



WELLINGTON  
SHIRE COUNCIL  
*The Heart of Gippsland*

WELLINGTON SHIRE COUNCIL

# Sustainability Strategy 2020-24

ANNUAL REPORT CARD 2020-21

*Strengthening our commitment to  
environmental sustainability*



## Contents

<b>About this report</b>	3
<b>Our journey so far</b>	4
<b>Year Highlights</b>	5
<b>Where to from here</b>	7
<b>Climate Resilient Communities</b>	8
<b>Low Carbon Economy</b>	10
<b>Protecting Nature</b>	14
<b>Towards a Circular Economy</b>	18
<b>Environmental Stewardship</b>	22

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# About this report

This is Wellington Shire Council's first annual sustainability report spanning the financial year 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

The report documents the progress and highlights as Council continues its journey to be a leader in Sustainability.

Council's Sustainability Strategy 2020-24 was adopted by Council in May 2020.

Public reporting is central to the commitment of transparency regarding Council's and communities environmental footprint. The delivery of an annual sustainability report was included as a key action in the strategy.

In preparing this report Council has considered the following principles for defining report quality.

- **Accuracy**
- **Comparability**
- **Balance**
- **Reliability**

The report addresses the key themes in the strategy:

- **Climate Resilient Communities**
- **Low Carbon Economy**
- **Protecting Nature**
- **Towards a Circular Economy**
- **Environmental Stewardship**

We have used the following references to report against our indicators and targets.



**On track**



**Could be doing better**



**Lots of work to do**

The actions delivered may have since progressed, however were correct as at 31st July 2021

1



CEO raised the profile of sustainability across the organisation by endorsing it as a new key core value.

2



The Mayor approved a formal partnership with the Cities Power Partnership, committing to a range of emission reduction actions over the next four years.

3



Installed first public fast charger at the Port of Sale and started planning for a further three new stations across the region.

4



Council commenced a process to develop and approve a new Environmentally Sustainable Design Policy for council

5



Council signed up to the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO) to purchase renewable energy to offset approximately 1300 tonnes of carbon emissions annually.

6



Secured \$536,000 to deliver weed and pest control during drought on private and public land.

