energy transition plan (AETP).