

Environmental Sustainability Report

2022 - 2023




Mildura Rural City Council

Environmental Sustainability Achievements



Greenhouse Emissions

We reduced our overall emissions by **650 tCO₂-e** with reductions in fleet, landfill and scope 3 emissions.



Energy

We upgraded over **1,700** street lights to energy efficient LED's



Fleet

We purchased **3** fully electric vehicles and installed **4** electric vehicle charger points.

Water

We reduced our water consumption by **22%** from the previous year.



Biodiversity

We planted **1,137** trees in urban areas.

Community Engagement

We engaged over **1,613** residents in environmental and waste education.



Waste

We diverted and recycled **2,567** tonnes of green waste at the Mildura Landfill.

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Summary

On 26 February 2020, Mildura Rural City Council (Council) became the thirtieth local government in Victoria and the ninety-fourth in Australia to declare a climate emergency. As a leader in the community, Council strives to set an example of responsible environmental management. This report provides information for the 2022-2023 financial year that demonstrates our commitment to managing our environment in a sustainable way and responding to the climate emergency.

Council's key sustainability areas are greenhouse emissions, electricity, fleet, water, biodiversity, waste and community engagement. Each of these areas has plans and strategies adopted by Council to improve the sustainability of Council operations, protect the natural environment, and reduce the impact of our community on the environment.

Each year Council aims to meet targets related to environmental sustainability as set out in various plans and strategies. This is Council's second year reporting on its greenhouse emissions as part of this annual report. In 2022-2023 a reduction in emissions for fleet, landfill and scope 3 emissions (water, paper & air travel) resulted in an overall decrease of 650 tCO₂-e in emissions compared to 2021-2022. Buildings and facilities saw an increase of 25 tCO₂-e in emissions due to increase gas usage. The focus on electrification of our assets is expected to reduce future gas use. Electricity used across all buildings and facilities and street lighting continues to be 100 per cent renewable with zero emissions.

Council recorded a four point three per cent decrease in fuel consumption in 2022-2023 compared to 2021-2022. This decrease was due to reduced diesel use across our heavy plant and machinery.

Water consumption in 2022-2023 was 22 per cent lower than the previous year due to flooding of much of our irrigated riverfront public open spaces.

Our natural environment, particularly our Murray Riverfront Reserve, is valued by our community and visitors to the region. Ongoing Council works to maintain the environmental and recreational values in these areas include management of recreational pressures, revegetation and weed and pest animal control.

Council provides a range of waste management services, including kerbside organics, garbage and recycling, management of two landfills and eight transfer stations, routine and emergency street sweeping, street litter and recycling bins, and clean-up after littering and illegal dumping on Council land.

Community engagement is an integral part of Council's environmental program. Environmental education within the community and involvement in projects and activities, including the Mildura Eco Village, Clean Up Australia Day, and National Tree Day, assists in building the community's capacity to value and care for our environment.

Greenhouse Emissions

Introduction

In February 2020, Mildura Rural City Council declared a state of climate change emergency requiring urgent action by all levels of government. Under the declaration Council committed to obtaining current base line greenhouse gas emission levels on municipal services, operations and infrastructure, and implementing and reporting on a strategy to reduce these emissions.

This has been addressed through the *Towards Zero Emissions Strategy 2021-2050*, under which Council has committed to achieving:

- Zero net emissions for council operations, excluding landfill, by 2040.
- Zero net emissions for all council operations by 2050 (including landfill).
- Zero net emissions for council owned buildings and facilities by 2030.
- Zero net emissions for light fleet by 2030 and heavy fleet by 2040.

The Strategy includes a detailed five-year action plan to reduce carbon emissions, with the progress against these actions to be closely monitored.

Council prioritises energy and emission reduction initiatives through an Energy Reduction Hierarchy (see Figure 1 below). The hierarchy is used when deciding on short and long term actions to reduce carbon emissions.

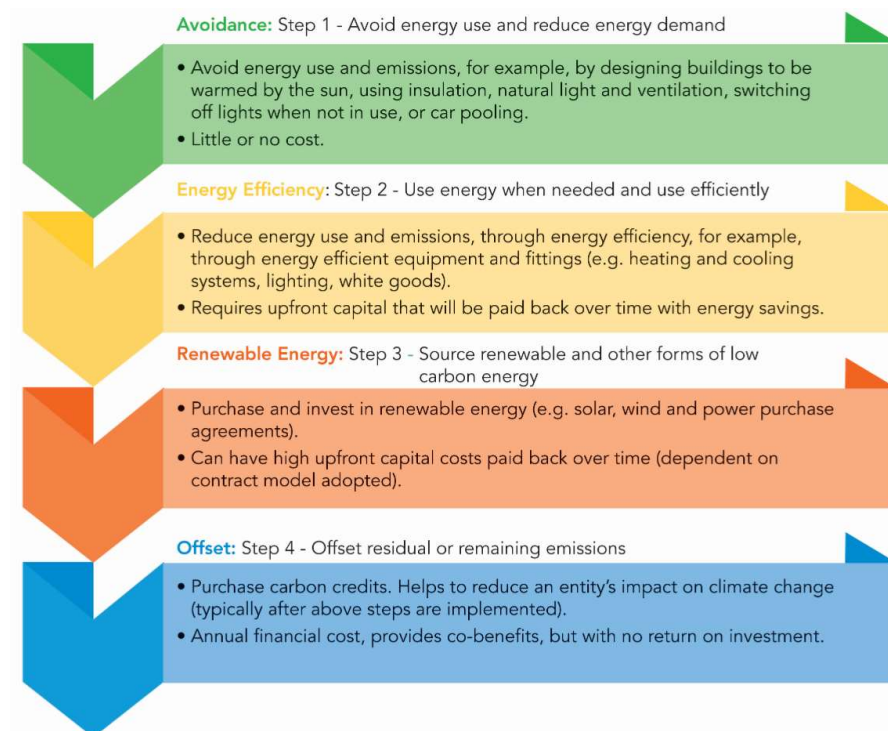


Figure 1: Energy Reduction Hierarchy.

Information

Under the *Towards Zero Emissions Strategy 2021-2050* there are five priority areas for emissions: landfill, buildings and facilities, fleet, street lighting and Scope 3 emissions (water, office paper and flights). Council has established strategic directions for each priority to reduce emissions over the long term. For the purposes of monitoring and reporting our emission reductions over time, the 2018-19 financial year was established as the baseline year. Table 1 below shows the 2022-23 emissions compared to the baseline emissions.