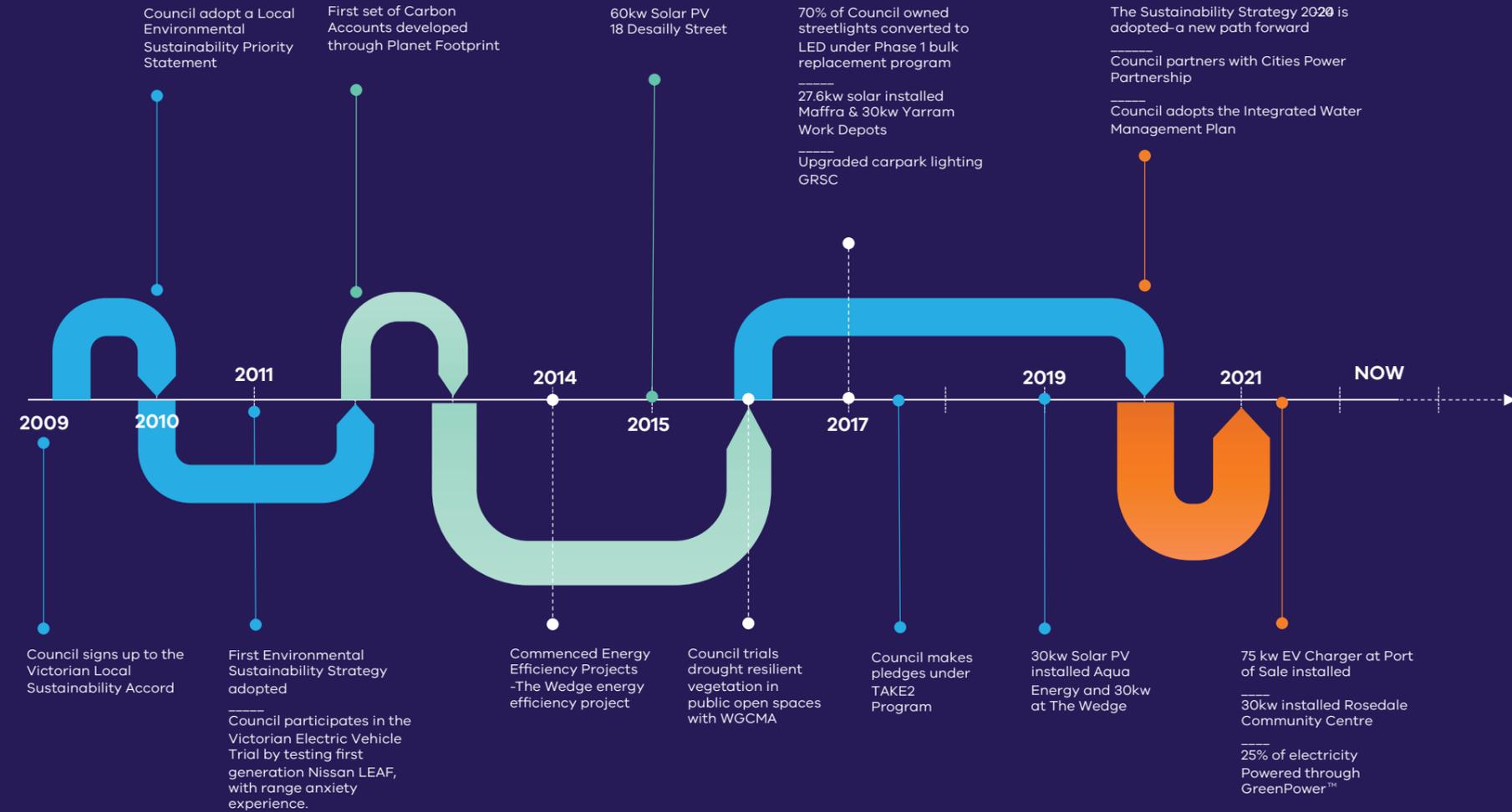
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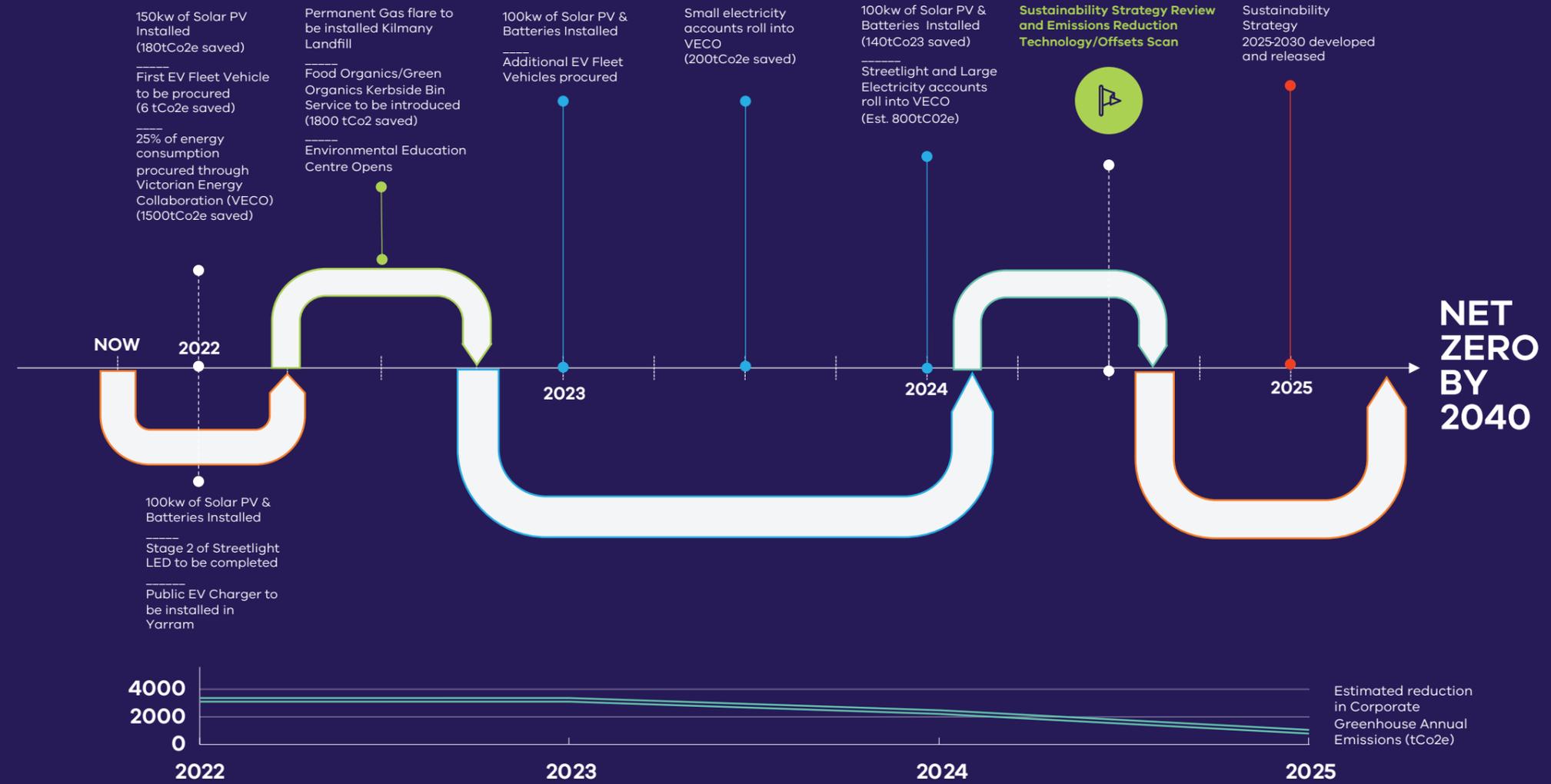
Council added its first full electric vehicle to its fleet

