

SOUTHERN
GRAMPIANS
SHIRE COUNCIL

CLIMATE CHANGE AND **SUSTAINABILITY** STRATEGY



Southern Grampians
SHIRE COUNCIL



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Southern Grampians Shire Council acknowledges that our shire is on the traditional lands of the Gunditjmara, Tjap Wurrung, Jardwadjali and Buandig people.

We recognise the important ongoing role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have in our community and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.





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"A shared vision for a Sustainable Future"

INTRODUCTION



The Southern Grampians Shire Council Sustainability Strategy is the key strategic document for delivering an environmentally sustainable Southern Grampians Shire. This strategy sets ambitious targets that align with State and Federal Governments emission reductions policies, as well as a roadmap for Council and the community to achieve a net-zero carbon future and to prepare our Shire for the challenges of a changing climate.

This strategy has been created based on Council's Notice of Motion tabled at the Ordinary Council Meeting on the 8 December 2021, Councillors resolved:

- + That the Southern Grampians Shire Council takes the strong leadership position of recognising and urgently responding to Climate Change
- + That the Southern Grampians Shire develop a Climate Change Urgent Action Plan in conjunction with the current review of the Sustainability Plan and further recommendations with strong targets and bold action.

OUR REGION

The Southern Grampians Shire is located in southwestern Victoria, Australia. It covers an expansive area of approximately 6,200 square kilometres and is home to a diverse range of landscapes, including rolling hills, volcanic plains, and the iconic Grampians (Gariwerd) National Park.

The Shire is comprised of several townships, including Hamilton, the main administrative centre, as well as Balmoral, Branxholme/Byaduk, Cavendish, Coleraine, Dunkeld, Glenthompson, Peshurst and Tarrington. With a population of approximately 17,000 residents, the Southern Grampians Shire offers a unique blend of rural charm, natural beauty, and rich cultural heritage.

Agriculture plays a vital role in the Southern Grampians Shire's economy, with a focus on livestock farming, wool production, and cropping. The region is known for its high-quality wool and fine merino sheep.

In recent years, the Southern Grampians Shire has committed to sustainability and environmental stewardship. The community has shown commitment to preserving the region's natural assets, protecting biodiversity, and promoting sustainable land management practices.





CLIMATE CHALLENGES

The threat of a changing climate poses increasing risks to life on our planet. In our region, extreme temperatures mean increasingly destructive bushfires, decreased water security and impacts to health and wellbeing from extreme weather events.

Many governments globally, including Australia have set emissions reduction targets based on the IPCC's most recent comprehensive assessment report, known as the "AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023". This report highlights the importance of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels to avoid the most severe impacts of climate change. The report suggests that achieving this target would require achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by around 2050. It also emphasises the need for rapid and ambitious emission reductions in the coming years.

As described in Council's Climate Adaptation Plan 2017–2027, the climate for Great South Coast region has changed, since 1950 average temperatures for the region are over 1 degree higher and average annual rainfall has dropped by over 100mm.

The region has been getting warmer and drier, in the future the region can expect:

- + Temperatures to continue to increase year round
- + Less rainfall in winter and spring
- + Harsher fire weather and longer fire season

- + Increased frequency and height of extreme sea level events
- + More hot days and warm spells, and fewer frosts
- + More frequent and more intense downpours
- + Rising sea levels

Change in climate for the Southern Grampians Shire will create threats across all sectors of our community including:

- + Environmental damage to waterways from more intense rainfall events
- + Increased irrigation requirements of plants
- + Stress and demand on communication networks
- + Increased insurance costs (or reduction of coverage)
- + Loss of business continuity to extreme weather events
- + Inability to access essential services or commute to place of employment

This strategy intends to mitigate the impact of climate change and ensure our Shire and its community is prepared and adapted for a change in climate.



COUNCIL'S ROLE

The success of the strategy and an effective climate response will require Council, community, private business and other government agencies working together towards reducing the emissions profile within the Shire while adapting to a changing climate.

The strategy is divided into six Key Themes, and it includes actions for both Council and the community. Council will lead by example and set ambitious targets to guide both our organisation, and our community.

