



Rural City of
Wangaratta

Environmental Sustainability Strategy

2021-2026



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**Cover photo taken at Mount Cobbler Walking Track*

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the lands of the Rural City of Wangaratta and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Executive Summary

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy is a plan for a healthy, resilient, and sustainable future for our municipality. We recognise that climate change and degradation of the natural environment are defining issues of our time and the Strategy outlines a vision and action plan over the next five years to address these concerns to ensure sustainable environmental, social and economic prosperity for the Rural City of Wangaratta.

This Strategy builds upon the achievements of the previous Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2014 and seeks to learn from our past experiences; pulling together our existing work and delivering activities that we know have positive benefits. We recognise there is still much to do. Success will require a mix of leadership and collaboration, education, and partnerships and both advocacy and action to take advantage of opportunities and to meet the challenges facing our municipality.

These challenges have been identified as unsustainable resource use, pest plants and animals, changes to land use, ongoing loss of habitat, water resource availability, soil health issues, adverse weather events and climate change. Climate change is not a distant threat. The recent 2020 bushfires are a sharp reminder of how climate change can impact upon our lives, it highlights the risks we face with increased adverse weather events and the urgency required to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions if we are to rise to the challenge of creating a better life for future generations.

To meet these challenges, six priority areas have been established in the Strategy. These are Biodiversity, Built Environment, Greenhouse Gas Emissions & Energy Reduction, Healthy Waterways, Sustainable Communities and Waste Reduction & Resource Recovery. Each priority area is divided into objectives and then further divided into specific actions that will be undertaken to fulfil these objectives and to provide direction for Council to achieve meaningful environmental outcomes. We also seek to align with the latest national, regional and local strategies and targets and we recognise the need to measure and report regularly so we can be sure our actions are working, such as setting a new emission target for our operations and to start reporting on community emissions.

Above all, there is an understanding that we all have a role to play in order to get the very best results for our municipality. We need to actively engage and work with residents and Council staff to build awareness and progress towards environmental sustainability, ensure climate change is embedded within our business plans, strategies and policies; and work in partnership and collaboration with community groups and external stakeholders to secure the future of the Rural City of Wangaratta, our region and beyond.

Our Strategy

Vision

An environmentally sustainable municipality, across both urban and rural areas, that is resilient, healthy and continues to protect and enhance the natural environment for the benefit of all.

Mission

To protect, enhance and invest in our environment, natural assets and the health and wellbeing of our community through our environmental sustainability commitment, expertise and leadership. We will achieve this mission by working with internal and external stakeholders and the community.

Introduction

We will look after our environment to secure a sustainable future for current and future generations, including action on climate change.

– Our Principles for Decision Making, Council Plan 2021-25

This strategy identifies the approach that Council will take in securing a sustainable future, recognising that to achieve the best outcomes we need to work closely with national, state, regional and non-government agencies along with our local community.

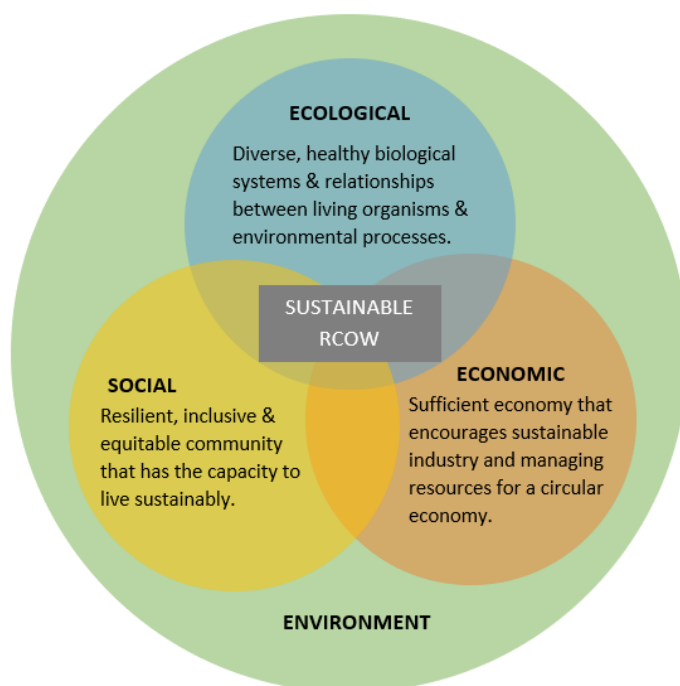


Figure 1. Based from diagrams in the Handbook of Sustainability Literacy, Systems Thinking Chapter

Taking an even wider, systems-thinking approach to this strategy, we recognise the importance of the relationships of the inter-connection between systems and the multi-disciplinary approach that is required for facing complex environmental challenges such as climate change.

The diagram on the left illustrates these relationships between social, ecological, and economic systems and the wider context, which is that all these systems reside and are dependent on the environment - in other words our planet.

We recognise that we depend on our local environment for clean and plentiful water to drink, clean air to breathe, productive soils for food and energy sources. These environmental and ecological assets sustain our health, our lifestyle and our livelihoods. Similarly, our local flora and fauna are dependent on these systems for their own survival, and we have a responsibility to ensure our actions do not lead to environmental degradation of their habitats.

From Council's extensive consultation for the Council Plan and Community Vision the natural environment was identified as a key focus area for the community acknowledging the collective role we all need to play in its conservation, protection and remediation. Our community has said it wants us to, "be a leader in addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation" with a vision of, "becoming an example of a local government area which takes sustainability seriously and shows this can be done whilst growing our economy".

Further to this, under the *Local Government Act 2020*, Council's primary objective is to endeavour to achieve the best outcomes for the local community having consideration for the long term and cumulative effects of decisions. In seeking to achieve this objective, Council must promote the social, economic and environmental viability and sustainability of the municipality.

Our climate change statement within the Council Plan acknowledges that our municipality is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and we face significant challenges to maintain environmental sustainability in the future. With challenges come opportunities. Opportunities to innovate, lead by example and inspire community action through demonstrating environmental leadership in our own operations.

There are many functions undertaken by Council that enable the strengthening of sustainability. Local councils can make a difference through town planning, public health planning, facilitating economic development, waste management, recycling, stormwater management, transport planning, community education, public land management, emission reporting, capital works material use as well as the delivery of specific environmental programs. Council can also make a valuable contribution through reducing its own day-to-day environmental impact through sustainably sourced purchasing and reduction of waste, water, energy and resource use.

As a result the Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS) has developed an action plan to advance environmental sustainability across the full range of Council activities. It responds to community aspirations for a more sustainable future.

The Strategy:

- reviews key deliberations that express the intent of the community as well as studies that examine local environmental issues
- identifies key issues affecting Council operations and services, the community, the natural environment, and their related impacts
- examines the challenges posed by key environmental issues - climate change and resource; and
- sets out actions to reduce impacts and improve environmental outcomes, including adaptation approaches under the following six priority areas;



Biodiversity



Healthy Waterways



Built Environment



Sustainable Communities



Greenhouse Gas Emission
& Energy Reduction



Waste Reduction & Resource
Recovery

Actions in the Strategy utilise a range of approaches. For example, increasing awareness, planning and control, education and engineering. These approaches are based on the achievements of the previous ESS (2014), a number of community and technical studies conducted by the Council and other organisation in the north east region, as well as some key Victorian studies.

The Strategy is intended to consolidate and build on the outcomes of community deliberations and environmental studies forming the link between longer term community plans, the Council Plan and operational programs.

Our Role & Policy Context

The Rural City of Wangaratta is responsible for many activities that may impact upon our environment and may include everything from maintaining infrastructure, delivery of waste services, maintaining parks and bush reserves to administering the planning scheme and enforcing state and local laws in regard to land use.

Through these activities Council is fortunate to have the closest immediate relationship to community compared to other levels of government and is therefore well positioned to promote environmental sustainability and work closely with the community in order to achieve these aspirations. We recognise that our role includes leading by example in how we operate and advocating for change at various levels of government. It includes monitoring and reporting on our progress and empowering and engaging with our local community by supporting local environmental initiatives within our resourcing capacity.

