Environmental Sustainability Report

2024 - 2025

Mildura Rural City Council

Environmental Sustainability Achievements

Greenhouse Emissions

We reduced our overall emissions by 551 tCO2-e with reductions in buildings and facilities, fleet, landfill and scope 3 emissions.

Energy

We've now installed 1,070kW of solar panels on Council owned buildings and facilities.

Fleet

We've added 5 new electric vehicles to our Council fleet, helping reduce emissions and lead by example in sustainable transport.

Biodiversity

We planted 1,615 trees in urban areas.

Community Engagement

We completed 64 environmental educational activities.

Waste

We diverted and recycled 14,339 tonnes of kerbside FOGO waste, 3,159 tonnes of kerbside comingled waste & 540 tonnes of kerbside glass waste

Contents

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 2024-2025 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, climate change and community engagement. Each of these areas has plans/strategies, with targets, to improve the sustainability of Council operations, protect the natural environment, and reduce the impact of our community on the environment.

In 2024-2025, a reduction in emissions for buildings and facilities, fleet, landfill and scope 3 emissions (paper and air travel) resulted in an overall decrease of 551 tCO2-e in emissions compared to 2023-2024.

The focus on electrification of our assets is expected to reduce future gas use. Metered electricity used across all buildings and facilities, and street lighting continues to be 100 % renewable with zero emissions.

Council recorded a six % decrease in fuel consumption in 2024-2025 compared to 2023-2024. This decrease was largely due to the introduction of lower emission vehicles in the fleet.

Water consumption during 2024-2025 increased by 14 % compared to the previous year. This rise is attributed to drier climatic conditions experienced throughout the reporting period.

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 community 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 food and garden 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 drives Council's environmental efforts, inspiring residents to take action through community events such as Clean Up Australia Day, National Tree Day, World Environment Day, and workshops and activities at the Mildura Eco Village. These experiences build environmental awareness and empower the community to care for our local 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 baseline 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 four-year action plan to reduce carbon emissions, with the progress against these actions 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.

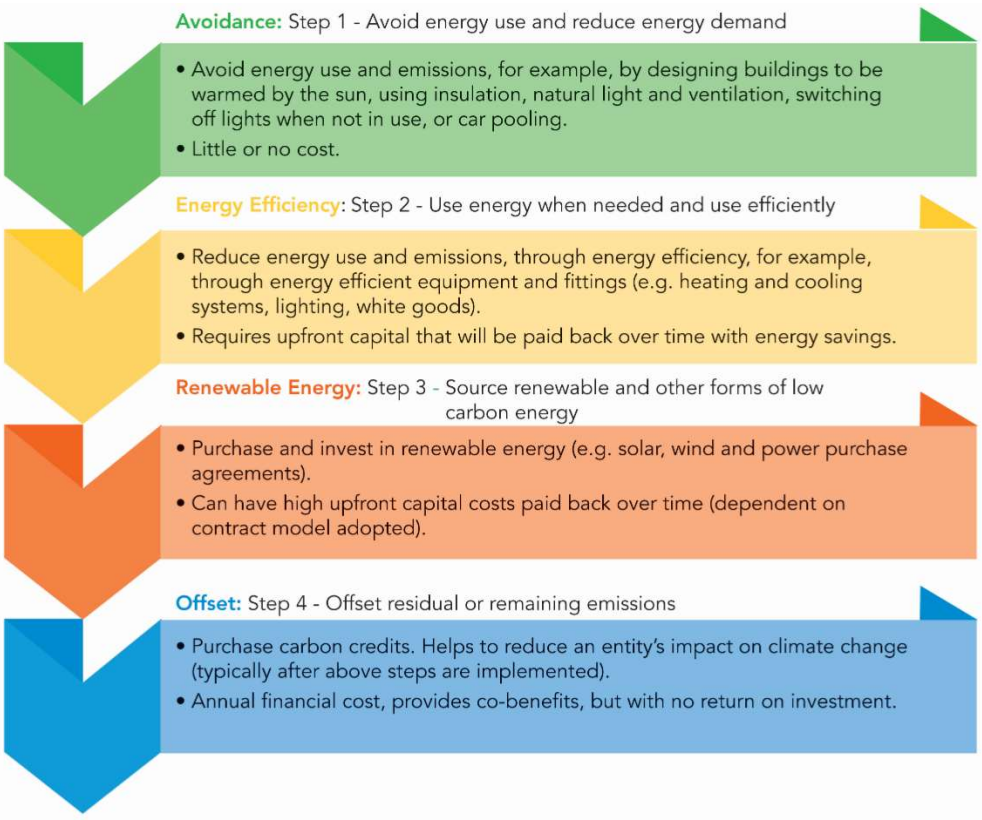

Figure 1: Energy Reduction Hierarchy.