# Our journey so far: Year Highlights

# Our journey so far



# Where to from here



# Climate Resilient Communities

## What success looks like:

Wellington Communities, particularly those who are most vulnerable, can assess, prioritise, and manage climate change risk and recover quickly from extreme climatic-driven natural disasters.

### Corporate Actions 20-21

- Public Risk Register in relation to climate change has been updated to reflect increased climate risk levels. Public risk committee to discuss ways of addressing risk.
- The Council Plan and Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, two key strategic documents identify Climate Change as a key priority, with community engagement currently underway.
- An updated Environmental Sustainability policy has been put forward for approval. This policy embeds climate change planning into process and mandates setting of science-based emissions targets into the future, which will ensure our targets remain in line with global expectations.

- Currently five policies reference Climate Change – Assessment of Sea level rise Policy, Environmental Sustainability Policy, Open Space Policy, Assets & Projects Asset Management Policy & Council Provision of Recreation/Community Facilities Policy. Recommendations put forward to improve processes around policy review.
- Internal strategic project commenced to improve consideration of climate change in infrastructure and facilities projects through an ESD policy and supporting processes.
- Climate change training delivered to eight Councillors and four senior managers.
- New plantings for the Living Labs Project to trial new species of trees that will increase resilience of our streetscapes in a changing climate. Species trialled includes Pinus pinea, Eucalyptus oliveace. Three of the four species planted look to be suitable for further testing in streetscapes. A list of new potential species is currently being developed.

### Community Actions 20-21

- Targeted engagement of community in discussions around incorporation of climate change into Council Plan and Municipal Health Plan by council officers.
- Council reviewed and commented on Regional Climate Adaption Plan developed by DELWP.
- New Climate Change information page on website developed.
- Developed the Building Climate Resilience - Guide to safeguarding your home against climate change and extreme weather.



- Continued with the Playing the Climate Game project, which resulted in a trial of warm season grasses on a soccer pitch at Baldwin Reserve. Due to Covid 19, the planned forum was cancelled. Council will be working with Gippsport to evaluate the program and engage with sporting clubs around climate change.

## Tracking our Targets

### 100% Score against DELWP Climate Adaption Scorecard up from 13%

Of the 10 key indicators that make up the scorecard, progress has been made in corporate/strategic plans, Public Risk Register, Asset Management, Emergency Disaster Management, Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change Policy. A full review to be completed at end of 2024.

### Zero excess deaths attributed to extreme weather and or climate driven natural disaster.

In June 2021, an easterly low-pressure system resulted in widespread flooding across Gippsland. Within Wellington Shire Council, the floods resulted in one death. Early reports from the SES indicate that it was the busiest 24-hour period on the service history, with 9000 requests for assistance across Victoria .

Wellington Shire Council enacted a Flood event relief and recovery program, teaming with Australian Defence Force Personnel. At the time of writing Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund (GERF) had raised \$278,000, distributed \$199,500 across 80 families in need. GERF also allocated \$1.4 million to farmers from the \$10.4 million GERF raised during its 2020 bushfire appeal.

### Council actively engaging with community to increase knowledge of climate-risk exposure.

Council is in the early stages of planning best approaches for engaging community around climate change and impacts.