Council has many legislative requirements that guide our operations in the environmental space and the Strategy seeks to align with key Federal, State and Regional documents and these are listed under each relevant focus area within the strategy.

Our Community Vision & Council Plan

Our natural environment is part of our identity, our appeal, and our livelihood. Protecting and enhancing our natural assets are a critical part of what we value as a community, and we recognise that we need to work hard and courageously for our future.

– 2021-2033 Community Vision

Community voices have driven the development of the Rural City of Wangaratta's Community Vision and Council plan 2021-2025. An extensive process of deliberative community engagement saw more than 1000 responses to a community survey and the formation of the 126 member Shape Wangaratta Panel, who by online and in-person facilitated sessions helped develop the documents. It acknowledges that the need to address climate change is imperative, as is implementing frameworks that address climate risks.

The four main focus areas identified in the Vision regarding the environment are to;

- Build environmentally sustainable communities
- Reduce waste and enhance resource recovery
- Actively combat the causes and impacts of climate change
- Healthy and protected waterways and access to water

These focus areas make up four of our six key priority areas which provides strong links and cohesion between the two documents.

The Council Plan also contains a climate change statement and acknowledges that the impacts of climate change influence all aspects of council operations and community life, and therefore cut across the themes identified within the Council Plan, including health and wellbeing, leadership, growth, our economy, lifestyle and environment.

Relationships with key Council Plans

We recognise that this strategy needs to co-exist and help deliver on other relevant strategies. Table 1 illustrates the relationship between the ESS and other key Council documents, including the Council Plan.

Table 1: Key Council Plans

DOCUMENT	PURPOSE
2030 Community Vision	Our community is connected, sustainable and contemporary. We are the place where good things grow.
Council Plan 2017-2021	Council Plan 2017-2021 details Council's strategic objectives and the key strategic activities and actions we will be undertaking to achieve those objectives.
Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP)	The MPHWP sets the broad mission, goals and priorities to enable people living in the municipality to achieve maximum health and wellbeing.
Roadside Conservation Management Plan	The Roadside Conservation Management Plan aims to conserve roadside native vegetation that often provides valuable habitat and is an important feature in local landscapes.
Waste Management Strategy	The Rural City of Wangaratta's Waste Management Strategy (WMS) was developed to provide a strategy for sustainable waste management over the next five years. The purpose of this document is to consolidate all the related issues and topics, to provide a complete picture of waste management within the municipality.
Economic Development and Tourism Strategy	The Economic Development Strategy (EDS) has been produced by the Rural City of Wangaratta (RCoW) to fulfil Council's aspirations for a vibrant and prosperous community that offers residents and businesses a broad range of highly rewarding opportunities for work and investment.
Tree Management Strategy	The purpose of the strategy is to establish the Rural City of Wangaratta's future strategic direction for tree planting, protection and maintenance.
Walking and Cycling Strategy	Council's Walking and Cycling Strategy is a significant strategic document that will guide the way Council delivers infrastructure that supports the ability of people within our community to be active, to safely move around, and to stay connected
Bush reserves management plans (Northern Beaches and Kaluna Precinct)	Both the Kaluna Precinct and Northern Beaches Plans are to provide practical and perceptive information which will assist management to protect, and where possible enhance the natural values of these areas.
Wangaratta Planning Scheme	The Planning Scheme the governing document for use, development and protection of land in the Rural City of Wangaratta.

The Council Plan is the principal plan for Council that clearly identifies what the Council aims to achieve over the next 5 years as part of longer-term objectives.

Funding

Funding the actions of the Environment Sustainability Strategy will require both internal and external funding. It is noted that securing funding continues to be a challenge for environmental sustainability projects where it can be difficult to demonstrate definitive economic outcomes or that the environmental outcomes and benefits are long term.

Our Region

Our Environment

We are the Rural City of Wangaratta, but in truth, we're so much more than that. A municipality that includes both a vibrant city and distinctive rural towns. We're known for our waterways, the rugged beauty, and surrounds of different landscapes. We are located in the Hume region of North-East Victoria and our municipality covers an area of 3,645 square kilometres, experiences cool temperate climate with low humidity and a high diurnal (day-night) temperature range.

The population of Wangaratta has grown steadily over the past decade rising from 26,390 to 28,310 with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people making up 1.3%, as informed by the latest 2016 census. The population is 53.3% female and 46.7% male and the SEIFA index of Disadvantage for the municipality is 983, which ranks Wangaratta 303 out of 544 of local government areas. With current population estimates at 29,660 and the projected population by 2036

to be 32,160.

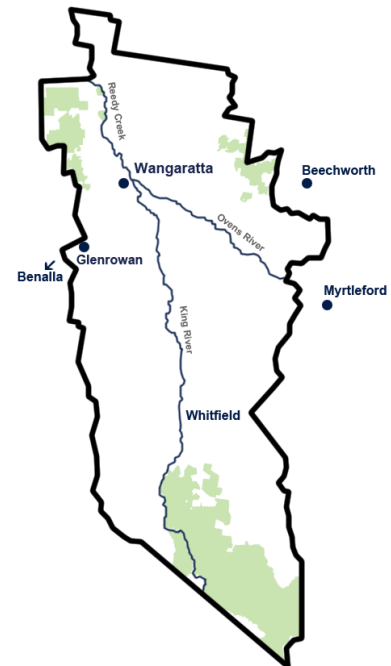
Compared to the rest of Victoria the proportion of people aged 14-45 is much lower and the population aged 49 and above is higher, reflecting an ageing population. The health care and social assistance industry was identified as the largest employer in Wangaratta in 2016. Whilst agriculture and manufacturing, although declining in terms of employment, remained the predominant export industries in the municipality

Throughout the municipality, Council is responsible for many reserves with high conservation value, often located beside waterways. The Ovens and King Rivers and other waterways form healthy riverine forest corridors that dissect Wangaratta and other towns, provide magnificent vistas and are home to a vast array of birds, native fish and other wildlife, which is the envy of other urban centres.

Our municipality encompasses the valleys of the mid-lower Ovens River and the King River, and these two rivers and nearby surrounds are home for threatened and endangered wildlife including Barking Owls, Squirrel Gliders and the iconic Murray Cod. Unsustainable agricultural practices,

including land clearing, gold dredging and the invasion of pest animals and plants have caused degradation to the waterways over the ensuing centuries.¹

Photo: Kaluna Island interpretive signage.



¹ Environment Victoria, Accessed July 2020, <https://environmentvictoria.org.au/our-campaigns/healthy-rivers/about-healthy-rivers/river-stories/ovens-river/>

Crown land in the municipality contains a diversity of habitats and native species. Key Crown land areas include the Warby-Ovens National Park, the Alpine National Park, the Chiltern-Mt Pilot National Park, as well as state reserves, and linear reserves on Crown land along roads, rail and waterways. These linear reserves form important fauna corridors across cleared landscapes. A number of agencies work in conjunction to conserve these parks and links, including Council, Department of Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria (PV), Trust for Nature (TFN), North East Catchment Management Authority (NECMA) and Regional Roads Victoria.



Photo: Boorhaman Native Grassland

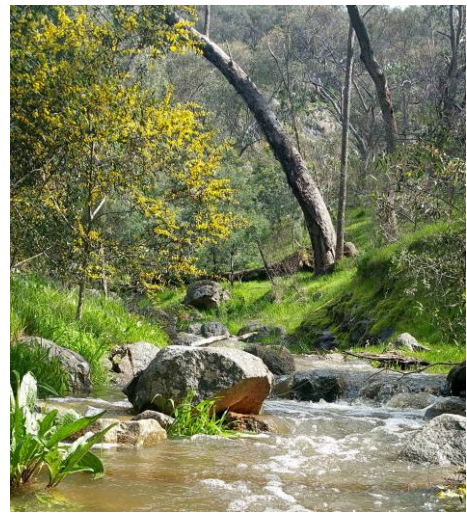


Photo: Salisbury Walk in the Warby Ranges

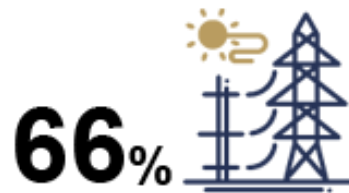
The National Parks and the Lower Ovens River have been recognised as national ecosystem flagship areas by the Federal Government Caring for Country program, with the Lower Ovens River being heritage listed. Areas to the north of Wangaratta have been recognised for potential as a biolink between these flagship areas.