In order to achieve the goals, targets and actions set within the strategy, Council will be required to be a:

+ Driver

Directly responsible for service delivery or asset management.

+ Partner

Shared responsibility for funding or on-ground service delivery.

+ Advocate

High priority projects or needs within the community beyond Council capacity or legislated role to deliver.

BACKGROUND CONTEXT



The Strategic Context

This strategy has been built on Council's Community Vision Framework 2041 principles to be a growing, inclusive and connected community that fosters sustainability, diversity and innovation.

Over 400 people helped to shape the vision of the community plan where sustainability is strongly represented across three strategic pillars – Economy and Business, Built Environment and Infrastructure and Natural Environment.

This strategy was outlined as a Key Strategic Indicator in the Southern Grampians Shire Council Plan 2021 – 2025 as part of the Key Priority no. 4 Protect Our Natural Environment and in the Southern Grampians 2041 Community Vision Framework.

At a State Level, the Victorian Government has committed to net-zero emissions by 2045 with a 75-80% reduction by 2035.

In addition, the sustainability strategy will support key priorities of the Council's plan:

- + Support our community
- + Grow our Regional Economy
- + Maintain and Renew our Infrastructure
- + Protect our Natural Environment
- + Provide Strong Governance and Leadership.

Past Actions and Achievements

Development of the Sustainability Strategy will formalise the link between the Sustainability goals of the Shire and the projects required to deliver outcomes previously guided by the Sustainability Strategy 2010–2020.

Such past, in-progress and ongoing work includes:

- + Construction of a Waste Transfer Shed at the Hamilton Transfer Station
- + Continued Solar Panel and Rainwater Capture Rollout on Council Buildings
- + A commercial waste exchange platform for regional business
- + A community mulch program
- + Replacement of streetlights to LED
- + Installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- + Council driven School Sustainability Competition.



OVERARCHING OBJECTIVE

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

GOALS

Southern Grampians Shire Council will show bold leadership in Sustainability Initiatives through creating strong connections with our business stakeholders and community. When tackling the impacts of climate change, we need to share a singular focus and work together to create a future we can all be proud of. Council will prioritise transparency to build a landscape of trust and accountability. Progress will be shared, along with lessons learned, to ensure that our efforts are continually refined and improved.

HOW

By fostering a collaborative environment, we will harness diverse perspectives and expertise to drive innovative solutions. This approach will not only enhance our sustainability outcomes but also strengthen our community and economic resilience. Together, we will set ambitious goals, track our progress, celebrate our successes, and address challenges head-on, always striving for a greener, more sustainable future for the Southern Grampians Shire.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Collaboration and Partnerships

Foster collaborations and partnerships with local businesses, community organisations, and neighbouring councils to leverage collective resources, share best practices, and collaborate on sustainability initiatives. Seek opportunities for joint projects, knowledge exchange, and funding partnerships to accelerate progress towards the net-zero vision.

Monitoring and Reporting

Council will ensure accountability of delivering the actions in this strategy by embedding it into its planning and performance systems. We will establish a robust monitoring and reporting system to track progress towards net-zero goals. Yearly measure and report on key indicators such as energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and waste diversion rates.

A separate four-year action plan document will be developed which will include actions, measures, timeline, budget and monitoring to achieve the strategic objectives.

Council will undertake a review of the Sustainability Strategy every 4 years to track our progress, identify areas for improvements, and to ensure we are meeting the current needs and requirements of community.

DEVELOPING THIS PLAN

THEME	KEY STRATEGIC ACTION		
Towards Net Zero	Transition to Renewable Energy	Energy Efficiency Measures	
Built Environment	Sustainable Transport Solutions	Tree Planting and Urban Greening	Environmentally Sustainable Design
Circular Economy	Circular Economy and Sustainable Consumption		Waste Management
Land Use and Biodiversity	Sustainable Agriculture Practices	Natural Resource Conservation	
Integrated Water Management	Water Conservation and Sustainable Water Management		Carbon Offsetting and Sequestration
Community Engagement	Climate Resilience and Adaptation	Community Engagement and Education	



TOWARDS NET ZERO

GOALS

Net-Zero Emissions

Southern Grampians Shire Council will commit to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions for all Council operations by 2035 and will work with our community, businesses and industries to create opportunities and develop partnerships to be a carbon neutral shire by 2040.

