

Natural Environment Sustainability Snapshot Report 2017

Executive Summary

This is a snapshot of the work performed under the Natural Environment Sustainability Strategy. The strategy continues to guide Latrobe City's approach to natural environment sustainability over five years, from 2014 to 2019.

The Strategy identifies 14 action areas, under four main themes.

1. Meeting statutory requirements
2. Building capacity to respond to change
3. Improving resource use efficiency, and
4. Protecting natural assets

The majority of action areas have been well progressed, however some require further action within the next 18 months in order to meet the objectives set out in the Strategy.

Those action areas that require further action include:

- Sustainability information and education
- Continuous improvement, in building capacity to respond to change
- Water efficiency
- Sustainable procurement, and
- Soil conservation.

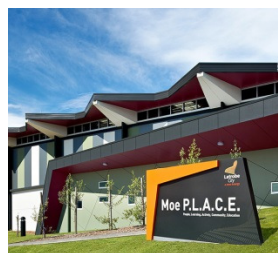
This snapshot report provides highlights of the progress made against each of the fourteen action areas.

1. Meeting statutory requirements

This theme is focussed on continuing to fulfil our regulatory responsibilities under the Planning and Environment Act 1987 and meeting the environmental requirements of state and federal legislation. It contains two action areas with five objectives.

Action Area		Objective	Highlights
1.1	Compliance activities	1.1.1 Continue to fulfil Council's regulatory responsibility in ensuring compliance with permitted clearing and the Code of Practice for Timber Production under the Latrobe Planning Scheme.	Compliance with the permitted clearing of native vegetation regulations has seen twenty-six applications and pre-applications processed, and seven enforcement proceedings involved with, in Q4 16/17. Compliance with the <i>Code of Practice for Timber Production</i> has seen 529.7 hectares of plantation scheduled for harvesting, under 16 Timber Harvesting Plans lodged with LCC in 16/17. Twelve audits were carried out, with five followed up by LCC officer field inspections. Average audit compliance is currently 98.59%.
		1.1.2 Maintain Council's enforcement capacity and capability regarding our natural environment sustainability regulatory responsibilities.	Three LCC officers from the environment sustainability team have been authorised under the <i>Planning & Environment Act 1987</i> and <i>Environment Protection Act 1970</i> , in order to support LCCs Planning Enforcement Officer and Local Laws Officers in the enforcement of natural environment sustainability regulatory issues.
		1.1.3 Work cooperatively to control and reduce the spread of weeds on Council rural roadsides and other Council-managed land.	Compliance with requirements under the <i>Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994</i> has seen woody weeds treated in the full width of the road reserve of 545 km of rural road in 16/17, equating to over a third of all LCC rural roads, and contributing to 1590 km of treatment since the adoption of the Strategy.

1.2	Sustainable future	1.2.1	Utilise Council's role as the responsible planning authority to encourage environmentally sustainable design principles in public and private developments including open space.	<p>LCCs design standard was updated to require energy efficient LED luminaires in all Category P streetlights installed in new developments.</p> <p>LCCs internal standards mean that new Council installations are also utilising energy efficient lighting technologies. The most recent example is the Latrobe Regional Gallery, which has been refurbished with nearly 100% LED internal lighting.</p> <p>Water Sensitive Urban Design is being incorporated into new developments, and is being made a feature of new public open space. The most recent examples include the green roof on the Moe Service Centre, and the Firmins Lane Wetlands, which is setting a new standard for stormwater treatment in the region.</p>
		1.2.2	Work cooperatively with relevant community, industry and agency groups to develop shared understanding and agreed action on natural environment sustainability regulatory issues.	<p>LCC has worked collaboratively with volunteers to roll our surveillance cameras in bushland reserves, for the purposes of monitoring vandalism and illegal dumping of rubbish. So far these have been rotated through two reserves, and are entering their third.</p> <p>Collaborative meetings have been held with industry to discuss what operating procedures and standards are required when coming across Warm Temperate Rainforest in plantation forestry areas.</p>



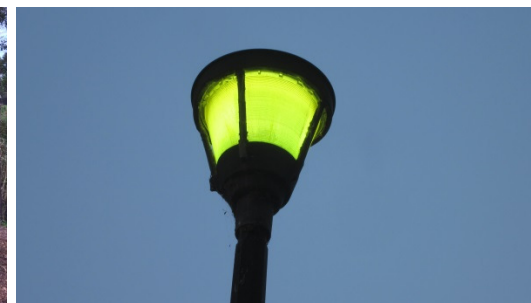
2. Building capacity to respond to change

This theme is focussed on helping our organisation and our community to make better environmental decisions and respond more effectively to environmental challenges. It contains four action areas with 12 objectives.