Photo: Mullinmur billabong

Remnant native vegetation in the municipality is represented by 31 plant communities described as Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) across five bioregions. Many of these EVCs are listed as threatened or endangered including the grassy woodlands of the plains environment and the woodlands and forests of the major creek and river systems. Much of the northern section of the municipality is part of the Grey Box Grassy Woodlands vegetation community. The value of this nationally threatened vegetation community has been recognised and protected under the Federal government Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999. Included is vegetation on private land which in these cleared landscapes provides essential habitat and connectivity for wildlife.

Our region in numbers

**1978**kmroad reserves
managed**200**habush reserves
managed**66%**of council emissions
come from electricity**113**kwof solar installed
across 7 council
sites**11**is the no. of hybrid cars
in council's light fleet**6000**average no. of
indigenous native plants
planted per year**12000**tthat's how much
green waste our
organics plant
can process**2273**people attended our
enviro events (19/20)**1930**Native flora &
fauna species of which**160** are threatened**11.38**ktonnes of waste is
collected kerbside
annually

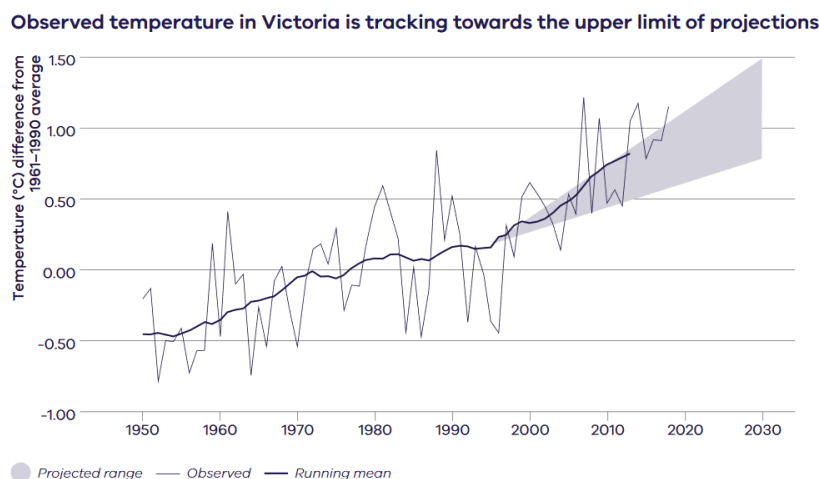
Climate Trends

Climate research has shown us that global surface air temperatures have risen by more than 1°C over the past 100 years. It is now undeniable that human activity is a major contributor to the increasing greenhouse gas levels in our atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels, land use change and agriculture.² In Victoria, we are already experiencing the impacts of climate change with increased incidents of bushfire and flood, and we recognise the increasing challenges it will have on our community, businesses, the agricultural industry and our environment.

Temperature

Projections from Victoria's Climate Science Report (2019) indicate an increase in average annual temperatures leading up to 2030. Figure 2 illustrates the observed average yearly temperatures from 1961 to 1990 average (thin black line) plus the 10-year running average (thicker black line), and the projected temperature change to 2030 across climate models and emission scenarios.

Figure 2.



As for North-East Victoria, the latest CSIRO climate change projections reflect the above findings pointing towards an increase of around 2°C to 3°C in mean daily maximum temperatures by 2050, with increases of 1°C to 2°C in mean daily minimum temperatures. It is also expected that there will be a continued increase in the frequency of heat wave events, that comprise of 3 or more consecutive days with a daily maximum temperature greater than 35°C. The Victoria Climate Change Strategy also highlights that if global emissions continue to increase, in the 2050s we may see a decline in alpine snowfall of 35-75% which would have flow on effects in our region, there could be as much as double the number of very hot days and with up to double the number of high fire danger days.

Rainfall

“Even though a warming climate is leading to reduced annual rainfall totals in Victoria, extreme rainfall events, such as the flash floods north of Wangaratta in December 2018, are likely to get more extreme.” – DELWP, Climate Projection Report 2019

Rainfall for our region is expected to decrease overall, however, the distribution throughout the year is likely to change, and this will impact upon livestock and growing conditions. We will see more extreme, and intense short-duration rainfall events despite this overall decrease in rainfall and a decline in runoff with a 20-30% reduction in streamflow by 2030.³

² DELWP, Accessed June 2020, climatechange.vic.gov.au/

³ Draft Hume Regional Climate Strategy

Key Challenges

Our environment not only provides valuable ecosystem services and natural habitat for our local wildlife, it is also integral for the health and wellbeing of our community and our economic prosperity. There are a number of environmental challenges that we face, that are shared amongst communities around the world, that will present both challenges and opportunities for our region. These are driven by climate change, increasing demand for resources and changes to land use.

A number of the key challenges are described below.

Adverse Events

Our climate is changing and with increased temperatures and changes to rainfall distribution there is a greater risk of flooding, heat stress, drought, habitat and species loss and harsher fire weather with longer fire seasons.

Council recognises the impacts flooding has upon our infrastructure, businesses and livelihoods. Heat stress puts the vulnerable in our communities at risk, increasing water and energy consumption, which in turn increases the cost of living for our residents. Droughts reduce the availability of irrigation water and impacts our agricultural industry as well as stressing local wildlife and vegetation. In addition, there are increased costs relating to maintaining our parks and gardens during these extreme dry events.

The 2019/20 summer season exposed us to the devastating impacts of harsher fire weather, with our municipality declared as one of the six Victorian local government State of Disaster areas. An increase in bushfires will have long-term detrimental impacts on natural ecosystems, human life and the economy.

Habitat Loss

Ongoing loss, degradation and fragmentation of habitats is a key threat to a healthy environment with climate change induced stressors impacting on many native plant and animal species. Much of the natural habitat in our area has been removed or altered for agriculture, development and other human activities. A well functioning ecosystem will contain a diversity of species and habitat elements. For example intact woodland habitat along our waterways is made up of a variety of vegetation layers including fallen logs, sticks and leaves in the ground layer along with native grasses and ground covers, small and medium shrubs and trees and large old trees with hollows. Reserves, roadsides and private property contain much of the remaining remnant vegetation in our area. Common types of habitat degradation include:

- Removal of ground cover and mid story shrub layer by grazing and clearing impacts on the habitats of reptiles, small birds and mammals, insects and other invertebrates, reducing food for other species.
- Removal of fallen timber for firewood and 'cleaning up' removes shelter, homes and foraging areas for many species, including bush stone-curlews and inland carpet python. Also prevents the nutrient recycling and weed suppression that fallen timber provides.
- Loss of large old, irreplaceable trees and habitat corridors from inappropriate fuel control burning, infrastructure development works e.g. road widening and drainage and urban and industrial development. Large old hollow bearing trees provide essential nesting and breeding sites for many species and it usually takes over a hundred years for hollows to form.

Invasive species

Invasive species are species of plants, animals, parasites or disease causing organisms that establish themselves outside of their natural range and become pests. In all ecosystems native species evolve alongside each other regulating each other's populations. A non-native species can disrupt the balance and kill or outcompete native species changing the whole system. Invasive species alter habitat and reduce biodiversity in both land and aquatic environments, and can adversely affect the recreational, social and commercial value of ecosystems. After habitat loss invasive species are the greatest threat to biodiversity. Pest animals including feral cats, foxes, rabbits, pigs, deer and carp along with noxious weeds are an ongoing threat to health of ecosystems across all land tenures.