Council will transition to 100% renewable energy and achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions for all council operations by 2035 and a net-zero carbon Shire by 2040. This will require innovation and changing the way we currently live our lives.

HOW

Council and the community will be bold and embrace innovative ideas and technologies to enable a net-zero carbon future.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Transition to Renewable Energy

Facilitate the transition to renewable energy sources by supporting and facilitating the development of renewable energy sites, community-led renewable energy initiative and setting ambitious targets for carbon emission reduction and renewable energy adoption.

Deliverables

- + Council will reduce 50% of its carbon emission from 2024 levels by 2030
- + Council operations to be carbon neutral by 2035
- + SGS carbon emission reductions (as Shire) of 30% from 2025 levels by 2035

- + Develop a zero-carbon action plan for Council operations and our community to meet the targets
- + Develop a carbon emission framework to monitor and report on greenhouse gas emissions
- + Support community-led renewable energy and battery storage initiatives.

Energy Efficiency Measures

Implement energy efficiency programs targeting council-owned buildings, facilities, and infrastructure. This includes energy audits, retrofitting projects, and the installation of energy-efficient lighting and equipment. Educate and engage the community on energy-saving practices and offer incentives for energy-efficient upgrades in residential and commercial properties.

Deliverables

- + Transition away from the use of fossil fuels for council buildings (renewable energy)
- + Continue the rollout of solar panels for Council buildings
- + Continue the installation of LED lights for Council building and street lighting across the Shire
- + Transition to battery technology where feasible.



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

GOALS

Environmentally Sustainable Design

Establish Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) building standards and guidelines for new constructions and major renovations within the council's jurisdiction. Provide support and incentives for developers and homeowners to meet sustainable building requirements, such as energy-efficient design, water-saving features, and use of sustainable materials.

Innovative and Sustainable Urban Development

Leverage new and innovative technologies, planning, and projects to enhance the quality of life in the Shire. This includes creating a healthy environment and living conditions, ensuring robust infrastructure to support industry and high-quality jobs such as road and rail networks, energy, digital connectivity, and essential services.

This will involve expanding public transportation networks, promoting active transportation infrastructure such as cycling lanes and pedestrian pathways, incentivizing electric vehicle adoption through charging infrastructure and parking incentives, and continuing to provide and support digital access to council services.

Green Open Spaces

Continue to provide and expand on our community Green Open Spaces including parks, public gardens, reserves, waterways, squares, community project areas (including gardens and compost hubs) playgrounds and other community infrastructure. Green Open Spaces will be prioritised in council development projects and centred around integrated and connected multifunctional spaces.

HOW

Through integrating environmentally sustainable design principles, harnessing the potential of innovative and sustainable urban development, and preserving and expanding green open spaces, we will create communities that thrive while prioritising sustainability.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Environmentally Sustainable Design

Establish ESD building standards and guidelines for new constructions and major renovations within the Council's jurisdiction. Provide support and incentives for developers and homeowners to meet sustainable building requirements, such as energy-efficient design, water-saving features, and use of sustainable materials.

Deliverables

- + Develop an internal ESD policy which will contain minimum Sustainability Standards for all new build, upgrade and expansion projects
- + Integrate minimum ESD standards into the planning scheme for future growth and new development within the Shire
- + Advocate for new developments or subdivisions to feature sustainable design principles.

Sustainable Transport Solutions

Encourage sustainable transportation options by expanding public transportation networks, promoting active transportation infrastructure such as cycling lanes and pedestrian pathways, and incentivizing electric vehicle adoption through charging infrastructure and parking incentives.

Deliverables

- + Integrate bicycle network with CBD upgrade including bicycle parking in new developments.
- + Advocate and support State Government initiatives to increase access to public transport across the Shire
- + Facilitate the roll out of EV charging stations across the Shire.

Tree Planting and Urban Greening

Implement tree planting and urban greening programs to increase green spaces, improve air quality, and enhance biodiversity. Collaborate with community groups and organizations to engage residents in tree planting initiatives and urban greening projects.