Priority Area	Baseline Emissions (tCO ₂ -e)	2022-23 Emissions (tCO ₂ -e)
Landfill	22,568	22,263
Buildings & Facilities (electricity, natural gas & LPG)	5,474	639
Fleet	2,638	2,562
Street Lighting	1,555	0
Water Use, Office Paper & Air Travel (Scope 3)	432	234
Total	32,667	25,698

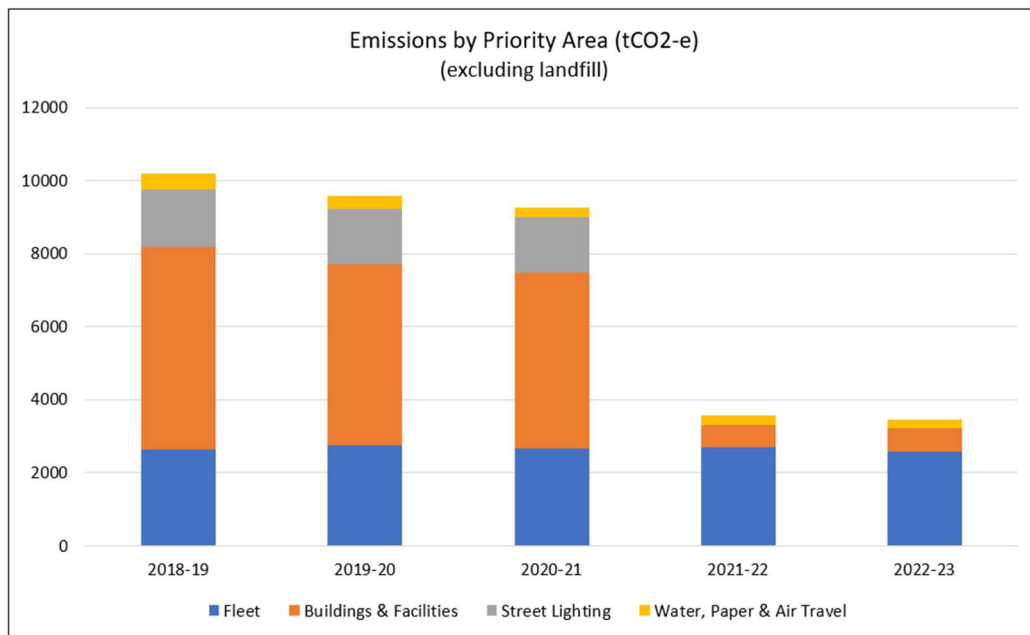
Table 1: 2022-23 Emissions compared to the Baseline Emissions by priority area.

There has been a slight decrease in landfill emissions between the baseline year of 2018-2019 and 2022-2023. A gradual drop off is expected over the next 30 years due to the introduction of the food and garden organics (FOGO) kerbside bin collection in July 2020, that diverts organic waste from landfill. Due to the nature of landfill emissions any reduction in waste to landfill, particularly organic waste, will reduce emissions over time, rather than immediately. Diversion of FOGO waste from landfill will have a significant impact on the amount of emissions from landfill into the future.

Buildings and facilities saw a dramatic drop off in emissions in 2021-2022 due to the purchase of 100 per cent renewable electricity from 1 July 2021, with emissions remaining only from natural gas and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) use. Street lighting has been fully powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity from 1 July 2021, resulting in abatement of emissions from this priority area.

Fleet emissions have slightly reduced due to a reduction in overall fuel consumption. Further reductions are expected as we transition our fleet to zero emissions vehicles.

Emissions from office paper and air travel have not yet been fully mitigated. Water use emissions have reduced and are primarily dependent on the emissions from the water service providers.



Graph 1: Emissions from Priority Areas, excluding landfill, in tonnes of CO2 equivalent.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- Upgraded over 1,700 street lights to LED technology as part of the Lighting the Regions Stage 2 project, partnering with the Victorian Government, Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance and Ironbark Sustainability.
- Council completed a Gas to Electric Transition Study for Council owned and operated sites, to prepare for the transition to all-electric buildings and facilities by 2030.
- Purchased three new passenger electric vehicles as part of Council's transition to zero emission fleet vehicles.
- Facilitation of the Community Climate Emergency Advisory Group (CCEAG) to develop community-owned and activated climate change mitigation and adaption strategies, as specified under the Climate Emergency Declaration made in 2020.

Challenges

- Transitioning Council's fleet to electric/hydrogen requires significant investment in charging and re-fuelling infrastructure.
- Transitioning large gas-use sites, such as the Alfred Deakin Centre and Mildura Arts Centre, away from gas, to be fully electric, will require comprehensive planning and budgeting.

Energy

Introduction

In achieving further reductions in energy consumption, Council will, where possible, prioritise actions according to the Energy Reduction Hierarchy specified in the previous greenhouse emissions section (Figure 1).

At the top of the hierarchy are those actions requiring little-to-no capital investment to save energy, including reducing energy use through behavioral change and efficient management of existing assets.

Implementation of energy saving measures at Council occurs within the following Council Policies and Plans:

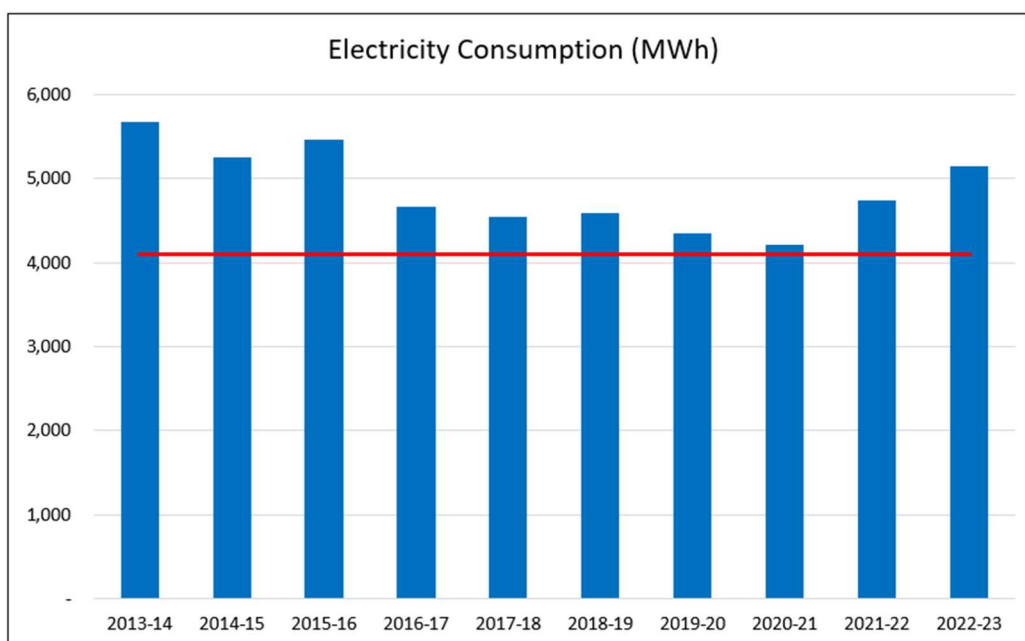
- *Towards Zero Emissions Strategy 2021-2050*
- *Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Policy CP-041*
- *Water and Energy Use Policy OP-186*
- *Water and Energy Use Guidelines – Buildings and Facilities*

Information

Under the *Towards Zero Emissions Strategy 2021-2050*, Council aimed to achieve 100 per cent renewable electricity consumption by 2022 (complete) and seeks to achieve 100 per cent renewable energy consumption for buildings and facilities by 2030. This target will be achieved by transitioning Council's buildings and facilities off natural gas and LPG to become fully electric by 2030.