Water Resources

The supply of water to the region is critical to the environment, healthy communities, culture and for further development of the agriculture in the area. A decrease in rainfall (and a consequent decrease in runoff and groundwater inflow) will impact current water supply, stream flows, water quality and habitat, in particular, in the unregulated Ovens River. Increased evaporation and drier soils magnify the impact on runoff, with greater impact likely in drier areas in the west of the municipality. Increased demand on groundwater storages for domestic and agricultural use could exceed natural replenishment. Waterway pollution from both urban and rural areas has negative impacts on water quality.

Population

Wangaratta is forecast to increase its population to 32,160 by 2036, which is an average rate increase of 0.6%.⁴ The growth in population will see a demand for new developments and put pressure on existing infrastructure and both will need to consider the impact of climate change and how to increase resilience and adapt to the changing conditions.

We also recognise we have an ageing population with the latest population projections from the Department of Health & Human Services indicating that the age group of 60-85+ in Wangaratta is expected to increase over the next five years. The elderly are identified as one of the groups most vulnerable to heat stress and changes in cost of living.

Health & Wellbeing

The effects of climate change are already being seen by Victoria's health services and it is estimated that these impacts will see a fivefold increase in the cost of public health by 2050.⁵ The impacts upon health come in a variety of forms, such as heat stress from increased temperatures, mental health concerns as climate change impacts increase and hazardous air quality from bushfire events. In a recent survey by Sustainability Victoria, it was found that 45% of people in public housing were either too hot in summer or too cold in winter, which highlighted the need for safe public spaces for vulnerable groups.

⁴ Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning 'Victoria in Future 2019' report

⁵ Sustainability Victoria - Health Impacts of Climate Change, sustainability.vic.gov.au/research-data-and-insights/research/climate-change/health-impacts-of-climate-change

Unsustainable Resource Use

Total waste generation for North-East Victoria is predicted to increase from 222k total waste generation to 234.7k by 2025⁶. In addition, Victoria, like the rest of Australia, is facing major challenges with the collection and disposal of waste and there has been an increase in trade restrictions surrounding the international export of recyclable materials. We recognise that consumption of goods and waste generation have both a direct and indirect impact upon our local natural environment and we also recognise that what is currently considered waste has resource potential under a circular economy as outlined in the State Government's new 10-year circular economy plan, 'Recycling Victoria'.

Changes in Land Use

With the effects of climate change on our region, and the importance of agriculture to the local economy, we recognise the importance of conserving agricultural land and supporting innovation in farming practices that have positive impacts on the natural environment to ensure sustainability for the future. Supporting local production, through strategies such as the North East Local Food Strategy, can also prove beneficial for the local community and reduce carbon emissions through a reduction in food miles. We also recognise the importance of conserving our natural spaces which are so important to our well being, lifestyle, amenity and tourism.

Soil Health

The Regional Catchment Strategy (NECMA, 2013) records significant soil health issues in the region. Key risks to soil health and land assets include erosion, soil structure decline, organic matter loss, soil pathogens, acidity, dryland salinity, and increases in climate variability and related soil moisture changes. Soil health was highlighted as a key environmental issue in the 2030 Community Vision. Soil health issues are exacerbated by inappropriate management practices, poor grazing management, land clearing and bushfires. The North East Catchment Management Authority and Landcare are leading projects to improve soils health in the region.

⁶ SV Waste Projection Model, Accessed August 2020, sustainability.vic.gov.au/Government/Victorian-Waste-data-portal/Interactive-waste-data-mapping/Waste-projection-model#

Our Priorities

We recognise that local government plays a pivotal role in creating environmentally sustainable deliverables for our local community that will address the challenges we face. It will require responses from all levels of government, businesses, and the community.

In response, our Strategy will focus on six broad strategic priority areas. On the following pages these priorities are listed with their context, relevant legislation, strategies & policies followed by objectives, indicators and actions at both a council operation and community level.

Table Key

In each priority area there is a table with actions listed. One of the columns is denoted with a \$ which represents 'financial resourcing source' of the particular action. They are as follows;

F (Funded) – This action will be funded by inhouse resources or has been already allocated funding, noting that these will still be up for review during the annual budget process and may change.

S (Subject to Funding) – Requires budget approval for action to proceed.

G (Grant Funding Required) – Identified that grant funding assistance will be required.



Photo: Reedy Creek

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of global principles to guide action on social, economic and environmental challenges. While 17 goals sit atop 169 detailed global targets, designed with national governments in mind, it is recognised that local government have a devolved responsibility for SDG achievements. While the SDG targets would need to be localised to address specific issues that are relevant in our local context, the strategy does map the relevant SDGs against each priority, identifying 11 relevant goals;

- 2. Zero Hunger
- 3. Good Health & Wellbeing
- 6. Clean Water & Sanitation
- 7. Affordable & Clean Energy
- 8. Decent Work & Economic Growth
- 9. Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure
- 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
- 12. Responsible Consumption & Production
- 13. Climate Action
- 14. Life Below Water
- 15. Life on Land

These are displayed on the right-hand side of each of the six priority areas.





Biodiversity



CONTEXT:

Biodiversity is all components of the living world: the variety of plants, animals and microorganisms, the genetic information they contain and the ecosystems they form.

Biodiversity has intrinsic value. It is also vital to sustaining agriculture and tourism and fundamental to the cultural practices of Indigenous people.

Threats to biodiversity in the RCoW include habitat loss and fragmentation, invasive species (weeds, pest animals) and changed fire and water regimes – all of which will be exacerbated by the effects of climate change. Healthy, biodiverse ecosystems are more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Council recognises that a healthy natural environment is vital to all species and essential to the health and well-being of current and future generations. We will protect and enhance biodiversity through management, education and partnerships to facilitate ecological resilience.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, REPORTS & STATE/FEDERAL TARGETS:

- Aboriginal Heritage Act, 2006 and Aboriginal Heritage Regulations, 2018
- Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act)
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
- Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Wildlife Protection) Act 2001
- Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 and Amendment Act 2019
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Protecting Victoria's Environment: Biodiversity 2037 – DELWP State targets: By 2037 there will be a net improvement in the outlook across all species and all Victorians will value nature.
- Victorian State of the Environment Report, 2018

OTHER RELEVANT STRATEGIES & POLICIES:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kaluna Natural Area Precinct Management Plan ▪ Mullinmur Wetland Management Plan ▪ NECMA Regional Catchment Strategy ▪ NECMA North East Climate Ready NRM Strategy ▪ NECMA North East Waterway Strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Northern Beaches Management Plan ▪ NECMA North East Climate Ready NRM Strategy ▪ NECMA North East Waterway Strategy ▪ Wangaratta Urban Waterway Action Plan |
|---|--|

COUNCIL ACHIEVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS:

- Winner of the Australian Government Partnerships with Landcare award in 2015.
- 7000 indigenous native trees, shrubs and grasses planted in 2019 with a 90% survival rate.
- Awarded \$778,049 in State and Federal grant funding from 2019-21 to deliver environmental projects.



Photo: National Tree Day community planting.

BIODIVERSITY

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

To address threats to biodiversity from invasive species, habitat loss and fragmentation on Council owned and managed reserves we will maintain and improve habitat by increasing native vegetation, protecting remnant vegetation and managing invasive species.

INDICATOR: Improved vegetation score in Council managed reserves assessed over time using regular monitoring of permanent monitoring points.