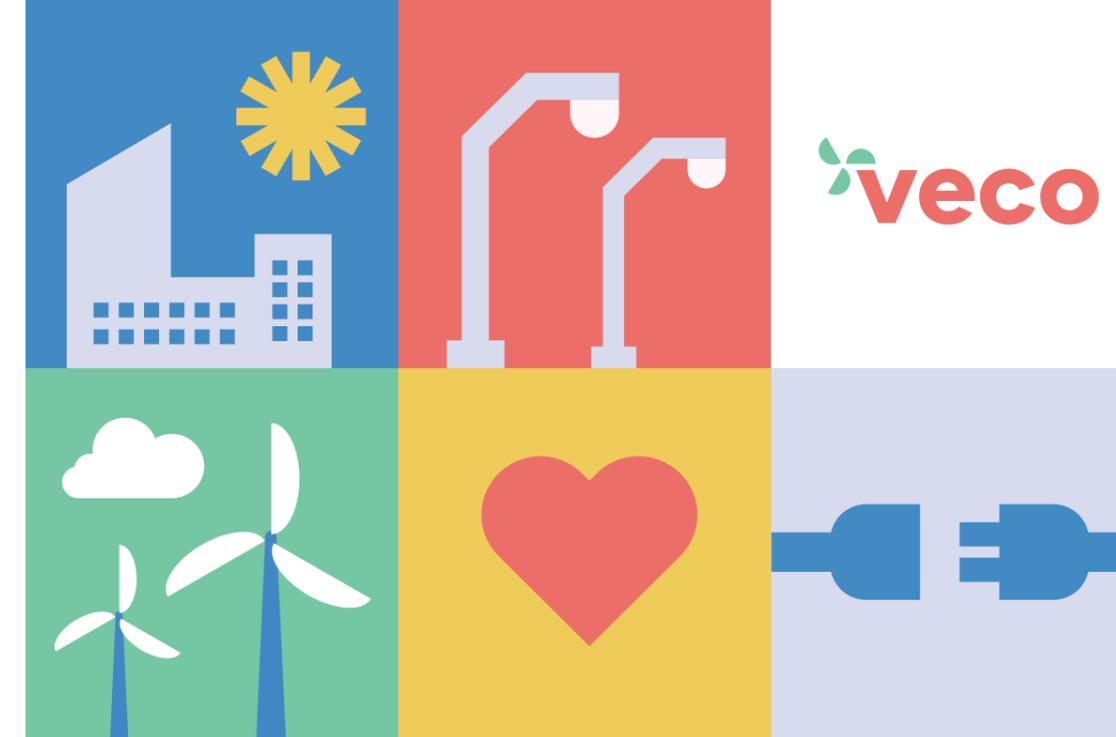
# Low Carbon Economy

## What success looks like:

Council and community reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with science-based targets to minimise global warming to under 2 degrees Celsius, as part of our obligations to act for the benefit of the wider global community.

### Corporate Actions 20-21

- Tender for 99kw solar installation and heat pumps at Yarram Hub closed and under evaluation.
- Solar installation at Sale aerodrome on hold due to solar glare analysis requirements.
- 30kw Solar PV installed Rosedale Community Centre bringing total installations to 190kw. To date the Rosedale installation has saved 3051 kg of carbon emissions.
- Replaced Metal Halide netball court lighting at Gippsland Regional Sport Complex. (\$95,000), building on the CBUS lighting control systems installed in 2019/20.
- Procurement of 100% GreenPower™ for approximately 1300MW/yr. of power consumption (Port of Sale, Sale Customer Service Centre, The Wedge Entertainment Centre) till Dec 2021 (795tCo2e reduction)
- Signed into long term Power Purchase Agreement for 1300MW of consumption as part of the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO) commencing Jan 2022 (795tCo2e).
- Commenced \$1.2M Streetlight LED Bulk Changeover Project – Phase 2 saving 470 tCo2e per year when completed in 2021/22.
- Two new Hybrid Toyota RAV and a new fully electric Hyundai Kona was added to councils fleet saving around 6tCo2e per year.
- Drafted Green Fleet policy and under review internally.
- Internal strategic project commenced to improve consideration of climate change in infrastructure and facilities projects through an ESD policy and supporting processes.
- Community Facilities, Assets and Projects and Sustainability team working together to embed new ESD processes and policy into building design.
- Aqua energy re-development, incorporating 20% funding into ESD, is currently under detailed design.
- Temporary Gas Flare installed at Kilmany Landfill to convert methane gas, a potent greenhouse gas back to less potent carbon dioxide. Pumping trials and planning for permanent flare underway.
- Budget secured for a Sustainability Education Officer to help rollout the Green Organics Food Organics kerbside bin to residents in July 2023.