The previous *Energy Management Plan 2017-2021* aimed to achieve a 25 per cent reduction from the baseline of 2015-2016 electricity consumption, in buildings and facilities by 2022. A 13 per cent reduction was achieved.

To minimise increases in operational costs, it is important that Council focuses on reducing its grid-energy consumption. This can be achieved through overall energy efficiency and undertaking targeted renewable energy projects and initiatives.



Graph 2: Electricity consumption against target in megawatt hours.

In 2022-2023 Council increased large and small market electricity consumption by eight per cent from the previous financial year. This is largely due to the increase in facilities at the Mildura Sporting Precinct being activated.

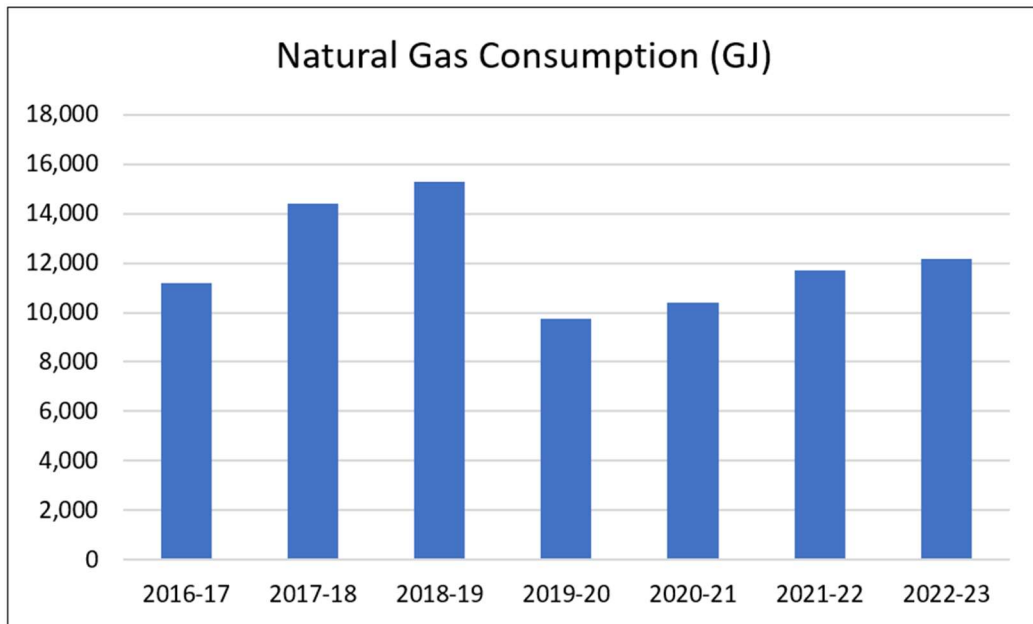


Figure 2: Solar installed at the Mildura Landfill (Transfer Station).

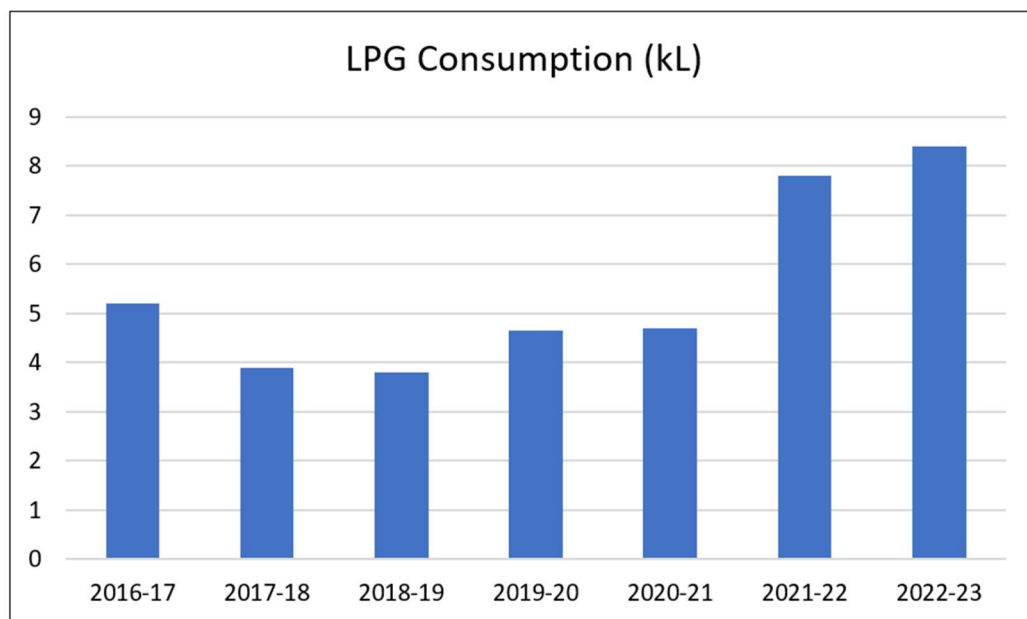


Figure 3: Solar installed at the Sacred Heart & Saint Andrews Tennis Club.

In 2022-2023 Council increased natural gas consumption by four per cent from the previous financial year. This is mainly due to a three percent increase in natural gas consumption at The Alfred Deakin Centre. Council also saw an eight per cent increase in LPG consumption from the previous financial year.



Graph 3: Natural gas consumption in gigajoules.



Graph 4: LPG consumption in kilolitres.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- Over 1,700 streetlights on major and minor roads in the municipality were upgraded to LEDs as part of stage two of the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance (CVGA) led Lighting the Regions project.

- Council's Energy Management Team provided a strategic approach to energy conservation. The team consists of management and key personnel responsible for large-market sites. There have been multiple improvements at these sites this year including:
 - Improved staff behaviour and attitude in relation to reducing energy use.
 - Continual auditing and rationalisation of redundant appliances (small fridges, heaters, and fans).
- Installation of 761 kilowatts of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on Council owned buildings, the largest number of installations for any local government in northern and central Victoria. This includes a new 46.53 kilowatt solar PV system at the Mildura Landfill (Transfer Station) and a 7.47 kilowatt solar PV system at the Sacred Heart and Saint Andrews Tennis Club.
- Installation of over 280 kilowatts of solar PV panels on seven commercial properties within the municipality. The Mildura Local Government Area (LGA) currently has Australia's sixth highest uptake of Environmental Upgrade Agreements (EUAs).
- Development and delivery of Council's annual internal window blind replacement program for improved energy conservation at Council buildings and facilities.