Action Area		Objective		Highlights
2.1	Emissions reduction and climate change adaptation	2.1.1	Participate in regional climate change forums and networks to share information and develop better strategies for emissions reduction and climate change adaptation.	LCC officers have continued to be involved in and support the Gippsland Climate Change Network, DELWP Gippsland's Government Climate Change Forums, and Sustainability Victoria climate change and emissions reduction forums.
		2.1.2	Pursue emissions reduction and climate change adaptation actions that provide a net social, economic or environmental benefit.	LCCs largest ever emissions reduction project, the change from 80W mercury-vapour street lights to 16W LED street lights, was completed in April 2016, reducing emissions by 2688 tonnes per year. Three 30KW rooftop solar systems were installed in 16/17, at Morwell HQ, Moe PLACE, and Latrobe Leisure Morwell.
		2.1.3	Continue to offset Council's annual vehicle emissions through revegetation programs and pursue an overall reduction in vehicle emissions.	Council's vehicle emissions have continued to be offset through annual revegetation programs. In 2016 these programs utilised close to 150,000 plantings being installed at the Firmins Lane Wetlands. Changes to LCC vehicle policies and procedures, encouraging smaller vehicles and fewer vehicles, have led to a small but noticeable decrease in emissions through decreased fuel usage.
2.2	Environmental recovery	2.2.1	Utilise Council's ongoing natural environment sustainability programs to complement other	This action area is activated on an as needs basis. There have been no significant disaster affected areas in 16/17.

			disaster recovery efforts where appropriate.	
		2.2.2	Support relevant authorities and community groups to undertake environmental recovery works in disaster affected areas.	This action area is activated on an as needs basis. There have been no significant disaster affected areas in 16/17.
2.3	Sustainability information and education	2.3.1	Engage with schools, businesses and households to improve energy efficiency and reduce environmental impacts.	A number of pre-schools, schools, and businesses have been engaged by the LCC Sustainability Education Officer to assist them in reducing their waste to landfill, in particular through vermicomposting and creating new pathways for recycling. Engagement regarding energy efficiency and other environmental impacts has been limited due to a reallocation of staffing resources to other work of the department.
		2.3.2	Maintain data and publish a 'State of Environment' report to measure progress and indicate priorities and developing issues.	A 'State of Environment' report has not been published since the adoption of this strategy due to resourcing issues (staff); the last report was published in 2013.
		2.3.3	Encourage, support and promote local community sustainability initiatives.	Further work is required in this area; support for community initiatives has been limited due to a reallocation of staffing resources to other work of the department.
		2.3.4	Demonstrate leadership in environmental sustainability through regular information to the community about Council's sustainability actions and achievements.	Information provision to the community on LCCs sustainability actions and achievements has been limited, due to a reallocation of staffing resources to other work of the department. In the 16/17 year a media release around Council's new rooftop solar, and advertising in the lead up to the 2017 National Tree Day activities, have been carried out.

2.4	Continuous improvement	2.4.1	Regularly measure and report on Latrobe City's progress against the Natural Environment Sustainability Strategy.	This is the first report on Latrobe City's progress against the Natural Environment Sustainability Strategy since its adoption in 2014, due to a reallocation of staffing resources to other work of the department.
		2.4.2	Improve internal communications to better inform staff of current trends and developments in natural environment sustainability, to encourage informed debate and co-operation across Council.	Internal communications regarding electricity consumption have been improved, by encouraging and providing direct access to electricity peak demand information for the managers of LCCs large energy using facilities.
		2.4.3	Participate in regional networks and forums and work cooperatively to ensure alignment with regional and state environmental sustainability strategies, policies and programs.	LCC officers have actively participated in forums and provided feedback on regional and state environmental strategies and policies, in 16/17 these have included; proposed amendments to the Victoria Planning Provisions – review of the native vegetation clearing regulations; Environment Protection Victoria review community consultation; review of the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act; and review of the Gippsland regional waste and resource recovery implementation plan.



3. Improving resource use efficiency

This theme focusses on working towards overall reductions in water use, energy use, waste production and unsustainable purchases. It contains four action areas with 13 objectives.

Action Area		Objective		Highlights
3.1	Water efficiency	3.1.1	Monitor and review Latrobe City Council's water use and make the information available to the community.	Data for LCC corporate water consumption has continued to be collected; however it has not been made available to the community due to a reallocation of staffing resources to other work of the department.
		3.1.2	Work towards an overall reduction in Latrobe City corporate water usage and improve water re-use and water conservation.	Sporting fields are some of LCCs largest users of potable water. Water capture and re-use for irrigation has been implemented at Latrobe City Sports and Entertainment Stadium, and controlled irrigation to prevent excess watering is being implemented at Ted Summerton Reserve.
		3.1.3	Support and promote water re-use and water conservation within the community, industries, developers and other agencies to maximise the amount of water available for river health and human use.	Further work is required in this area; work has been slow due to a reallocation of staffing resources to other work of the department.
3.2	Energy efficiency	3.2.1	Monitor and review Latrobe City Council's energy consumption and make the information available to the community.	Data for LCC corporate energy consumption has continued to be collected; it has been shared within the organisation as required for specific project needs, such as determining the viability of energy reduction proposals, and predicting the consumption of proposed facilities. It has not been made available to the community due to a reallocation of staffing resources to other work of the department.