working together  
to power **46 councils**  
with renewable energy

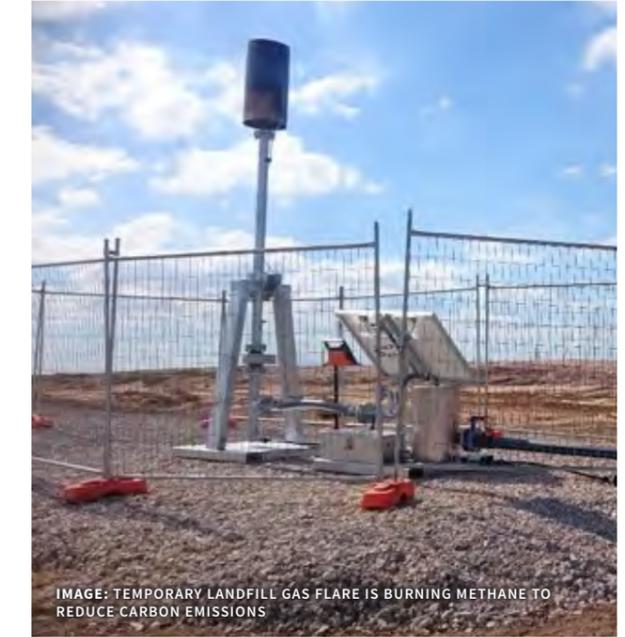


IMAGE: TEMPORARY LANDFILL GAS FLARE IS BURNING METHANE TO REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS

### Community Actions 20-21

- Funding of \$50,000 secured from Latrobe Valley Authority to complete the Gippsland Bioenergy Framework, to support the development of alternative organic waste to energy projects across our shire, securing a competitive advantage for Gippsland.
- First Environment Upgrade Agreement signed with a local business resulting in installation of 32kw solar PV system.



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[www.energisegippslandsolarprogram.com.au](http://www.energisegippslandsolarprogram.com.au)  
 1300 866 634



This program is a partnership between Wellington Shire Council, Latrobe City Council, Gippsland Climate Change Network, Energise Gippsland and the Yarra Energy Foundation, with Rockys Solar the local solar provider.



- Energise Gippsland Solar Program delivered throughout the year with 50kw of residential solar to be installed at 8 properties between Jan and June 2021.
- 75kw public fast charger installed at Port of Sale in March, with planning for additional three units underway.
- Participant in Latrobe Valley Authority Smart Specialisation Program for Community Microgrids, Geothermal, Food and Fibre and Bioenergy projects.
- Upgraded Cowwarr Recreation Reserve oval lighting to LED (\$230,000)

## Tracking our Targets

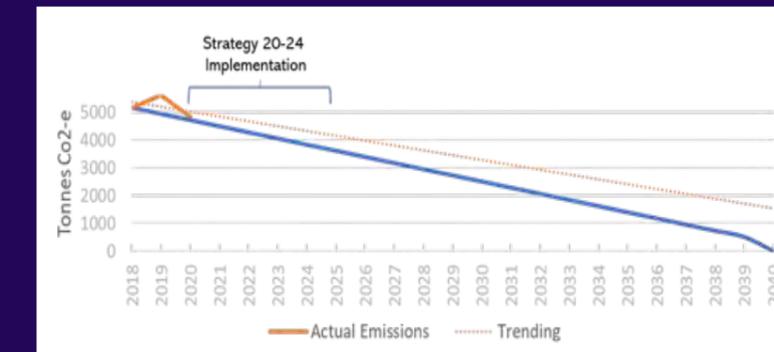
### Net Zero by 2040

The latest carbon accounts record emissions generated by Wellington Shire Council for the period 1st July 2019 and 30th June 2020.

These accounts fall prior to the actions delivered this year as per the Sustainability Strategy. As such they also reflect what would occur under a business-as-usual approach.

The Covid-19 pandemic is expected to have attributed to some reductions in emissions due to reduced fleet use, service disruptions and closure. If no emission reduction activities were undertaken in 2020-21, we would be tracking well above our expected emission reduction targets.

- 7% Reduction in Tco2e 100 tCo2e above 2021 target



### Policy Framework to guide strong ESD standards into design and construction of council buildings in place by 2024.

On track to deliver by 2024. An ESD policy is in draft format with supporting process guidance under development.