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 area to reduce emissions over the long term. For the purposes of monitoring and reporting our emission reductions over time, the 2018-2019 financial year was established as the baseline year. Table 1 below shows the 2024-2025 emissions compared to the baseline emissions.

Table 1: 2024-25 Emissions compared to the Baseline Emissions by priority area.

Priority Area	Baseline Emissions (tCO2-e)	2024-25 Emissions (tCO2-e)
Landfill	22,568	21,321
Buildings & Facilities (electricity, natural gas & LPG)	5,474	600
Fleet	2,638	2,102
Street Lighting	1,555	0
Water Use, Office Paper & Air Travel (Scope 3)	432	231
Total	**32,667**	**24,253**

There has been a five % decrease in landfill emissions between the baseline year of 2018-2019 and 2024-2025. A gradual drop off is expected over the next 25 years due to the introduction of the food and garden organics (FOGO) kerbside bin collection in July 2020, which 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 significantly reduce 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 % renewable electricity from 1 July 2021. Only emissions from natural gas and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) use remain. Street lighting has been fully powered by 100 % renewable electricity from 1 July 2021, resulting in complete abatement of emissions from this priority area.

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

Emissions from office paper have not yet been fully mitigated. Water use emissions have increased due to the increase in consumption.

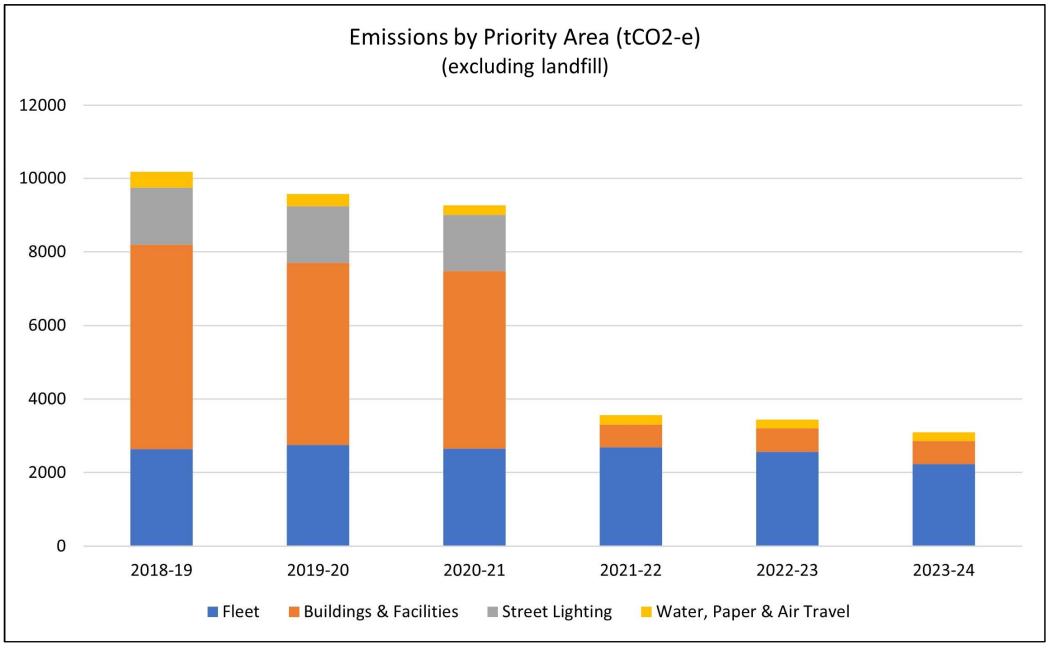

Figure 2: Emissions from Priority Areas, excluding landfill, in tonnes of CO2 equivalent.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- Completed detailed Electrification Feasibility Studies for The Alfred Deakin Centre and Mildura Arts Centre and a Gas to Electric Study for Council owned and leased sites, to prepare for the transition to all-electric buildings and facilities by 2030.
- Completed a Solar Carports Feasibility Study for The Alfred Deakin Centre, Mildura Sporting Precinct and Mildura Arts Centre.
- Council purchased carbon offsets for flights through Greenfleet. The offsets support re-vegetation projects in Australia and New Zealand.
- Securing $2.5 million in Federal funding under the Community Energy Upgrade Fund for energy projects, including the electrification of the Alfred Deakin Cerntre and Mildura Arts Centre.