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

COUNCIL OPERATIONS			
THEME	ACTIONS	YEAR	\$
RESILIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase annual program of invasive species control (including emerging pests) and habitat restoration in Council managed reserves and roadsides. 	2021-26	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set up permanent monitoring points to monitor changes in habitat condition and increase native vegetation mapping. 	2021-26	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce risk of damage to natural areas from unsustainable firewood collection and use through education, enforcement and improvements to firewood depots and permit system. 	2021-26	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Address threats to wildlife from dogs and cats through review of Council's order under Section 26 of the Domestic Animals Act 	2021-22	F/S
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with all areas of Council to ensure best practice biodiversity conservation in planning, project design and works. 	2021-26	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support mapping of large old/ significant trees in growth areas. 	2021-22	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update roadside conservation status & weed mapping data. 	2021-22	F/S/G
CAPACITY BUILDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognise and protect the integrity of traditional indigenous NRM knowledge, support traditional knowledge exchange and when permitted use it with respect. 	2021-26	S/G
RESEARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore and implement innovative ways to improve & monitor biodiversity outcomes. 	2021-26	S/G
INVESTMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify and facilitate suitable areas to use for improving habitat connectivity, green spaces, biodiverse firewood plantations & native vegetation offset sites. 	2021-26	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase connectivity, accessibility and education opportunities across natural areas. 	2021-26	S/G

BIODIVERSITY

COUNCIL OPERATIONS			
THEME	ACTIONS	YEAR	\$
ADVOCACY	▪ Advocate for improved firewood regulations and uptake of alternative heating sources to conserve biodiversity and address air quality impacts.	2021-26	F/S/G
	▪ Advocate for the re-establishment of research hubs within the region to work with the agricultural sector, local government and other agencies on sustainable agriculture and other environmental issues.	2021-26	F/S/G
	▪ Advocate in partnership with appropriate agencies to ensure all agencies and public land managers are being held to the same legally enforceable standards as private land holders.	2021-26	F/S/G

BIODIVERSITY

COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Foster community involvement in the stewardship, enjoyment, and preservation of our natural spaces. Work with partners to assist the community to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

INDICATOR: Assessed by an increase in no. of participants at events and follow up feedback surveys. No. of private properties with conservation covenants.

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

COMMUNITY			
THEME	ACTIONS	YEAR	\$
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver education events and resources in partnership with community groups and other agencies. 	2021-26	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase knowledge and build capacity to manage natural resource management issues including retaining and improving habitat, managing invasive species, controlling domestic animals and increasing sustainable agriculture practices. 	2021-26	F/S/G
COLLABORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Landcare, CFA, landholders and other partners to support on ground conservation action, sustainable land management practices and citizen science monitoring eg water quality, photo point habitat condition, fauna surveys. 	2021-26	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners on regional projects to protect and enhance biodiversity and improve landscape scale connectivity. 	2021-26	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the Land Protection Incentive program and work with Trust for Nature to encourage more private land conservation covenants. 	2021-26	F/S
PROMOTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Council managed bush reserves and natural spaces through events and publications to ensure they are sufficiently valued and maintained. 	2021-26	F/S



Built Environment



CONTEXT:

The built environment, the way our municipality is planned out, its buildings and suburbs, are a large contributor to emissions therefore it is increasingly important to avoid being locked into emission-intensive buildings, with a need to embrace resource efficient and smart design.

Through planning & investment we can improve our community's quality of life, accommodate the needs of a diverse and growing population and build climate resilience.

Council is therefore committed to creating an environmentally sustainable municipality through the minimisation of adverse impacts from our built environment, improving our urban ecology and to facilitating and encouraging development that is resource efficient.



RELEVANT LEGISLATION, REPORTS & STATE/FEDERAL TARGETS:

- Planning & Environment Act, 1987
- State Planning Policy Framework
- DELWP Climate Ready Hume Program 2019-2021
- State Planning Policy Framework (Wangaratta Planning Scheme)

OTHER RELEVANT STRATEGIES & POLICIES:

- Wangaratta Planning Scheme
- Asset Management Policy 2016
- Tree Management Plan 2018-2022
- Open Space & Recreation Strategy
- Walking & Cycling Strategy

Environmentally Sustainable Design

Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) is building design that promotes environmental quality, economic vitality and social benefit. Council recognises the importance of ESD in developments within Wangaratta and thus in 2017 was one of eight regional councils that engaged AECOM to explore the feasibility of establishing best practice ESD for regional greenfield subdivisions.

The project identified that there is a disconnect between subdivision and dwelling outcomes due to gaps between planning and building systems and lack of statutory tools to assess ESD subdivisions. Following from that project, 16 Victorian Councils, the Victorian Planning Authority and the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment have been working to develop a Framework for statutory planners to assess the sustainability measures included in subdivision applications and provide justification and means to conduct an 18-month trial starting in September 2020 to collect data and test the Framework.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT**COUNCIL PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:**

Enhance the energy and water efficiency of Council owned buildings.

INDICATOR: Assessed by reduction of annual potable use & electricity usage/baseline 2019.

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Increased tree canopy cover within the urban footprint to minimise heat island effect in line with policies and strategies.

INDICATOR: Baseline 2017 number of public trees sourced via i-Tree Eco.

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

COUNCIL OPERATIONS			
THEME	ACTIONS	YEAR	\$
STRATEGIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure changing rainfall, flooding, bushfire and drought patterns are included in all Council strategies and asset management plans where applicable. 	2021-26	F
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a Sustainable Building Policy for Council buildings. 	2022-24	S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed Climate Resilient Infrastructure checklists into relevant processes for designing and maintaining infrastructure (Once Sustainable Building Policy Completed) 	2023-26	S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate adopting a target for the use of recycled material in our works program. 	2021-26	F/S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with Wangaratta Landcare Sustainability to develop a plan for management and protection of wildlife corridors in the NW and S urban development corridors 	2021-23	F/S
ADAPTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with outside agencies to develop an urban tree strategy and planting program for expected climate change, including fire safe landscaping. 	2021-24	F/G
REPORTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to report on number of bush reserve tree plantings and start reporting on urban tree plantings per year. 	2022-26	F
INFLUENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with other agencies to seek opportunities around climate mitigation and adaptation through ESD tools & regulatory processes (i.e Strategic planning, CASBE/BESS membership, planning scheme) 	2021-26	S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess, where feasible, subdivision applications under the trial Subdivision Framework and continue to explore ways to improve sustainability of new urban development. 	2023-26	F
INNOVATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities to incorporate Smart Cities technology into future planning & works. 	2021-26	F/G

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Promote community action to reduce resources, energy and water use in retrofitting or new home builds.

INDICATOR: *Assessed by no. of participants at events and workshops.*

COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Community buildings and assets are supported in improving energy efficiency and retro-fits through knowledge building, initiatives and partnerships.

INDICATOR: *Assessed through a qualitative measure of active partnerships, joint projects and events held.*

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

COMMUNITY			
THEME	ACTIONS	YEAR	\$
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner to deliver education programs to demonstrate cost/benefits of sustainable design to community and development applicants. 	2021-26	S/G
RESILIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate feasibility of capturing and using stormwater and recycled water for urban and rural sporting ground watering. 	2023-26	S/G
CAPACITY BUILDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to engage with the community regarding energy efficiency and funding opportunities for both home owners, occupants and businesses. 	2021-26	F/S/G
INFLUENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and encourage more sustainable transport options as per the Walking & Cycling strategy and through the development of a Sustainable Transport Study within the strategic planning department. 	2021-26	F/S
ADVOCACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate to relevant water authorities for education of residents and industry regarding affordable household water systems to reduce water use. 	2021-26	F
COLLABORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with community to encourage canopy tree planting on private land to reduce heat island affect. 	2021-26	S/G



Greenhouse Gas Emissions & Energy Reduction



CONTEXT:

Council recognises its key role in supporting Australia's transition to a low carbon and resource efficient future, including mitigating and adapting to climate change. As a contributor to greenhouse gas emissions through our own operations we recognise the need to demonstrate leadership through the continued reduction of our emissions and to find new innovative solutions to the growing challenges. We are a part of the Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance (GMCA), Cities Power Partnership (CPP) and recently signed a CPP joint statement committing to economic recovery solutions that create jobs while tackling climate change.