Challenges

- Continuing to manage existing systems, such as air conditioning to ensure energy efficiency is maintained. Some remaining small heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems require a degree of manual operation and monitoring to maximise performance and efficiencies. Ongoing staff training and management is needed to ensure these systems are being operated in the efficient manner intended.
- Increasing demand on resources, such as the provision of lighting in public spaces to maintain public safety and increasing staff numbers, technology, and service level provision.
- Transitioning buildings, facilities, and fleet away from fossil fuels such as gas, to be fully electric, will increase electricity consumption.

Fleet

Introduction

Under the *Towards Zero Emissions Strategy 2021-2050* Council has committed to transitioning its light and heavy fleet to zero emission technologies by 2030 and 2040 respectively.

Council's *Fleet and Plant Management Policy* was reviewed in 2022-2023 and specifies that vehicle priority and green ratings for its passenger vehicle fleet are:

- Priority 1 - Battery Electric Vehicle (BEV)
 - Wherever possible a zero emissions vehicle must be considered.
- Priority 2 - Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV)
- Priority 3 - Plug-in Hybrid Vehicle (PHEV)
 - Lowest combined tailpipe CO₂g/km rating for appropriate utility and light commercial vehicles.
- Priority 4 - Hybrid Electric/Petrol
 - Lowest combined tailpipe CO₂g/km rating for appropriate utility and light commercial vehicles.
- Priority 5 - Fuel Consumption
 - Diesel vehicles are not permitted for passenger vehicles and can only be purchased for utility or other vehicle types where a suitable petrol vehicle is not available.
 - Lowest combined tailpipe CO₂g/km rating for appropriate utility and light commercial vehicles.

The Passenger and Light Commercial ratings are available on the Australian Government's Green Vehicle Guide and are based on the results of stringent, regulated tests conducted by manufacturers to demonstrate a vehicle's compliance with Australian Design Rule Standards.

Information

During 2022-2023, Council's fleet totalled 249 vehicles including: passenger vehicles, utility and commercial vehicles, heavy trucks, light trucks, waste compaction units, loaders, graders, mowers, trailers and miscellaneous equipment. Table 2 below shows the fuel consumption of vehicles for 2022-2023.

Fuel Type	No. of Vehicles	Total Litres ('000)
Petrol	43	53
Diesel	190	889
LPG	2	6
Electric	6	0
Hybrid	8	4.5
Total	249	953

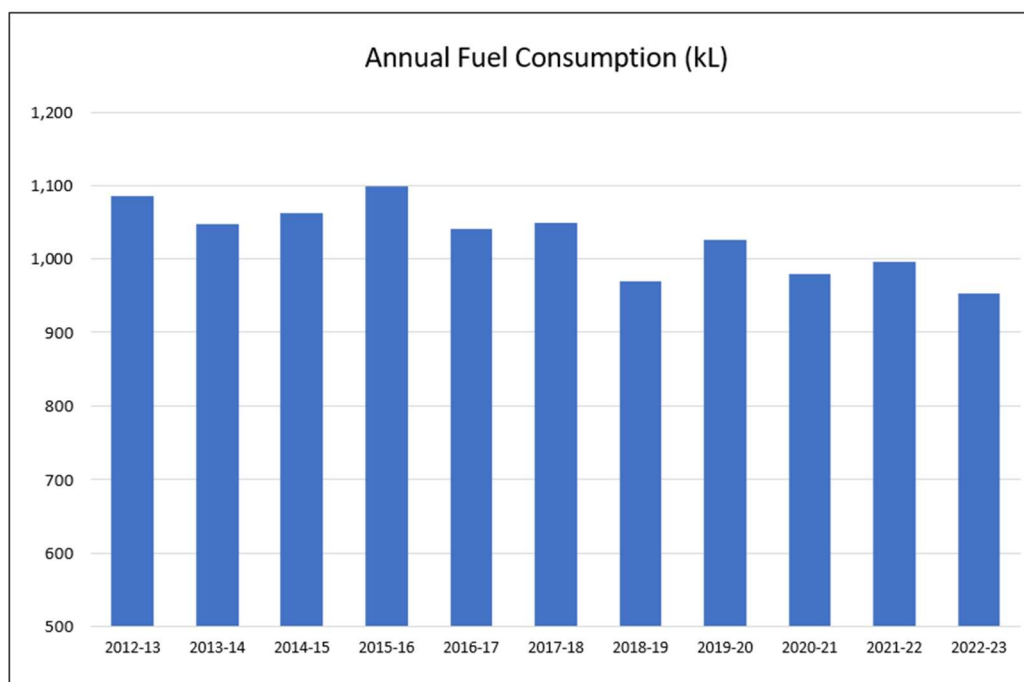
Table 2: Fuel consumption of vehicles in 2022-2023.

Table 3 shows the fuel efficiency of passenger and light commercial vehicles during 2022-2023. The most efficient vehicles in Council's fleet are the electric vehicles (note – six is the total number of electric vehicles in the fleet at the end of the financial year, with three purchased during 2022-2023). Of the fuel combustion vehicles, the four-cylinder hybrid vehicles are the most efficient.

Vehicle & Engine Type	No. of Vehicles in Fleet	Total Litres Used	Total Km Travelled	Litres/100 Km
Passenger Vehicles				
4CYL – Diesel	1	3,528	44,525	7.92
4CYL – Hybrid	8	4,538	76,078	6.96
4CYL – Petrol	32	42,109	451,640	9.32
6CYL – Petrol	1	1,497	14,463	10.35
Electric	6	0	14,352	0
Utility and Commercial Vehicles				
4CYL – Diesel	80	145,750	1,348,786	10.81
6CYL – Petrol	1	1,749	16,179	10.81

Table 3: Fuel efficiency of passenger and light commercial vehicles in 2022-2023.

Fuel usage totalled 953 kilolitres in 2022-2023, a decrease of 43 kilolitres from 2021-2022. This decrease is a result of reduced diesel usage across our heavy plant and machinery. Implementing new fleet reporting systems will result in a continuing emphasis on fuel efficiencies, reporting, route planning and works scheduling.



Graph 5: Fuel consumption for all fleet vehicles in kilolitres.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- Fuel reports are produced monthly, allowing management to monitor fuel consumption and question anomalies as they arise.
- Installation of an additional four electric vehicle charging ports at Council's Deakin Avenue Service Centres and the purchase of three new passenger electric vehicles.
- Review and adoption of the Fleet and Plant Management Policy and Guidelines supporting Council's transition to zero emissions vehicles.



