



Council Policy

20.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to describe and confirm Council's commitment to environmental sustainability.

SCOPE

This policy informs Council's decision-making and the development of all policy, strategy and plans as well as the delivery of services, operations and the actions of contractors, volunteers and staff alike.

DEFINITIONS

Biodiversity - The variety of all life forms: the different plants, animals and micro- organisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems they form. It is a concept that emphasises the inter-relatedness of the biological world It is often considered at three levels: genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity.

Community engagement - The involvement of people, businesses and stakeholders in decision making. There is a spectrum of ways in which we can involve people - from informing and consulting them, to collaborating and partnering with them.

Environmental sustainability - acting in a way that ensures future generations have the natural resources available to live an equal, if not better, way of life as current generations. ¹

Integration - In this context, integration means bringing together multiple, sometimes conflicting, objectives and considerations – as well as time (short and long-term) and space (local, regional, global). It requires an understanding of how different objectives and systems are linked and affect each other.

Natural resources - All the resources that are produced by the Earth's natural processes including mineral deposits, fossil fuels, soil, air, water, plants and animals and are used by people for agriculture, industry and other purposes.

Quality of life - The level of enjoyment and fulfilment derived by humans from the life they live within their local economic, cultural, social and environmental conditions.

Principles - To determine if a decision or action is likely to make a positive contribution to sustainability, we need a basic understanding of the key considerations or criteria of environmental sustainability. They provide a set of core issues for consideration and broad objectives to be pursued as part of our decisions.

Waste management hierarchy - a hierarchy, which sets out an order of preference for how waste should be managed to help achieve the best possible environmental outcomes. From most preferred to least preferred - AVOID; REDUCE; REUSE; RECYCLE; RECOVER; TREAT; DISPOSE.

¹ United Nations (UN) World Commission on Environment and Development

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REFERENCES

- Colac Otway Shire Environment Policy 2010-2018 (currently under review)
- Colac Otway Shire Council Carbon Neutral Roadmap 2013
- Colac Otway Shire Council Climate Adaptation Plan 2017-2027

STATEMENT OF POLICY

Council is committed to demonstrating environmental best practice in its operations, fostering environmentally responsible behaviour in its Councillors, staff and contractors and using its experience and influence to promote actions towards sustainability in the wider community.

Colac Otway Shire is well known for its green and blue panoramic vistas that are made up of rich productive rural landscapes, forests, rivers, lakes, oceans, mountains and unique biodiversity. The quality and beauty of our landscapes are fundamental to our community's quality of life, businesses income, the food we eat and recreation we enjoy.

This Council **Environmental Sustainability Policy** formally adopts a way of thinking and a process that will help us work towards implementing the Colac Otway Shire Environment Strategy. The Environment Strategy states that Council aims to be a leader and champion of sustainability.

The Council Policy statement is:

"Colac Otway Shire Council commits to applying the principles of environmental sustainability to all of our decision-making, our services and activities.

Environmental sustainability principles will influence our decisions to maintain and enhance our quality of life now and in the future. It requires an integrated consideration of economic, environmental and community factors.

Colac Otway Shire commitment to environmental sustainability will be specifically supported in all Council plans, strategies and services.

Colac Otway Shire will lead by example and become an inspiration to the Colac Otway community and the region."

This Policy represents a high-level commitment to environmental sustainability and guides and consolidates our corporate approach. It establishes a common understanding of sustainability within Council and helps us to focus on actions leading to enhanced environmental and sustainability outcomes. Understanding the issues and using this to inform decision making will assist in achieving a long lasting and integrated corporate approach to improved environmental responsibility.

PRINCIPLES

The achievement of Council's environmental sustainability objectives requires leadership from Council and collaborative engagement and support from all sectors of the municipality. Council's management, staff and Councillors are committed to:

- Protecting and enhancing the natural environment, taking due care to avoid serious or irreversible environmental harm.
- Integrating the principles of sustainability and sustainable development and climate change resilience into decision making, considering both short-term and long-term perspectives.
- Encouraging sustainable procurement.
- Reducing resource consumption, particularly energy and water.