Deliverables

- + Develop a Tree Strategy
- + Develop a heat mapping study across the Shire
- + Continue to support community led initiative to enhance canopy cover and biodiversity.



CIRCULAR ECONOMY

GOALS

Zero Waste to Landfill

Council is committed to a Zero recoverable waste to landfill target by 2030. This will involve a robust bin audit framework and a community education program around Recycling and Food and Garden Organics.

Improved Recycling

Council will maximise the value of waste streams through multiple projects including upgraded transfer station infrastructure, glass bin rollout and investigating business opportunities in the resource recovery space from a regional perspective.

Circular Economy

Council will support the Victorian Circular Economy transition and will facilitate this through revaluation of our asset requirements to reduce the need or extend the life of Council Assets, shifting procurement policies favouring circular design and engaging with community on projects that support a Circular Economy.

HOW

Together we will build a future where waste is no longer a burden on the environment, but a valuable resource. We are committed to achieving zero recoverable waste to landfill by adopting sustainable practices that maximise the value of waste streams.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Circular Economy and Sustainable Consumption

Promoting recycling, reuse, and repair initiatives, reducing single-use products, and encouraging sustainable consumption patterns through awareness campaigns and educational programs.



Deliverables

- + Zero recoverable waste to landfill by 2030
- + Support community led projects and operations to promote circular economy principles
- + Develop sustainability and waste education programs to increase waste diversion rates from landfill
- + Advocate for expanded CDS infrastructure across the Shire
- + Procurement policy to include Circular Economy metrics.

Waste Management

Develop comprehensive waste management and recycling programs that promote waste reduction, recycling, and composting. Provide education and resources to residents and businesses to facilitate proper waste separation and recycling. Explore opportunities for local recycling infrastructure development and collaborate with neighbouring councils for joint waste management initiatives.

Deliverables

- + Implement Bin audit and waste reporting frameworks (heading- baseline data collection)
- + Dedicated Glass Bin Rollout
- + Feasibility study for in-house organics processing infrastructure options.



LAND USE AND BIODIVERSITY

GOALS

Responsible Land Management

Council will practice responsible land management by implementing land use plans that consider long term ecological and social implications of development and promote responsible land use practices. In addition, Council will encourage and advocate for sustainable agriculture by promoting digital platforms and process innovations, working with industry and community groups to develop local markets to support small scale producers and reduce the carbon footprint of long-distance transport.

Biodiversity Protection

Council is committed to protecting, integrating, and regenerating our biodiverse natural ecosystems through good planning and governance of biodiversity actions, prioritisation of existing biodiversity and habitat on both council and private land and collaboration with the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority and community Landcare Groups.

HOW

Our focus on sustainable land use through responsible land management practices that prioritise the protection and conservation of biodiversity will create a harmonious balance between environmental preservation and societal needs for a sustainable future.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Sustainable Agriculture Practices

Encourage and support sustainable agricultural practices among local farmers, such as precision farming techniques, water-efficient irrigation systems, and regenerative farming methods. Provide resources, workshops, and incentives for farmers to adopt sustainable practices that reduce emissions and enhance carbon sequestration.

Deliverables

- + Create Sustainable Land Use Guidelines
- + Foster partnerships with key industry to enhance sustainable agricultural practices within the Shire.

Natural Resource Conservation

Implement measures to protect and conserve natural resources, including land, water, and biodiversity. This involves land stewardship programs, protection of natural habitats, promotion of sustainable land management practices, and initiatives to enhance water efficiency and waterway health.

Deliverables

- + Implement Land Use Plans with a focus on biodiversity conservation
- + Expand Protected Areas
- + Facilitate Habitat Restoration Projects
- + Increase habitat quality and connectivity across Council managed sites
- + Increase the number of significant roadside vegetation sites
- + Increase the protection of remnant native vegetation and biodiversity values, especially large paddock trees and native grasslands.

INTEGRATED WATER MANAGEMENT



GOALS

Sustainable Water Use

Through an integrated water management principle across all projects, Council will reduce its potable water usage by implementing further rainwater capture infrastructure, minimising the water intensity of its operations and investigate a waste to energy biogas facility at the Hamilton Saleyards.