We recognise the important role the community plays in reducing emissions for the municipality through behaviour change, the uptake of renewables and retrofitting. Therefore, Council aims to partner and assist our residents, businesses and community groups to build capacity and resilience and to support our community in this energy transition.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, REPORTS & STATE/FEDERAL TARGETS:

- Renewable Energy Amendment Bill 2019 (Vic) – VRET 2030 Target: Renewable Energy Targets for generation of 40 per cent by 2025 and 50 per cent by 2030.
- Victorian Climate Change Strategy – Reduce state's emissions from 2005 emission levels by 28-33% by 2025.

OTHER RELEVANT STRATEGIES & POLICIES:

- Energy Reduction Plan 2016
- RCOW Climate Change & Peak Oil Risk Assessment & Adaptation Planning 2013
- Hume Regional Climate Change Adaptation Plan
- The Local Power Plan 2020

COUNCIL ACHIEVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS:

- Since 2016-17 financial year, greenhouse gas emissions from Council owned buildings, streetlights and fleet reduced by 7.5%.
- "Watts Working Better" Street lighting Project in 2016 achieved a cost reduction by 37% and reduced emission by 425 tonnes.
- Solar installations on Council owned buildings include 63kw on WISAC stadium, 18.82kw at Wangaratta Childcare Centre, 4.2kw at Saleyards, 10kw at AC Swinburne Pavilion, 5kw Milawa Hall, 4 kw Bowmans Murrumbidgee Hall and 8.64kw at the Eco Living Centre.
- The co-generation unit at WISAC generates 58kw electricity and 104 kw thermal heat which heats the pools.
- In 2019 Council made the decision to switch its light fleet cars to hybrid through leasing, so far 11 cars have been switched to hybrids.



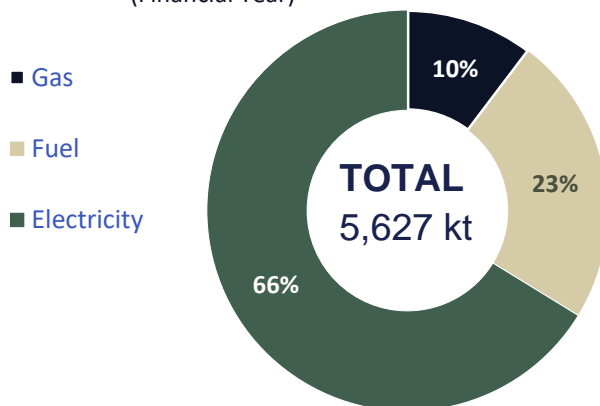
Photo: Ecoliving Centre solar panels at WISAC

Emission Profile

The Rural City of Wangaratta has been recording and monitoring the greenhouse gas emissions from its operations since 2006 when it signed up to the Cities Communities aim to reduce 20% of emissions by 2016 with the achievement of this target outlined in the Energy Reduction Plan 2016. Our current emission inventory considers emissions from electricity usage, fuel from fleet and gas from council-operated facilities that fall under scope 1 and 2 emissions. While to date Council has not been able to report on its landfill emissions, it is listed as one of the actions within the strategy.

Emission Profile 2018-2019

(Financial Year)



Where do our emissions come from?

Data being used in this section is from 2018-2019 as the results from 2019-2020 were impacted upon by COVID and the changes to how council operated during that year.

For 2018-2019 the predominant source of emissions came from the consumption of electricity accounting for over half of the total, with petrol, diesel and LPG powered vehicles accounting for 23%.

The remaining emissions were from consumption of natural gas at some of our facilities.

Council aims to demonstrate leadership by setting a new emission target for its council operations for 2025 and working towards the State's target of transitioning to a climate resilient community and economy with net zero emissions by 2050, as per Victoria's Climate Change Act 2017. After reviewing the previous accomplishment of a 20% reduction by 2016, and planned and future projects, the Rural City of Wangaratta is setting a target of 50% emission reduction from its electricity, fuel and gas usage by 2025*.

This challenge means we will need to continue retrofitting council-owned buildings, upgrading assets with innovative solutions and investing into renewable energy. Taking into account that electricity makes 66% of our emission profile, the falling prices in renewables in Victoria, and the opportunities for renewable energy purchasing through either green power or power purchasing agreements, we believe this is a realistic target for our operations.

Additionally, it needs to be noted that in order to aim for a net zero emission target, we need to address the previously mentioned landfill emission reporting gap before an overall target is set.

** To be confirmed through the development of the Carbon Reduction Action Plan*

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS & ENERGY REDUCTION

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

For at least 50% of Council's electricity to be sourced from renewable energy sources by 2025, with the target being reviewed on a regular basis.

INDICATOR: *Baseline 2015-16 levels*

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Reduce Council's operational carbon emissions by at least 50% by 2025 to create financial and carbon savings. *(To be confirmed through the development of the Carbon Reduction Action Plan)*

INDICATOR: *CO2 equivalent emissions per annum from Council operations based on a 2015-16 baseline*

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

COUNCIL OPERATIONS			
THEME	ACTIONS	YEAR	\$
REPORTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate feasibility of/and develop landfill emission reporting for the municipality. 	2021-22	S/G
INFLUENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider submitting a voluntary emissions reduction pledge under the Climate Change Act 2017. 	2021-22	F
STRATEGIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a carbon reduction action plan for corporate operations in order to achieve emission target. 	2021-22	F/S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to investigate feasibility of purchasing renewable energy through power purchasing agreements & other sustainable energy alternatives. 	2021-26	F
RESILIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and partner with sustainable energy provider to pilot at least one battery on a council owned building. 	2023-26	S/G
ASSETS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to replace remaining main road street lighting, that are shared assets with Regional Roads Victoria, to energy efficient LED lighting. 	2021-24	S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue energy auditing and retrofitting of Council buildings. 	2021-26	S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install solar PV systems where feasible on remaining community halls. 	2022-24	S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review opportunities to transition council vehicle fleet to electric & installing both council and public use electric recharge stations 	2021-26	S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replace or retrofit existing solar inverters with monitoring software at council facilities to report on consumption. 	2022-24	S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate smart technology to reduce peak loads and link operation of solar installations. 	2022-26	S/G

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS & ENERGY REDUCTION

COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

Engage and empower the community to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions.

Work with partners to inform, educate and assist the community with the aim of promoting and increasing the uptake of renewable energy.

INDICATOR: Assessed by no. of participants at events and workshops and follow up feedback surveys.

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

COMMUNITY			
THEME	ACTIONS	YEAR	\$
REPORTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission a community emission snapshot to report on and review. 	2021-24	S
CAPACITY BUILDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through partnerships investigate feasibility of community owned renewable energy generation. 	2021-26	F/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support community leaders wishing to set targets for the reduction of emissions. 	2021-26	F/S
RESILIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and investigate opportunities for community halls to improve energy efficiency. 	2022-26	S/G
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with community groups and external agencies to deliver education programs and workshops on energy efficiency, measuring carbon footprint and emission reductions to community and business to increase knowledge of opportunities. 	2021-26	F/S
ADVOCACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for sustainable energy industries within the municipality through the ongoing Economic Development Strategy. 	2021-26	F
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for low-cost renewable energy sources and energy efficiency for vulnerable households. 	2021-26	F



Healthy Waterways



CONTEXT:

Our waterways and wetlands are an integral part of what makes the Rural City of Wangaratta so special. We depend on our local environment for clean and plentiful water. We recognise the significance of our waterways to the cultural identity of local indigenous people and in maintaining healthy and prosperous communities.