Figure 4: Electric vehicle charging stations at the Deakin Avenue Service Centre.

Challenges

- Implementation of a new Fleet Management system to allow for better monitoring of vehicle usage and efficiencies and inform future savings opportunities.
- Implementing a consistent approach to car pooling to better inform utilisation and efficiencies.

Water

Introduction

Council is a significant water user within the community, with responsibility for irrigating parks, sporting fields, public gardens, and open spaces, and using water for other Council operations. In addition, as the local Planning Authority, Council is in a unique position to be able to influence public attitude and behaviour regarding water use and to set standards for water conservation in new developments.

As a result of Council's *Sustainable Water Use Plan 2006-2011* and *Sustainable Water Use Management Guidelines 2011-2016*, there are various documents in place that address sustainable water use.

Council currently has a '*Sustainable Water Use at Mildura Rural City Council*' document which identifies the plans, strategies, guidelines, and policies in place relating to sustainable water use, including those required to meet requirements under Victoria's Permanent Water Saving Rules and to set a target for future water use.

Key areas identified for improvements to sustainable water usage are irrigation, stormwater management, buildings and facilities, and aquatic facilities.

Efficiency targets set under the *Sustainable Water Use Plan 2006-2011* and *Sustainable Water Use Management Guidelines 2011-2016* have been achieved. The current target is to maintain water consumption at levels lower than those of 2014-2015.

Implementation of stormwater management and water saving measures occur within a framework of local, state and federal strategy and policy, including:

- *Water for Victoria (Plan)*
- *Securing Our Water Future Together, White Paper 2004*
- *Water Act 1989 (Vic)*
- *7-star Building Rating and Plumbing regulation*
- *Lower Murray Water Permanent Water Saving Plan*

Mildura Rural City Council Policies, Strategies and Plans:

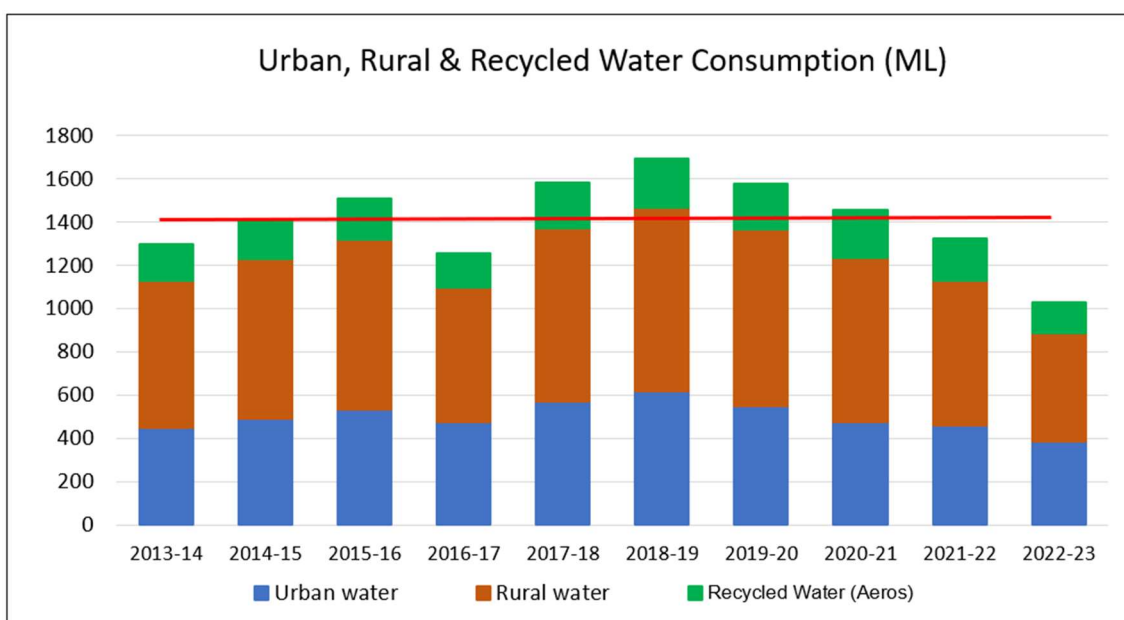
- *Native Vegetation Plan 2020-2024*
- *Water Use Plan – Irrigation Operation*
- *Constructed Wetland Management Guidelines*
- *Water and Energy Use Guidelines – Buildings and Facilities*
- *Water and Energy Use Policy OP-186*

- *Towards Zero Emissions Strategy 2021-2050*
- *Aquatic Facilities Redevelopment Strategy 2014-2020*
- *Recreation Strategy 2021-2031*

Information

Consumption

Water consumption in the 2022-2023 financial year decreased by 22 per cent from the previous year and was below the target of 1,428 ML (2014-15 consumption). Urban water usage decreased by 16 per cent overall, and significant decreases were seen in water usage for rural water (24 per cent) and recycled water (22 per cent).



Graph 6: Recycled, rural and urban water consumption against target in megalitres.

Stormwater

Council manages the following three major constructed wetlands:

- Etiwanda Wetland, which receives stormwater from Mildura East, including major industrial areas.
- Bob Corbould Wetland, which receives water from Mildura Central and Mildura West.
- Mildura South Wetlands, which receives water from Irymple and Mildura South.

The 2022-2023 floods impacted the Etiwanda Wetlands and restricted community access. Environmentally the wetlands coped well with only understory vegetation loss which is now naturally regenerating.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- Extensive mulching at Mildura South Wetlands to support tree health and amenity outcomes.
- Significantly reduced rural, urban and recycled water.
- Flood recovery at Etiwanda wetlands including removal of flood debris from the water body and surrounds and weed treatment.
- Natural regeneration at Etiwanda Wetlands following the flood event.

Challenges

- Increases in the size and/or number of open space areas requiring irrigation.
- Vandalism and ageing of irrigation systems.
- Meeting and managing community expectations whilst conserving water. There is often an expectation for a high level of service for sporting grounds and parks, requiring high water-use to keep them green.
- Maintaining constructed wetlands to support stormwater management, biodiversity, amenity outcomes and community expectations.

Biodiversity

Introduction

Council undertakes several programs focused on maintaining and improving native vegetation to support biodiversity values. The control of rabbits and weeds on significant roadside corridors and the management of recreational pressures and weeds in Council managed natural areas are high priorities.

Council's key strategic documents for biodiversity are:

- *Invasive Plants and Animals Plan 2020-2024*
- *Native Vegetation Management Plan 2020-2024*
- *Environmental Education Plan 2020-2024*
- *Roadside Weeds & Pests Program Control Plan 2019–2021*

Information

Roadsides

Roadsides Rabbit and Weed Control – Mallee Catchment Management Authority (Mallee CMA) funded projects.