		3.2.2	Work towards an overall reduction in Latrobe City corporate energy consumption to improve energy efficiency.	LED lighting for energy savings has become an accepted practice in the organisation. For example, internal building lights at Latrobe Regional Gallery completed 2017, Category P street lighting on all LCC roads completed 2016, and all LCC stadiums and sports field lighting completed 2016.
		3.2.3	Support and promote energy efficiency within the community, industries, developers and other agencies to minimise the amount of energy needed and maximise the efficiency of what is used.	Support and promotion in this area has been minimal, due to a reallocation of staffing resources to other work of the department. A community information night to support the appropriate usage of solar and battery technology, with presentations by local installers, was supported in 2016.
3.3	Sustainable procurement	3.3.1	Increase the proportion of environmentally sustainable products and services purchased by Latrobe City.	There are opportunities to utilise current procurement management systems to better monitor this action. Further discussion will be held with the procurement team.
		3.3.2	Encourage a reduction in Latrobe City's corporate consumption by identifying and investigating changes in quantity and cost of consumables purchased.	Further work is required in this area; however, an ongoing example of reduction in consumption is the number of passenger vehicles in the Council fleet, which has been reduced from 131 vehicles in 14-15, to 107 vehicles in 16-17.
3.4	Waste minimisation	3.4.1	Implement and review the Latrobe City Council Waste Management Strategy 2010-2017.	The Latrobe City Council Waste Management Strategy continues to be implemented, and the review is currently underway.
		3.4.2	Implement and review the Latrobe City Council Waste Education Plan 2010-2015.	The ongoing actions within the Waste Education Plan are continuing to be implemented, while the review of the Plan is being tied into the review of the broader Latrobe City Council Waste Management Strategy which is currently underway.

		3.4.3	Ensure the socially, environmentally and economically responsible disposal of municipal waste.	LCC continues to run a three bin system for township areas, and transfer station facilities for all other areas of the municipality. This waste is collected and disposed of through the LCC owned and operated landfill, a contracted green waste processing facility, and a contracted materials recovery facility (recycling).
		3.4.4	Maintain and enhance community engagement over waste management services provided by Council.	The community remains engaged via services provided through the LCC Sustainability Education Officer, through new waste initiatives, and through the Hyland Highway Landfill Consultative Committee.
		3.4.5	Work cooperatively with other agencies to increase the amount of material recycled, and promote positive waste disposal behaviour, in the Latrobe City community.	Continued participation by officers in the State Government Gippsland Waste and Resource Recovery Group, which works on collaborative recycling and waste solutions region-wide.



4. Protecting natural assets

This theme focusses on working cooperatively to better manage, and increase protection for, the waterways, air, soil and biodiversity valued by Latrobe City. It contains four action areas with 17 objectives.

Action Area		Objective		Highlights
4.1	Waterway health	4.1.1	Advocate for and support our partners to improve water quality in Latrobe City.	Further work is required in this area; however a recent example of LCC leadership is the construction of the Firmins Lane Wetlands, which treat stormwater before it enters Waterhole Creek.
		4.1.2	Continue to minimise the amount of litter and other pollutants entering the stormwater system through infrastructure and education.	The transition away from piping stormwater directly into creeks, and instead filtering it through wetlands, provides a significant reduction in the amount of litter and pollutants entering waterways from new developments. Further work is still required where traditional storm water systems exist.
		4.1.3	Continue to support Neighbourhood Environment Improvement Plans for Traralgon Creek and Morwell River, and encourage other cooperative action between industry, agencies and community.	Neighbourhood Environment Improvement Plans were reviewed in 2013 and have not been continued since the adoption of this Strategy.
		4.1.4	Work in cooperation with the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to develop a Waterway Management Plan for Waterhole Creek.	The Waterway Management Plan was finalised in 2014, and continues to be implemented.