Threats to the health of our rivers, creeks and wetlands include a reduction in native vegetation cover and habitat loss, pollution, invasive species and unsustainable use. With predicted declines in annual rainfall and stream flow and the increased likelihood of extreme weather events that will impact water quality it is vital that we manage water sustainably and build resilience in our natural systems. Council recognises it is essential to protect and enhance local waterways, wetlands and floodplains to increase ecosystem and community resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, REPORTS & STATE/FEDERAL TARGETS:

- Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act)
- Water Act 1989
- Environment Protection Act 1970
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Wildlife Protection) Act 2001

OTHER RELEVANT STRATEGIES & POLICIES:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wangaratta Urban Waterway Action Plan ▪ RCoW Stormwater Management Plan ▪ Mullinmur Wetland Management Plan ▪ State Environment Protection Policy (Waters) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Victorian Government Water for Victoria, Water Plan ▪ NECMA Regional Catchment Strategy ▪ NECMA North East Climate Ready NRM Strategy ▪ NECMA North East Waterway Strategy |
|---|---|

POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Citizen science is keeping an eye on water quality in the Mullinmur Billabongs and adjacent Ovens River to ensure it remains suitable for native fish populations. Volunteers from Wangaratta Landcare and Sustainability Inc and RCoW staff are using the Waterwatch program and nest box monitoring as part of an environmental education program to assess wetland ecosystem health. Waterwatch in North East Victoria is delivered by North East CMA in partnership with the Rural City of Wangaratta and Petaurus Education Group, with funding from the Victorian Government. We recognise the value of community contributions to monitoring and improving the health of our precious ecosystems.



Photo: Water bug survey.

HEALTHY WATERWAYS

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

To address threats to waterway health from loss of native vegetation, invasive species, unsustainable use, and pollution we will improve the ecological health of waterways and wetlands on Council managed land using sustainable water management, increasing riparian habitat, managing invasive species and improving infrastructure.

INDICATOR: *An improvement in habitat condition score in Council managed riparian areas assessed using regular monitoring of permanent monitoring points.*

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

COUNCIL OPERATIONS			
THEME	ACTIONS	YEAR	\$
RESILIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve water quality and riparian habitat connectivity with increased invasive species control and habitat restoration. 	2021-26	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with partners to develop regional projects. 	2021-26	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up permanent monitoring points to monitor changes in habitat condition and water quality over time. 	2021-26	F/S/G
INVESTMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities for green/blue infrastructure development – an effective carbon store. Incorporate natural systems that provide ecological and amenity value with stormwater management. 	2021-26	S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the impacts of climate change on storm events when planning renewal of infrastructure. Use innovative design to reduce impacts of pollution and flooding. 	2021-26	F/S/G
STRATEGIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update relevant Council plans with sustainable stormwater management considerations. 	2021-26	F/S
ADAPTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan for climate change impacts on green spaces (drier soil, increased evaporation and less available water) leading to higher watering demand. 	2021-26	F/S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and use alternative sources of water (eg stormwater, recycled) to maintain green spaces, use water wise landscaping and invest in water saving technologies to meet higher water demand. 	2021-26	F/S/G

HEALTHY WATERWAYS

COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Foster community involvement in protecting waterway health. Work with partners to assist the community to use water sustainably, maintain habitat and reduce pollution to improve water quality.

INDICATOR: Assessed by number of participants at events and community involvement in waterway health indicator monitoring and follow up feedback surveys.

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

COMMUNITY			
THEME	ACTIONS	YEAR	\$
RESILIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in partnership with community groups and agencies to preserve waterway values and enhance remnant habitat through riparian planting and invasive species management. 	2021-26	F/S/G
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage participation in citizen science e.g. monitoring water quality, photo point habitat condition, fauna surveys to help understand the impact of habitat destruction, pollution and invasive species on waterways and inform actions to reduce this impact. 	2021-26	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver education events and resources in partnership with community groups and other agencies. 	2021-26	F/S/G
COLLABORATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated water management. Work with partners including NECMA, NE Water and communities to deliver innovative solutions to adapt to changing climatic conditions and protect and improve waterway, wetland and floodplain health on a regional scale. 	2021-26	F/S/G



Sustainable Communities



CONTEXT:

Victoria has been experiencing impacts from climate change within its communities, from heatwaves, floods and bushfires. It is Council's role to assist the community in the transition to a future with different climate and resources and to deal with both direct and indirect impacts.

These will affect many of the health pillars identified in the Municipal Health & Wellbeing Plan that include social equity, mental health, healthy behaviours and active communities.

We are seeking to increase the resilience of the community to mitigate and adapt to these changes. In order to achieve this Council commits to strengthening partnerships and collaboration with various stakeholders including Youth Council, businesses and local community groups.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, REPORTS & STATE/FEDERAL TARGETS:

- UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Recycling Victoria - national target to halve Australia's food waste by 2030
- Victoria's Climate Change Framework

OTHER RELEVANT STRATEGIES & POLICIES:

- North East Local Food Strategy 2018-2022
- Municipal Emergency Management Plan
- Access & Inclusion Plan
- Wangaratta Urban Flood Study

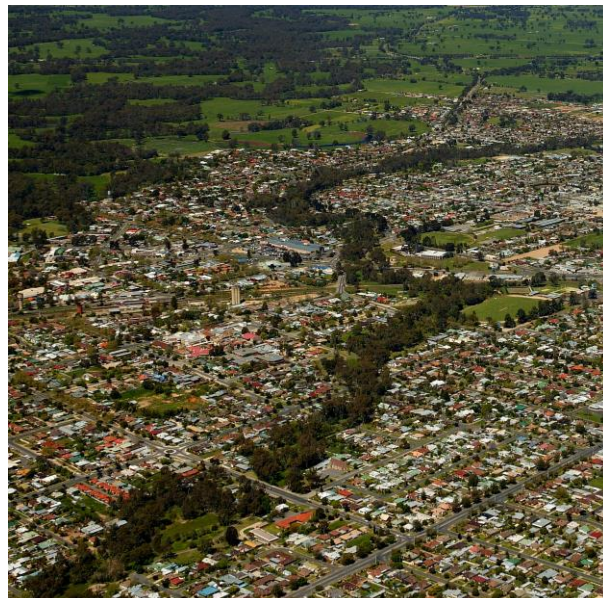


Photo: Aerial of Wangaratta

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH COLLABORATION

Council is part of the Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance (GMCA) which is made up of 13 regional Councils, the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, North East Catchment Management Authority, and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Hume).

The vision of GMCA is to enable our communities to actively respond to climate change and it is one of a network of regional greenhouse alliances across Victoria, working to respond to climate change through the development of a variety of projects.

These have included the Watts Working Better project, Main Road Streetlighting Project, Electric Vehicle Study, Climate Smart Agricultural Development, developing a sustainability indicator tool, and co-sponsoring the regional conference, "Managing Climate Risk in Agriculture".

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Increase environmental & sustainability awareness for staff at all levels at Council.

INDICATOR: Assessed by number of Eco Leader events & no. of participants.

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Demonstrate commitment through the inclusion of climate change & sustainability criteria in all relevant documents and policies.

INDICATOR: Assessed by reviewing Council documents & policies.

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

COUNCIL OPERATIONS			
THEME	ACTIONS	YEAR	\$
STRATEGIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to adverse weather events through the review and continual update of emergency preparedness and response actions, including planning for recovery and continuity after events. 	2021-26	F
INFLUENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure sustainability criteria are strengthened for the community grants program and to support relevant applicants through the process. 	2021-22	F
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the staff Eco Leaders team to increase awareness and actions regarding environmental sustainability. 	2021-26	F
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and facilitate training programs for staff regarding climate change and sustainability to improve efforts at all levels of Council. 	2022-26	S
GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate environmental considerations & climate change risk in the Council plan and council strategies during their review. 	2021-26	F

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Increase the resilience capacity of community to mitigate and adapt to changes driven by climate change and to respond to extreme events.

Work collaboratively with external stakeholders on community-based environment and sustainability initiatives.

INDICATOR: Assessed by number of joint events & projects.