Council receives grants from the Mallee CMA for the enhancement of roadside vegetation corridors bordering National Parks and State Forests in our municipality. Controlling weeds and rabbits within intact native vegetation on rural roadsides improves habitat and corridor movement for native fauna. This project saw weeds such as prickly pear and bridal creeper and rabbit warrens controlled across the targeted areas.



Figures 5 & 6: Site infested with prickly pear prior to works and the same site after works.

Roadside Weeds & Pests Program – Department of Government Services

Council received \$75,000 in grant funding from the Victorian Government, to undertake weed and/or rabbit control on Council roadside reserves under the *Roadside Weeds & Pests Program Control Plan 2019-2021*. The funding was allocated to four Landcare Groups through an expression of interest process to support rabbit and weed control. Through this program a total of 1,907 rabbit warrens were controlled by Council and Landcare across roadsides and natural areas, along with 35 cactus species.

Significant Roadsides

Council currently has 24 roadside sites where Threatened Species have been identified. These roadsides are signposted to inform people to take additional care when working in the area. The sites are monitored for weeds, pest animals, impacts of climate change and other threats.

Natural Areas

Weed and rabbit control is undertaken annually on Council managed land, in natural areas and road reserves within the irrigation district. Species targeted include African boxthorn, prickly pear and other cactus species, thistles/burrs, athel pine and selected exotic palms and trees. Multiple cactus species on roadsides, athel pine and thornapple at Blandowski walk and burrs and other weeds along the river at Ranfurly Way were controlled.

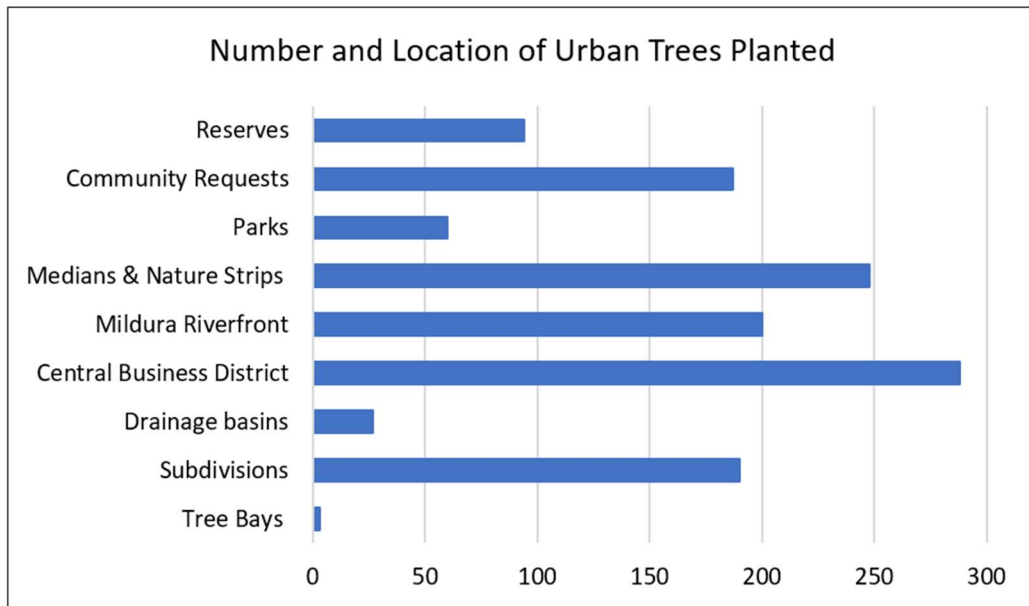
Re-vegetation Projects

Over many years Greening Mildura has been involved in planting, monitoring and watering re-vegetation sites on Council managed land. They have continued to carry out this work maintaining revegetation across Mildura.

Planning has been undertaken for a direct seeding and tubestock planting project across rural roadsides in the Millewa Carwarp area which will be completed in 2023-2024.

Street tree urban area plantings

A total of 1,137 street trees, including both native and exotic species, were planted in our municipality, in a variety of locations, over the 2022-2023 financial year.



Graph 7: Number and location of trees planted in urban areas.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- Supporting environmental groups such as Landcare and Greening Mildura.
- Re-invigorating a collaborative approach to controlling invasive plants and animals through the MRCC Roadside Invasive Plants and Animals Working Group.
- Responding to community concerns, by taking appropriate action to mitigate threats and maintain natural areas.
- Providing support to internal staff on native vegetation identification and legislation.

Challenges

- Improving community knowledge and responsibility of native vegetation and local fauna.
- The management of recreational pressures in our natural areas, including illegal dumping, vandalism, and off-track driving.
- Maintaining strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes.
- Increasing community awareness of the importance of urban biodiversity.

Waste

Introduction

Council provides a wide range of waste management services to our community. These services assist residents, visitors, and businesses to responsibly dispose of the waste they produce, to extend the life of local landfills and improve the sustainability of our environment.

The waste management services that Council provides include:

- The provision of kerbside bin collections for food organics and garden organics (FOGO), garbage, and recycling to approximately 27,700 residents and businesses across the municipality.
- Management of two operating landfills, two closed landfills and eight transfer stations, providing access to all residents to dispose of waste and recycle where possible.
- Undertake routine and emergency street sweeping.
- Servicing public place litter and recycling bins.
- Deliver recycling and waste minimisation education to our community.
- The provision of garbage and recycling bins for events.
- The clean-up of illegal dumping on Council's roadsides.

Council's key strategic document for waste management is the *Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2022-2026*, adopted in 2021-2022. Litter and illegal dumping are covered by the *Litter and Illegal Dumping Strategy 2020-2025*.

Information

Waste Diversion

Waste diversion is the measurement of all waste and recycling brought to our waste facilities divided by the amount that is recycled or diverted from landfill. This includes all waste from our landfill and transfer stations. In 2022-2023 Council achieved a total waste diversion from landfill rate of 54 per cent. Council has a target of 72 per cent diversion by 2025 and 80 per cent diversion by 2030. This is the first year of measuring against this target.

Litter Reduction

Each year Council collects illegal dumping and litter from Council land including roadsides, public land and gross pollutant traps. In 2022-23, 26 tonnes of illegal dumping including 55 tyres, 59 mattresses and 11 electronic waste items were collected, and 144 tonnes of waste was removed from gross pollutant traps.

Council has a target of a 10 per cent reduction in the tonnes of illegal dumping collected, 10 per cent reduction of the number of mattresses, tyres and electronic waste collected as illegal dumping and a

10 per cent reduction in the tonnes of litter collected in gross pollutant traps by 2025. This is the first year of measuring against this target.