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- Capturing renewable resources to generate energy, such as solar, wind and water.
- Considering the waste management hierarchy when procuring, using and disposing of resources and materials.
- Operating in a sustainable manner and reporting its sustainability performance transparently.
- Encouraging and inspiring the community to live sustainable lifestyles and build their resilience to future climate change.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Environmental Sustainability Policy are:

- To demonstrate Council's commitment to establishing, promoting and maintaining a culture of sustainability and environmental responsibility by councillors and staff;
- To provide clear direction for Council to incorporate environmental sustainability into all elements of its business;
- To support improvement measures and targets identified in Council's Environment Strategy and Environment Action Plan;
- To protect and enhance the natural environment, to conserve natural resources, protect biodiversity, to be waste wise, to reduce our greenhouse footprint, to travel smarter and to conserve our water resources and other natural assets; and
- To raise awareness of environmental sustainability and increase community participation.

FOCUS AREAS

To enable an effective and realistic response we have identified focus areas to make sustainability easier to promote, interpret and implement. These areas are where we will place our focus:

- **Natural Environment** - A healthy and connected natural environment where indigenous landscapes are protected, valued and accessible. A healthy environment that enhances natural ecosystems, public health and livability.
- **Built Environment** - Sustainable, resilient, and accessible facilities, towns and settlements.
- **Greenhouse Gas Reduction** – Council and its community is energy efficient and rapidly moving towards a zero carbon future for a safe climate.
- **Climate Change Adaptation** - Council and its community is adaptive and resilient to changes in short and long-term climatic conditions
- **Water** - A water sensitive shire with healthy waterways with focus on integrated water management, water sensitive urban design, reduced reliance on potable water and minimum urban impacts to waterways.
- **Waste** - A clean and safe Council and shire that minimises waste generation and maximises reuse and recycling.

OUTCOMES

The expected outcomes of the Policy are:

- Intergenerational decision-making.
- Sustainability embedded in all facets of the organisation's work.
- All employees gained clear and shared understanding about what sustainability means and how they can apply it to their daily tasks.
- Management support, cross-program integration, corporate systems and new 'tools' developed to assist staff in their decision making.
- Continuous learning about sustainability and application of the best available sustainable technologies.

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

These management positions are responsible for the implementation, communication and compliance monitoring of the policy in their work areas:

Party / Parties	Roles and Responsibilities
Chief Executive	Ensure overall corporate compliance with the policy.
Environment & Infrastructure General Manager	Overall responsibility for the policy implementation.
General Managers	Ensure compliance with the policy by all Council Officers under their supervision.
Managers	Ensure compliance with the policy by all Council Officers under their supervision.
Coordinator Environment	Responsible for reviewing, updating and implementing policy. Together with the Environment Unit, primary source for environmental sustainability advice, training and guidance.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

All Council staff are required to consider environment, economic and social outcomes and impacts in their work. Non-compliance of this policy will affect the quality of life for current and future generations of the Municipality. It is the responsibility of all Councillors, staff, contractors and volunteers to understand the concept and principles of sustainability outlined in this policy and to apply these principles in all planning, decision-making, activities and reporting.

Council will develop tools to assist staff, contractors, volunteers and Councillors in their sustainable decision-making and competence in the application of sustainability principles. Environmental Sustainability Framework document will be developed to provide a transparent and universal approach to implementing the policy and thereby addressing environmental sustainability considerations in all council projects, operations and services.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Colac Otway Shire Environment Strategy 2010-2018 (currently under review)

Colac Otway Shire Council Carbon Neutral Roadmap 2013

Colac Otway Shire Council Climate Adaptation Plan 2017-2027

Colac Otway Shire Council Procurement Policy 2019

Colac Otway Shire Council Waste Management Strategy 2021

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy owner	Manager, Environment & Community Safety	Division	Environment & Infrastructure
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