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

COMMUNITY			
THEME	ACTIONS	YEAR	\$
BUILDING AWARENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with local groups in the creation of communication material to showcase sustainability stories from residents to empower & educate the community to make sustainable changes at home. 	2021-26	F/S
ADVOCACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for continued funding for initiatives around rural resilience & mental health in the face of climate change and develop community driven support mechanisms. 	2021-26	F/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for the inclusion of a sustainability category for the Wangaratta Business Awards. 	2021-23	F
ENGAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an Environment & Sustainability reference group to encourage increased dialogue & collaboration. 	2021-26	F/S/G
CAPACITY BUILDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support initiatives to improve community access to food through local food and economies, the North East food strategy, and regenerative agricultural practices. 	2021-26	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support environmental capacity building initiatives and upskilling opportunities for local community groups to increase resilience.. 	2021-26	S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with local landholders, businesses and residents about local climate adaptation through the development of a newsletter, utilising social media platforms, and additional website information 	2021-26	S
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore feasibility of providing sustainability information to new tenants, social housing residents & homeowners by working with local real estate agents & owners corporations. 	2023-24	S
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support Community Food for All to address sustainable food production and consumption and support community gardens and home food production for residents. 	2021-26	F/S



Waste Reduction & Resource Recovery



CONTEXT:

In Australia our waste and recycling system is facing serious challenges and the sector is rapidly evolving with a focus on waste avoidance and the emergence of a shift to resource recovery and a circular economy.

Council has a key role to play in leading this change to engage and incentivise responsible consumption and production in our municipality which is recognised in the Waste Management Strategy. The additional targets and actions within this Strategy are complementary to those.

We also recognise the emerging local production and innovation opportunities within Victoria's circular economy that has the potential to lead to lower greenhouse gas emissions, cost efficiencies and job creation.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION, REPORTS & STATE/FEDERAL TARGETS:

- Recycling Victoria Policy – Cut total waste generation by 15 per cent per capita by 2030.
- 2025 National Packaging Waste Targets – 100% recyclable, reusable or compostable packaging in Australia by 2025.
- National Waste Policy 2018
 - Divert 80 percent of waste from landfill by 2030 and 72 per cent by 2025.
 - Significantly increase the use of recycled content by government and industry
- Victorian Government's Social Procurement Framework

OTHER RELEVANT STRATEGIES & POLICIES:

- Events & Attractions Policy 2018-2023



Photo: Organics Processing Plant

What is a circular economy?

The Victorian Government defines a circular economy as one that continually seeks to reduce the environmental impacts of production and consumption, while enabling economic growth through more productive use of natural resources.

It “promotes more efficient business models that encourage intense and efficient product use, such as sharing products between multiple users, or supplying a product as a service that includes maintenance, repair and disposal” and “It transforms our linear economy mindset—take, use and throw away—and fosters innovation and productivity that invigorates existing businesses and creates new ones, delivering more jobs and more growth for local, regional, state and global economies.” -*Recycling Victoria Policy*

WASTE REDUCTION & RESOURCE RECOVERY

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Reduce resource and waste generation from Council operations.

INDICATOR: Assessed through bin audits, paper consumption and water usage.

COUNCIL PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVE:

Addition of sustainability and waste reduction requirements/policies for council operations and events.

INDICATOR: Assessed by reviewing Council documents & policies.

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

COUNCIL OPERATIONS			
THEME	ACTIONS	YEAR	\$
STRATEGIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a single use plastic policy for Council's operations & events, that includes an educational workshop and bin audit. 	2022-26	F/S
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce waste, paper and water usage through education & changing processes. 	2021-26	F/S
REPORTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and change procurement policy to address sustainability considerations and criteria for tenders. 	2022-26	F/S
INNOVATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess feasibility of extracting methane gas from Council owned facilities to convert into energy. 	2022-26	G

WASTE REDUCTION & RESOURCE RECOVERY

COMMUNITY PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES:

Work in partnership with the community to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill.

INDICATOR: *Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill.*

Increased awareness of circular economy & recycling opportunities to encourage waste recovery and extend lifecycle of resources.

INDICATOR: *Kerbside collection waste diverted from landfill.*

HOW WILL THIS BE ACHIEVED?

COMMUNITY			
THEME	ACTIONS	YEAR	\$
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in partnership with the community & local groups to increase awareness of resource consumption and improve waste avoidance. 	2021-26	F/S/G
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trial cloth nappy rebate for community members. 	2021-26	S
CAPACITY BUILDING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate opportunities and collaborate with external organisations to develop a share library of household items to minimise household consumption (i.e. power & hand tools, household party supplies, sports or camping equipment) 	2021-26	S/G
INVESTMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and assist businesses and agricultural producers to establish circular economy opportunities and attract sustainable industries. 	2021-26	S/G
STRATEGIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop 'Waste Wise' event guidelines that include waste minimisation guidelines for all event applications. 	2021-23	F
INFLUENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support State & external organisation led circular economy education campaigns & promote innovation through our communications and events. 	2021-26	F

Appendices

Glossary

Term	Definition
Biodiversity	the variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat, a high level of which is usually considered to be important and desirable.
Built Environment	man-made structures, features, and facilities viewed collectively as an environment in which people live and work.
Catchment	natural drainage area that collects water such as rainfall.
Climate Change	changes in the world's weather as a result of human activity increasing the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.
Community	group of people living in the same place, in this case all people within the Rural City of Wangaratta municipality including individuals, households, businesses and schools.
Context	Background information that assists in explaining reason for priority area and following actions.
Ecosystem	a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment
Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD)	aims to improve the health and comfort of buildings for occupants whilst at the same time reducing negative impacts on the environment.
Environmental Sustainability	responsibly interacting with the planet to maintain natural resources and ensuring they will be protected and maintained for future generations.
Flora	the plants of a particular region, habitat, or geological period.
Fauna	the animals of a particular region, habitat, or geological period.
Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance (GMCA)	is one of a network of regional greenhouse alliances across Victoria consisting of 13 councils responding to climate change through the implementation of various regional projects.
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Gases, such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide that trap heat in the atmosphere and are resulting in changes to the planet's climate systems.
Indigenous Species	a native species that occurs naturally in a local area. They are well suited to the conditions of a particular area.
Invasive Species	a plant or animal species occurring as a result of human activities beyond its accepted normal distribution which threatens valued environmental, agricultural or other resources by the damage it causes.

Native Species	broadly refers to a species that normally lives and thrives in a particular ecosystem, in this case endemic to Australia.
Natural Assets	assets of the natural environment. They consist of biological assets (produced or wild), land and water areas with their ecosystems, subsoil assets, and air.
Natural Resource Management (NRM)	refers to the management of natural resources such as land, water, soil, plants, and animals
Procurement Policy	a council policy outlining the act of obtaining goods or services is managed.
Recycling	the action or process of converting waste into reusable material. An example of resource recovery.
Renewable Energy Sources	Sources of energy that come from natural sources or processes that are constantly replenished such as solar, wind, water (hydro), biomass and geothermal.
Resilience	In the context of this strategy council defines it as the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to hazardous events, trends, or disturbances related to climate.
Resource Recovery	is when energy, a material, or a product is taken from waste and used for another purpose.
Stormwater	Surface water resulting from rainfall which runs off surfaces including roofs, pavement and land that is captured by constructed drainage systems.
Subdivisions	a portion of land divided into lots for real-estate development.
Sustainable Food Systems	food that is produced, processed, distributed and disposed of in ways that protect the diversity of both plants and animals and the welfare of farmed and wild species and avoids damaging or wasting natural resources or contributing to climate change.
Tree canopy cover	a form of green infrastructure providing shade and a measure of how much the plant canopy covers the ground when viewed from the air.
Urban Heat Island Effect	an increase in temperature in urbanised areas due to removal of vegetation or introduction of structures such as buildings and roads that absorb and re-emit the sun's heat.
Waterways	a channel for water including a river, creek, stream or watercourse where water regularly flows.
Waterwatch	a citizen science program for monitoring waterway health.



Rural City of
Wangaratta