Community Satisfaction for Waste

The State Government undertakes annual community satisfaction surveys on the services councils provide. Councils score for community satisfaction for waste and resource recovery was 52/100 in both 2021-2021 and 2022-2023. Council aims to increase this score by 2025.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- Approval to introduce a kerbside glass bin in 2024 with the aim to crush the glass locally and use this material in road construction.
- Diverted and recycled 2,567 tonnes of green waste at Mildura Landfill.
- 4,954 tonnes of kerbside recycling and 12,533 tonnes of kerbside organics diverted from landfill.
- The Mildura Transfer Station recycled 4,089 tyres, 1,600 mattresses, 4,123 e-waste items, 12,725 litres of oil, 3,279 tonnes of steel, 96 tonnes of cardboard and 15,312 chemical drums.
- An overall waste diversion rate of 53.61 per cent.

Challenges

- Audits conducted in 2022 showed that on average, 68 per cent of the kerbside rubbish bin could be diverted from landfill via the kerbside co-mingled recycling bin or the FOGO bin. 38 per cent of this is organic material with most of this being food.
- Encouraging the community and businesses to recycle more material at the Mildura Landfill (sorting their loads) so that less unsorted waste enters the landfill.
- Illegal dumping in natural areas, parks and on roadsides.
- Providing an environmentally, economically, and socially practical service in the face of increasing regulatory and financial pressures.

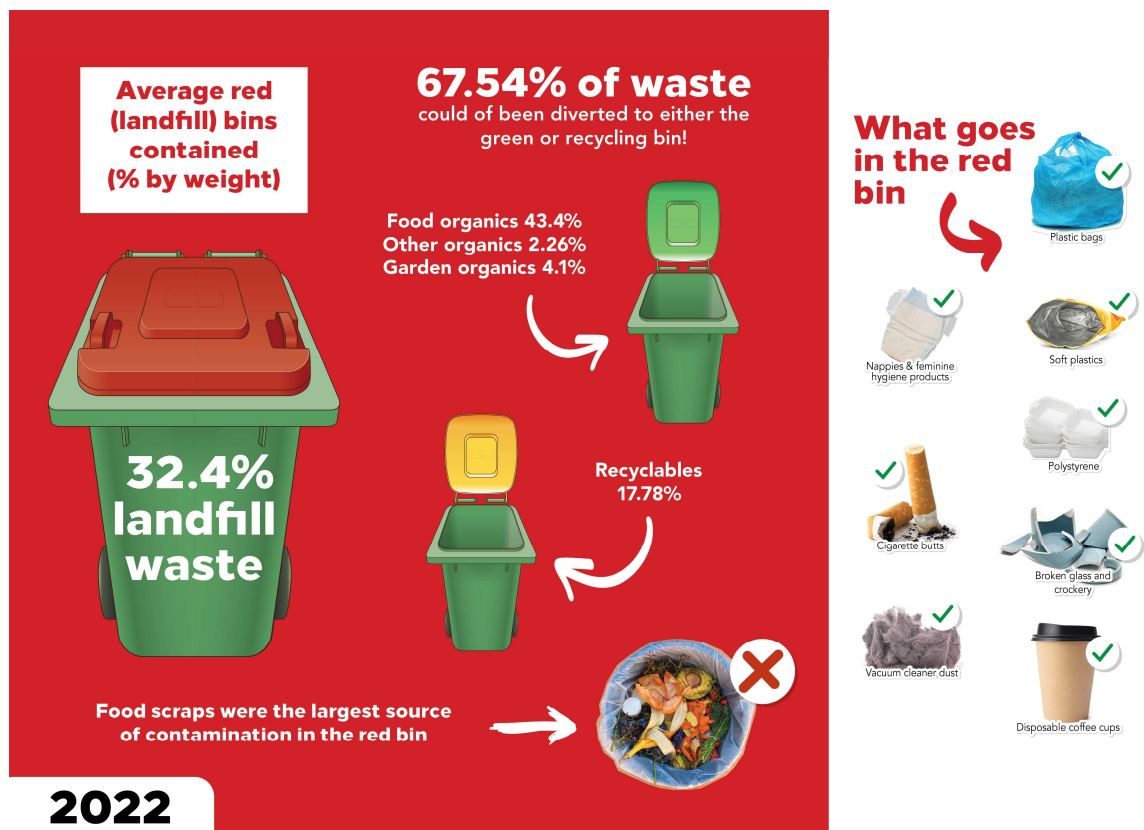


Figure 7: Landfill/rubbish bin overview

Community Engagement

Introduction

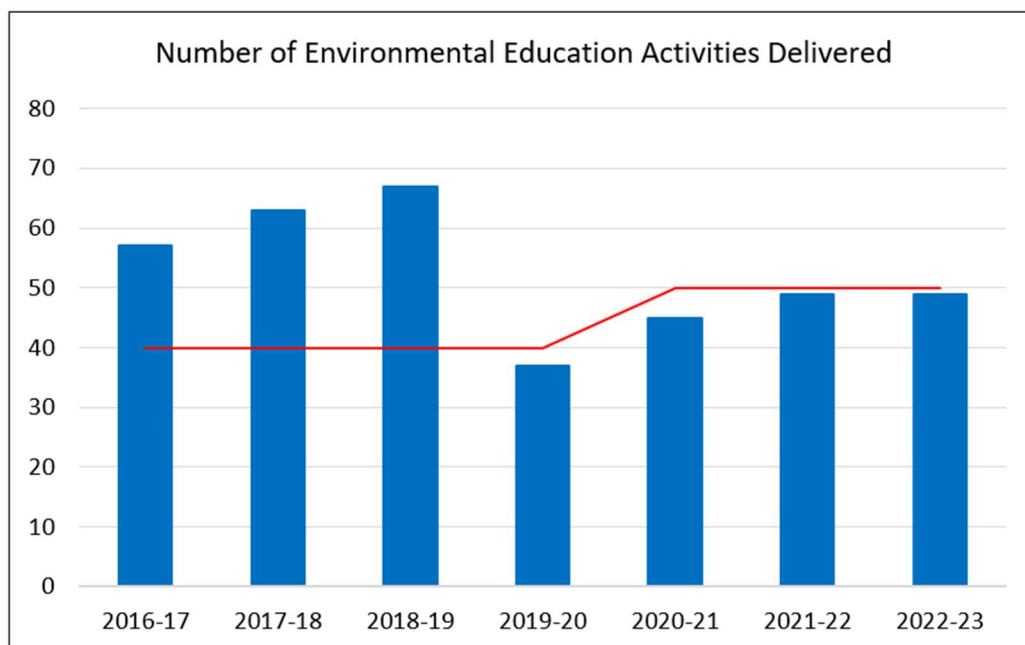
Community engagement is a crucial element of Council's environmental program. Council carries out environmental education programs for students and community groups at the Mildura Eco Village and participates in various environmental projects and activities, such as Clean Up Australia Day, National Tree Day, and the school's tree program. This helps to promote environmental awareness and responsibility in the community.

Council's *Environmental Education Plan for 2020-2024* aims to provide a comprehensive approach to environmental education. Key areas of focus for community engagement in environmental issues include water, energy, biodiversity, and waste management.