Challenges

- Transitioning Council's fleet to electric/hydrogen requires significant investment in charging and re-fuelling infrastructure.

Energy

Introduction

Energy reduction actions are prioritised 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 in line with 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 % renewable electricity consumption by 2022 (complete) and seeks to achieve 100 % 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.

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

In 2024-2025 Council saw a reduction in large and small market electricity consumption by five % from the previous financial year. This is due to several energy efficiency and renewable energy works being completed during the year.

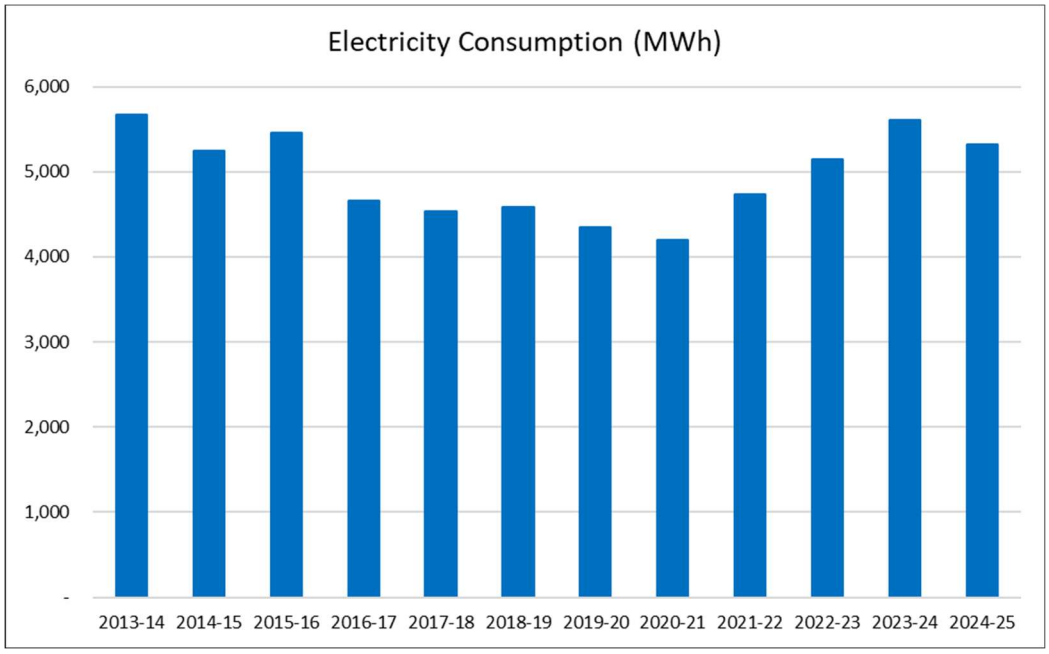

Figure 3: Electricity consumption in megawatt hours.

Figure 4: Solar installed at the Red Cliffs Early Years Hub

In 2024-2025 there were slight increases in natural gas (0.03 %) and LPG (1 %) consumption from the previous financial year.