### 50% Increase in the number of registered Electric/dual fuel and LPG powered vehicles in Wellington LGA by 2050.

This community target indicates the level of take-up of low carbon or no carbon emission vehicles in our region.

There has been a reduction in the number of registered 'green' vehicles from a proportion of 3.7% in 2018 to 3.5% in 2019. We anticipate that with the new EV electric vehicle rebate offered by the State of Victoria that numbers should increase in the coming future.

### Increase in the Solar Penetration rate across Wellington LGA by 2050 to 50%.

The Solar penetration rate is risen from 21% in 2018 to 25.6% in June 2021. Approximately 6,260 dwellings in the region have Solar PV generation on rooftops.

# Protecting Nature

## What success looks like:

Our natural environment is healthy and resilient to emerging threats and is valued both in its own right and for the essential contribution to our health and wellbeing through its provision of a range of ecosystems services (food, water, air, pollution control, shelter, cultural connection, water treatment). benefit of the wider global community.

### Corporate Actions 20-21

- Canopy analysis completed for Six major towns. Approximately 1100 street trees to be planted across the shire in the planting season. Heyfield Tree Plan and Turnbull and Hoddle Street Tree Consultation conducted. A total of 637 trees have been grown in council's nursery, well in exceedance of expectations.
- Tree audits and review have been undertaken to support the development of the Significant Tree Register, which assesses against the National Trust criteria. Approximately 150 trees identified to date. Full assessment and data capture to be completed in 2021/22.
- New open space secured in Peters Drive Stratford and secured funding for the renewal of the Sale Botanical Gardens Sensory Gardens.
- Celebrated 21 years of the Sale Botanical Gardens Friends of Group with attendance by past and present members. The Friends of Group helps maintain the gardens and offers free guided tours.
- Investigation into use of digital beacons to facilitate community engagement at the Sale Botanical Gardens commenced.
- Around 20,000 shrubs and trees planted as Biodiversity improvements across the shire including Cameron Sporting Complex, Sarah Court Wurruk, Cobain's Estate, Ross Street Reserve, Flooding Creek Linear Reserve, and Loch Sport.



- Direct Seeding trial for native species on the Flooding Creek Linear Reserve completed in June.
- Carbon offsets planting and riparian revegetation works completed at Hiawatha, to improve biodiversity at the site.
- Blackberry control and works at Blind Joes Creek as part of Biodiversity Plan actions.
- Roadside Weeds program for 20/21 completed, targeting Lovegrass, Serrated Tussock, Blackberries, Gorse, Boxthorn and Prickly pear.
- Investigations into improving management of orchid populations at the Yarram Parkside Aerodrome
- Website content upgrade under development
- Rate reduction program under Natural Heritage Trust reviewed and recommendations for rate increase and updated policy developed.
- Water use across council facilities measured. Irrigation Officer appointed.
- Sale Botanical Gardens Management Plan completed, and Care for the Rare Living Collection commenced.
- Local Laws commenced review of cat curfew policy options and commenced engagement with community.

### Community Actions 20-21

- Awarded \$536,000 to undertake weed and pest control activities and education programs across private farms as part of the Australian Governments Combating Pest and Weed during Drought Program, in partnership with Maffra & Districts Landcare Network. Around 60 landholders to date funded to implement on-ground works to combat pests and weeds.
- Virtual Parks Week delivered due to Covid-19 restrictions with significant positive feedback from the community.
  - Yarram Wetlands and Memorial Park Virtual Tour - YouTube
  - Sale Botanic Gardens Virtual Tour - YouTube
- The 'Be Smart, Choose Tap' initiative across our sporting facilities ran into issues over the Covid restriction periods. New water dispensers have been procured for Aqua Energy and GRSC. The initiative reduces the need to purchase bottled water.

# Tracking our Targets

## Increase the area of mixed native species on council owned land from 21ha to 50ha.

Significant plantings across council-owned land has been completed. Spatial mapping of sites is yet to be completed to confirm size of increase.

## 10% reduction in potable water use across council operations.

Council have achieved a 18% reduction in potable water consumption (123,077 kl in 2017/18 to 100,817 kl in 2019/20)

This significant decrease has been attributed to higher usage in 17/18 driven by drought conditions in 17/18, as opposed to water saving management actions taken by council.

Irrigation Officer appointed to undertake irrigation infrastructure audit and improvement (key priority under Integrated Water Management (IWM) plan. Irrigation upgrades and rationalisation expected to deliver future water savings.