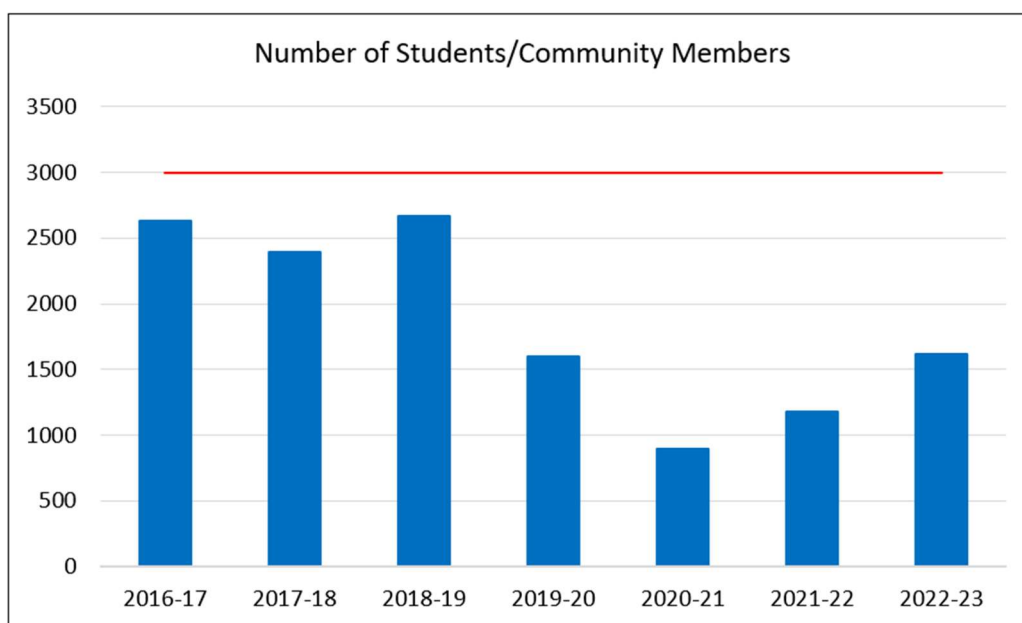
Information

Council offers an environmental education program that aims to increase awareness and encourage sustainable living and local environmental activities among students and community groups. The program covers a range of topics and activities, such as tree planting, visits to natural areas and wetlands, tours of the landfill and the Mildura Eco Village, sustainable gardening and composting, healthy habitats, urban heat island effects, waste management, and energy efficiency. Graphs 11 and 12 show the number of activities conducted and the number of students and community members participating in environmental activities each year.

In total, 49 environmental education activities were delivered, engaging 1,613 students and community members.



Graph 11: Number of environmental education activities delivered against target.



Graph 12: Number of students/community members involved in environmental education activities against target.

The Mildura Eco Village

The Mildura Eco Village provides an area for the community to come together, share ideas, and encourage more sustainable ways of living to create a positive and lasting influence on community attitudes towards sustainability.

Located adjacent to the Mildura Landfill, the site is the base for the environmental education activities delivered by Council and incorporates the following facilities:

- An Education Centre – a multipurpose community facility displaying sustainable design elements, building practices and technologies.
- A Community Garden – the heart and soul of the Mildura Eco Village, which includes 37 raised beds, large on-ground community beds, composting and worm farming.
- A Sustainable Play Space – constructed to encourage free play and creative thinking.
- The Eco House – a retrofitted sustainable demonstration house for community use. The Eco House is used as the main location for energy efficient environmental education.



Figure 8: Students Participating in an Environmental Education Activity at the Mildura Eco Village.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- Increased use of the Mildura Eco Village community gardens by various user groups.
- Events held at the Mildura Eco Village, at schools and community group venues, including:
 - 1,613 participants in environmental and waste education activities.
 - 49 school groups, kindergartens, and community groups engaged and completed activities.
 - 20 schools participated in the school's native tree program, with 500 native plants delivered to schools.
 - One major event held at the Mildura Eco Village "Tis the season to be sustainable" community day – included landfill and AroundAgain tours and a tree decorating workshop using recycled materials as decorations.
 - Waste education workshops conducted with the community and school groups. Topics included reduce, reuse, and recycle and correct sorting of waste and recycling. Activities included landfill tours, waste relays, waste audit workshops and beeswax wraps workshops.
- Continued rollout of the Cool It! Street Tree Replacement Program where residents are encouraged to care for their nature strip trees. Benefits include improved amenity, reduced summer heat, improved neighbourhood walkability and increased urban biodiversity. This year also included a semi-mature 100 tree giveaway program.
- 3 events for National Tree Day, Mildura Market Day 300 tree giveaway, Community Planting Day 200 trees and Schools Tree Planting Day 150 trees.



Figure 9: Collection of environmental education activities and events over 2022-23.

Challenges

- Reinvigorating the Mildura Eco Village Community Gardens.
- Engaging more members of the community in projects undertaken at the Mildura Eco Village, in partnership with the Sunraysia Sustainability Network.
- Increasing and maintaining the enthusiasm of the community, school groups and stakeholders to achieve environmental sustainability objectives.
- Delivery of environmental education activities and maintaining community engagement.

Environmental Sustainability Targets for 2023-2024

Greenhouse Emissions

- Zero net emissions for council operations, excluding landfill, by 2040.
- Zero net emissions for all council operations by 2050 (including landfill).
(*Towards Zero Emissions Strategy 2021-2050*)

Energy

- Transition from gas to fully electric at all Council owned buildings and facilities by 2030.
- Council owned buildings and facilities to be powered by 100 per cent renewable energy by 2030.
(*Towards Zero Emissions Strategy 2021-2050*)

Fleet

- Transition of passenger/utility/commercial fleet to electric by 2030.
- Transition of heavy vehicles/equipment to electric and hydrogen powered by 2040.
(*Towards Zero Emissions Strategy 2021-2050*)

Water

- Maintain water usage below the 2014-2015 level (<1,428L).
(*Sustainable Water Use at MRCC, 2017*)

Biodiversity

- Achieve a seedling re-vegetation survival rate of 70 per cent 12 months after planting for roadsides and natural areas.

Waste

- Achieve a 72 per cent diversion of waste from landfill by 2025.
- Achieve an 80 per cent diversion of waste from landfill by 2030.
- Zero waste to landfill by 2050.
(*Waste & Resource Recovery Strategy 2022-2026*)

Community Engagement

- Deliver at least 50 school/community group visits/tours/activities on environmental sustainability per year.
(*Environmental Education Plan 2020-2024*)

This report was prepared by the following staff:

Nardia Baker

Bonnie Pettett

Jay Smith

Susan Whiteley

Sarah O'Connor

Jamie Blefari-Paynting

Lisa Jolliffe

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