Healthy Waterways

Council will continue to improve the health and regeneration of our natural waterways through facilitating regeneration projects, urban planning and stormwater design that enhances the natural environment and through continued community education programs around waste, contaminated stormwater, and runoff impacts.



HOW

Our precious water resources will be utilised responsibly, supporting the current and future needs of communities, industries, and ecosystems by fostering sustainable practices and protecting the vitality of our waterways.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Water Conservation and Sustainable Water Management

Implement water conservation measures, such as promoting water-saving practices, encouraging water-efficient landscaping, and implementing water-efficient irrigation systems. Invest in water infrastructure upgrades, including rainwater harvesting systems and wastewater treatment and reuse facilities.

Deliverables

- + Reduce usage of potable water in non-potable applications 30% by 2035 based on 2025 levels
- + Incorporate water intelligence and integrated water management principles into the design of all new and upgraded Council assets.
- + Investigate and apply the use of water sensitive urban design guidelines in the planning and designing of new urban areas
- + Develop and monitor potable water usage across all Council facilities.
- + Review and upgrade storm water infrastructure and practices in the Shire
- + Development partnerships and collaboration with key stakeholders on water conservation and preservation of our natural resources.

Teal Carbon Offsetting and Sequestration

Explore opportunities for carbon offsetting and sequestration projects within the Council's jurisdiction. This can include reforestation and afforestation programs, conservation and restoration of carbon-rich ecosystems, and the establishment of carbon offset schemes in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

Deliverables

- + Continue to partner with local authorities on regeneration and wetland restoration projects
- + Investigate teal carbon (wetland) opportunities within the shire.



CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION

GOALS

Connected Communities

Council will engage with community members and stakeholders to develop and implement sustainability initiatives, raise awareness about environmental issues, and foster a sense of collective responsibility for creating a sustainable future. Through education programs and targeted projects, Council will work with community groups and schools to reconnect people to nature and foster a socially and environmentally responsible community.

Climate Resilience

Council is committed to climate resilience and will foster and empower connected communities to mitigate the impacts of climate change events such as fires, floods and heatwaves. These actions will be facilitated through community engagement programs, organisational partnerships and education.

HOW

By fostering connections, sharing knowledge, and mobilising resources, we create a strong network of resilient communities ready to tackle climate change and build a sustainable and thriving future.



KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Climate Resilience and Adaptation

Develop and implement climate resilience and adaptation plans to address the impacts of climate change. This includes conducting vulnerability assessments, enhancing infrastructure resilience, and implementing nature-based solutions for flood mitigation and heat island reduction.

Deliverables

- + Improve preparedness to extreme weather events through projects such as heat mapping and cool refuges.
- + Support the community to improve their environmentally sustainable practices and build their capacity to respond to environmental changes
- + Supporting Policy and Plans: Climate Adaptation Plan 2017 – 2027 – this plan sets out our priority risks and action areas for the next 10 years.
- + Empower youth to increase their understanding of climate change and take climate action.
- + Support our community to develop Community Climate Emergency Responses and take broader community action, facilitate localised climate change discussions and encourage action.
- + Seek opportunities for local businesses to share their environmental initiatives and efforts to reduce emissions and waste with each other and the community.

Community Engagement and Education

Engage and educate the local community about the net-zero vision, climate change impacts, and the role of sustainable practices in achieving carbon neutrality. Organise community events, workshops, and information sessions to raise awareness and foster behavioural changes that support the net-zero goal.

Deliverables

- + Facilitate Community Awareness and Education around Climate Change and its associated impacts
- + Develop tailored and effective community communication and engagement programs
- + Create and expand volunteer and community action programmes to tackle sustainability projects including clean-up campaigns, tree planting activities, and energy-saving challenges
- + Create partnerships with community members and/or organisations on the implementation and delivery of sustainable initiatives.
- + Engaging and empowering the regional community to participate and partner in regional biodiversity management.
- + Promote Council's Community Partnership Grants sustainability stream, develop the capacity of community groups and individuals to write successful grant applications.

2024-41

For further information or
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