## Maintain yearly property inspections for domestic wastewater management compliance (283 inspections in 2017/18)

The Environmental Health team have exceeded targets and have achieved 508 inspections for the year to date, reducing risks of water pollution across our groundwater and waterway systems.

## Case studies and communication tools developed and disseminated to increase community awareness.

While there has been some minor progress on development of additional education materials for community, it has not yet been disseminated into the community. There are several projects in planning that will increase our performance on this indicator.

## 30% Canopy cover within town boundaries increasing property values, reducing urban heat island effect, and supporting biodiversity.

Initial baseline studies of the percentage canopy cover for six towns have been completed, with over 1200 street trees to be planted over the winter period.

Sale – 18%, Maffra – 25%, Yarram 19%, Stratford – 19%, Heyfield -25% and Rosedale -19%. Studies have identified that there is an opportunity to develop an average of 37% across these towns. The canopy analysis forms a key benchmark in forming the Greening Wellington Strategy and Significant Tree Register.

Remeasurement of canopy cover will occur on a five-yearly basis.



# Towards a Circular Economy

## What success looks like:

Our community moves away from the 'take-make-dispose' approach of the past and supports the growth of a circular economy with minimal remaining residual landfill waste managed in accordance with Best Management Practices.

### Corporate Actions 20-21

- Completed a Waste Strategic Directions paper, outlining key waste related priorities over the next 10 years in line with EPA requirements.
- Funding of \$50,000 secured from Latrobe Valley Authority to complete the Gippsland Bioenergy Framework, to support the development of alternative organic waste to energy projects across our shire, securing a competitive advantage for Gippsland.
- Secured lease arrangements with recycling processors at Kilmany Resource Recovery Hub, for expansion of recycling facilities across Gippsland.
- Completed Longford Landfill Rehabilitation planning. Next stage is to receive EPA approval for capping design using indigenous plants as part of the cap.
- Investigations into improvements in access to digital waste information underway. Offering a range of information sharing platforms will help deliver stronger messages to community.
- Commenced review of waste management practices at key council sites including Port of Sale and The Wedge.
- Council is working with Resource Recovery Gippsland in the Gippswide Kerbside Joint Procurement process and intends to implement a third bin collecting Food Organics & Garden Organics (FOGO) early in the new contract commencing 2023.
- Granted \$235,453 from Sustainability Victoria for Heyfield Transfer Station upgrade of drop off areas for commingled recycling and to prepare for the implementation of separate glass collection.
- The 10-year capital works program was updated to ensure waste management facilities and operations continue to meet EPA and other regulatory authorities' standards and guidelines, and foreseeable infrastructure upgrades and replacements are planned for.

### Community Actions 20-21

- Provision of a 'fee free' Green Waste collection for residents and ratepayers as part of Bushfire Preparations in November 2020
- Provided free waste services for organic and green waste after Gippsland Floods. Power interruptions caused by the floods impacted on refrigerated food storage, resulting in large volumes of spoiled food. Landfill levies for this initiative are met by council.
- Delivered a Covid altered Sustainable Living Education program across schools and community. Around 139 in school education classes were held.



# Tracking our Targets

## Increase Uptake of recyclable or renewable materials in council operations.

Council's Parks and Gardens unit currently seeks opportunities to use recyclable materials in park infrastructure including tables, bollards and boardwalk.

## 10% reduction in total tonnes of council waste sent to landfill by 2024

Not started. Council currently does not accurately measure the waste generated from council operations. This metric is under review.

## Increased diversion of garbage, recyclables and green organics collected from kerbside bins to 50% by 2024.

Council is under performing compared to the average of all councils and Similar councils. The introduction of the Green and Food Organics Bin in 2022 will be a giant step towards improving our regions impact on waste management.

REPORTING PERIOD	WELLINGTON SHIRE	SIMILAR COUNCILS	ALL COUNCILS
2016-2017	32.93%	44.55%	44.52%
2017-2018	33.55%	46.46%	44.69%
2018-2019	35.71%	46.71%	43.94%
2019-2020	35.26%	47.23%	44.13%
2020-2021	31.45%	Data not yet available	Data not yet available

## Increase in the number of local recycling or circular economy businesses in Wellington Shire.

2019/20 – 2  
2020/21 – 2 (with businesses in development)

Wellington Shire has a small waste and resource recovery industry, however there are emerging opportunities under development.

### Gippsland Water Soil Organic Waste Facility (SORF)

Of significance is Gippsland Water's SORF, which currently accepts green and organic waste from Melbourne metropolitan areas.

