



Colac Otway
SHIRE

COUNCIL POLICY

Council Policy Title:	Environmental Sustainability
Council Policy ref. no:	20.1
Responsible Department:	Sustainable Planning and Development
Date of adoption/review:	24 July 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

This Council **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.

In February 2010, the Council adopted the Environment Strategy designed to promote environmental sustainability and best practice across all areas of Councils operations, advocacy with regional stakeholders and the broader community. An Environmental Action Plan was completed in September 2010 to detail and monitor our progress against targets.

This Policy renews a high-level commitment to environmental sustainability and refreshes and consolidates our corporate approach. It will establish a common understanding of sustainability within Council and will help us to focus on actions leading to enhanced environmental 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.

2. 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.

3. FOCUS AREAS

To enable an effective and realistic response we have identified four target areas to make sustainability easier to promote, interpret and implement. These areas are where we will place our initial focus: Council Managed Land, Planning & Regulations, Physical Works & General Services, Education & Awareness Raising.

Specifically we will look at:

- Resource efficiency, saving energy & water and reducing waste.
- Sustainable land use planning, transport & mobility and other human impacts on the environment.
- Biodiversity conservation, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, natural areas, coasts and waterways.
- Adapting to climate change and becoming a more resilient municipality.
- Environmental/green procurement with waste avoidance and reduction in environmental impacts.

4. OUTCOMES

The major outcomes of the Policy are:

- Sustainability embedded in 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.
- Practical and realistic performance indicators established to measure and report on Council's progress with sustainability and meeting targets set in the Environment Strategy.

5. COUNCIL POLICY STATEMENT

The overarching Council Policy statement is:

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

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."

6. CORPORATE POLICY STATEMENT

The Corporate Policy statement is:

“Colac Otway Shire commits to undertake its business in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Colac Otway Shire Executive Team is committed to working towards environmental sustainability.

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

Colac Otway Shire strives to exceed the requirements of environmental laws and regulations.

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

7. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

It is ultimately the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer and the Executive Management Team to develop a culture and values that enhance decision making processes to ensure sustainability is embedded in the work environment.

The Chief Executive Officer, together with the GM Sustainable Planning & Development is responsible for reviewing and updating the policy; Promoting the policy among staff to ensure it is implemented throughout Council; and Ensuring that new staff are informed of the policy during induction.

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.

This policy will be incorporated into key decision making processes of Council and the planning and reporting process with Managers, Co-ordinators and Team Leaders being responsible for educating their staff on the policy.

The Sustainability Working Group and Environment Unit is responsible for monitoring, reporting and coordinating implementation of this policy. The Sustainability fund can be used to support this coordination.

Council will develop tools to assist staff, contractors, volunteers and Councillors in their sustainable decision-making and competence in the application of sustainability principles. An ‘Operational Procedures’ 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.

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.

8. 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.

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 sustainability. They provide a set of core issues for consideration and broad objectives to be pursued as part of our decisions.

ADOPTED/AMENDMENT OF POLICY

Policy Review Date	Reason for Amendment
27 June 2012	Adopted by Council
24 July 2013	Review