		4.1.5	Work cooperatively with relevant agencies to protect natural waterways within Latrobe City from threatening activities.	LCC revegetation programs have focussed primarily on the enhancement of waterways, with cooperation from the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, and private businesses such as HVP Plantations and EnergyAustralia.
		4.1.6	Work in cooperation with the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to develop a memorandum of understanding for the management of the urban section of Traralgon Creek.	A memorandum of understanding was agreed in 2014, however this document requires renewal if it is to continue to be implemented.
4.2	Air quality	4.2.1	Advocate for and support our partners to improve air quality in Latrobe City.	Additional temporary air monitoring assets, installed following the Morwell Mine Fire in 2013, have been retained in the Latrobe Valley.
		4.2.2	Support the continued monitoring of air quality and publication of information by the Latrobe Valley Air Monitoring Network Inc.	The Latrobe Valley Air Monitoring Network continues to operate, and publish data on their website. The closure of Hazelwood Power Station has the potential to reduce the financial viability of this industry led network.
		4.2.3	Encourage the reduction of pollution from Latrobe City Council activities as well as local domestic, transport and business sources.	Some of the initiatives undertaken to achieve this objective include the reduction in the size of the LCC passenger vehicle fleet. The installation of additional rooftop solar has also helped to limit the level of carbon pollution being produced by day to day Latrobe City Council activities.
		4.2.4	Where particular local air quality issues are identified, explore the use of Local Laws to address them.	No major local air quality issues are identified in the 16/17 year, however further work is required in this area if Local Laws are to be utilised.

4.3	Soil conservation	4.3.1	In cooperation with relevant agencies, promote awareness of appropriate land management to landholders in high erosion risk-areas.	Further work is required in this area; however, work on the proposed Rural Land Use Strategy may provide support.
		4.3.2	Support actions to improve soil health where they contribute to whole-of-catchment sustainability.	Further work is required in this area; work has been slow due to a reallocation of staffing resources to other work of the department.
4.4	Biodiversity protection	4.4.1	Work cooperatively to protect existing biodiversity within Latrobe City from threatening processes, with a priority focus on remnant vegetation and protected species.	The endangered species Matted Flax-lily, known to occur in Eric Lubke Yarra Gum Conservation Reserve, Morwell, was re-mapped in 2017 and shows signs of the population increasing. An additional population is now protected on LCC property in Traralgon, in a reserve created in 2016 as part of a housing subdivision.
		4.4.2	Work cooperatively to plan, implement and maintain biodiversity restoration projects, with a priority focus on strategic landscape linkages and waterways.	LCC revegetation projects continue, in 2015 the focus was on Eel Hole Creek in Churchill, and in 2016 the focus was on the Firmins Lane Wetlands in Hazelwood North. In 2017 the focus will be on Narracan Creek in Newborough, partnering with Latrobe Catchment Landcare Group, Moe Yallourn Rail Trail Committee of Management and EnergyAustralia to deliver the program.
		4.4.3	Support individuals and groups undertaking biodiversity management actions that are of benefit to the Latrobe City's natural environment and community.	The Biodiversity on Rural Land grants program provided support to projects on four properties in 16/17. Advertising for the 17/18 grants program is currently underway.

		4.4.4	Demonstrate leadership in natural environment sustainability through appropriate management of biodiversity on Council managed land, particularly bushland reserves.	Seven bushland reserves, located within the boundaries of the four major towns, continue to be actively managed for biodiversity, with five of them supported by active volunteer groups. Other bushland reserves outside the main towns continue to be managed on an as needs basis.
		4.4.5	Develop a Biolinks paper highlighting areas of potential connectivity of habitat which can be used to prioritise revegetation and biodiversity restoration work.	<p>A biolinks paper, highlighting areas of potential connectivity of habitat which can be used to prioritise revegetation and biodiversity restoration work, has yet to be progressed due to resourcing issues (staff).</p> <p>Work on the proposed Rural Land Use Strategy is providing strong support for a specific biolink between the Strzelecki Ranges and the Southern Fall of the Great Dividing Range, where the valley is narrowest, near Moe.</p>



Conclusion

The majority of action areas have achieved progress within the current three year working life of the document. These areas include:

- Compliance activities,
- Sustainable future (use of Council's town planning and regulatory tools),
- Emissions reduction and climate change adaptation,
- Environmental Recovery (natural disaster recovery),
- Energy efficiency,
- Waste minimisation,
- Waterway health,
- Air quality, and
- Biodiversity protection.

Five action areas have not been significantly progressed and will require priority action within the next 18 months to complete. These include:

- Sustainability information and education
- Continuous improvement (monitoring and reporting against this strategy)
- Water efficiency,
- Sustainable procurement, and
- Soil conservation.

In order to progress these five action areas, discussions will be held internally regarding their priority and achievability, and externally with the partners that must be involved for particular actions. Depending on the scope of work that is required, some action areas may be built into 17/18 or 18/19 operational business plans, while others may need to be fed into the planning process for the next strategy, which will then become active in 2019.