## Elecsome

Elecsome are currently planning new solar panel recycling facilities in the Wellington Shire, in anticipation of the increased investment into large scale solar farms in the region. A lease agreement at Kilmany Resource Recovery Centre has been signed.

### Radial Renewable Energy Park Demonstration Site

Council have received funding to help support project partners Spiegel Pty Ltd (Latrobe Valley Authority, Victorian Forestry Plan Community Transition Team, Radial Renewable Energy Park, BioRa, and Radial Timbers and Heartwood Plantation) to trial energy generation and storage through processing of timber waste through pyrolysis technology, marking step forward in circular economy practices.

### Gippsland Bioenergy Development Framework and Biomass Audit

Council is supporting business development in this sector by working with LVA, EnviromicroBio, Frontier Impact Group and the Gippsland Smart Specialisation in the development of the Gippsland Bioenergy Development Framework and Biomass Audit. The final reports are available on council's webpage.





# Environmental Stewardship

## What success looks like:

Residents, businesses, and industry across Wellington Shire are adopting sustainable practices through the leadership and advocacy provided by council and its partners.

## Corporate Actions 20-21

- Sustainability was incorporated as a key council core value, signalling a formal commitment to sustainable outcomes across the organisation. As part of this, a new staff award has been developed which recognises individuals or teams who go above and beyond to demonstrate commitment to leading sustainable practices or encourage and support others to do the same.
- Council formally committed to the Cities Power Partnership to demonstrate leadership. Council have pledged a range of actions as part of the partnership to be delivered over a four-year period and report back annually to the partnership on its successes.

- A suite of learning guides and links have been provided on council's internal intranet, fostering opportunities for staff to increase their knowledge of sustainability.
- Funding for councils new Environmental Education Centre has been confirmed, with designs finalised and tender for construction currently out. The building showcases passive design principles:
  - north facing aspect
  - unique west facing movable panels to harness afternoon winter sun, while exclude harsh summer sun.
  - Use of high thermal mass rammed earth walls
  - Minimal mechanical heating and cooling
  - Water tanks and renewable energy generation.
  - Double glazed windows
  - Seeking to use recycled timber in parts of the design.
- Ramping up of council communication around sustainability and natural environment projects. Media releases on projects at Blind Joes Creek, Fire hazard reduction programs



# Tracking our Targets

**10% Relevant staff undertake sustainability education or training through formal, or informal pathways.**

Council is involved in a Climate Alliance and DELWP joint project to develop and disseminate climate change related education materials. The project is not yet complete so has not been delivered to staff. A range of training tools has been provided to staff, however uptake of these opportunities is unknown.

Planning is underway to develop and deliver an internal, staff focussed on-line Sustainability Training package (through LDS) expanding on the above climate focussed DELWP Training.

**Council publishes an annual sustainability report.**

This report maintains us on track for this target.

**Awards presented to community and Council Sustainability Champions.**

One staff award in Sustainability has been awarded, through councils revised award program. As yet there is no mechanism established to deliver awards to community champions. Investigations into the most suitable process to formalise awards is in process.

**Increase in the performance for the “Environmental Sustainability Service Area” by 2024 to 75 points.**

Wellington has achieved a score of 62 in 2021, up from an all-time low of 59 in 2020. WSC is equal to the state average and one point higher than our large rural council counterparts. The importance of sustainability remains steady at 71 points.

## Environmental sustainability performance



2021 environmental sustainability performance (index scores)

	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
65+	64	60	59	64	64	59	63	65	63
Men	64	61	62	62	64	58	64	60	62
35-49	63	63	64	61	64	63	65	65	64
Central Ward	63	62	65	63	68	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
State-wide	62	60	62	63	64	63	64	64	64
Wellington	62	59	63	62	65	62	64	62	63
Coastal Ward	62	60	58	58	62	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
18-34	62	54	65	64	70	68	65	59	66
Northern Ward	62	56	59	62	63	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Large Rural	61	60	61	62	62	64	n/a	n/a	n/a
Women	60	57	63	62	66	65	64	64	67
50-64	58	62	63	59	62	59	64	69	62

Q2: How has Council performed on 'Environmental sustainability' over the last 12 months?  
 Base: All respondents (Councils asked state-wide: 34 Councils asked group: 17)  
 Note: Please see Appendix A for explanation of significant differences.



### **Sale Service Centre**

18 Desailly Street, Sale Victoria 3850  
Telephone 1300 366 244

### **Yarram Service Centre**

156 Grant Street, Yarram Victoria 3971  
Telephone 03 5182 5100

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