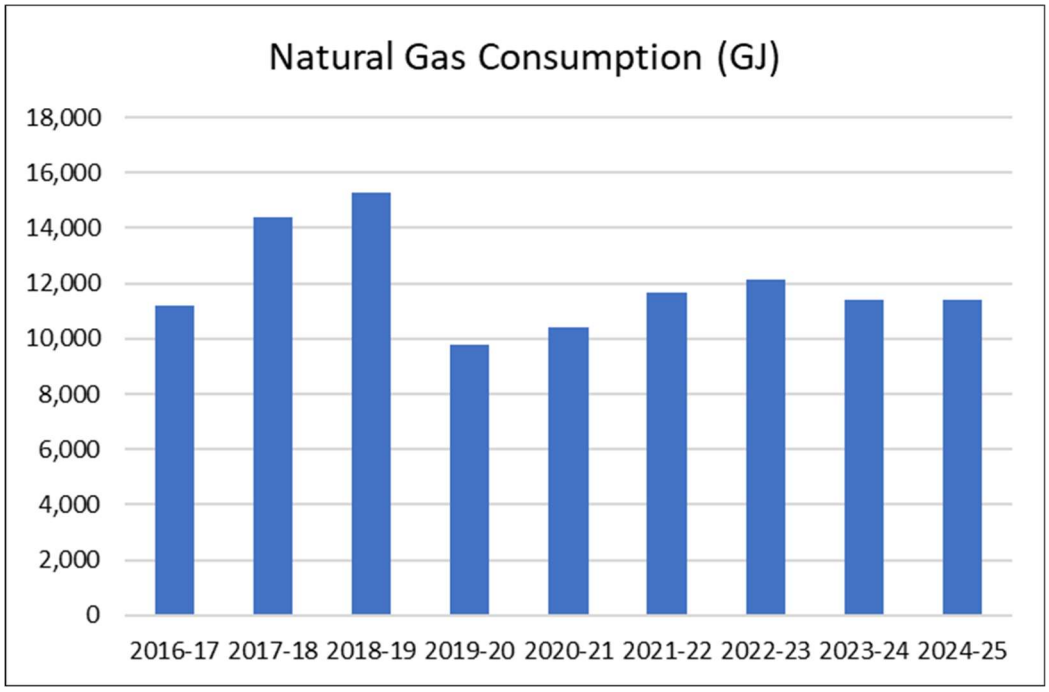

Figure 5: Natural gas consumption in gigajoules.

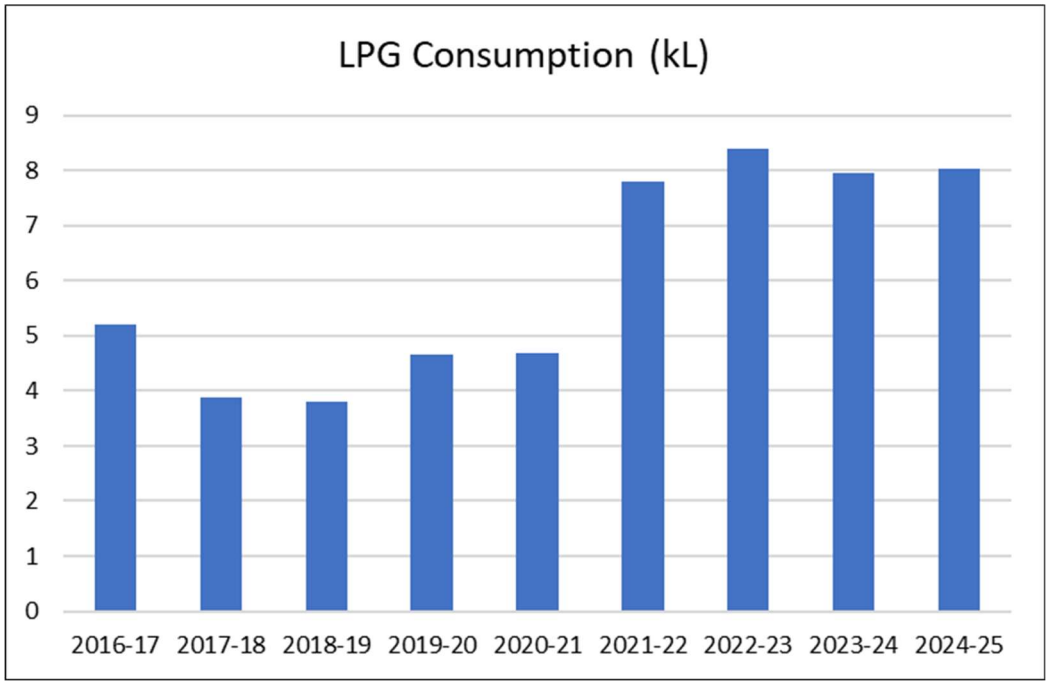

Figure 6: LPG consumption in kilolitres.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- Installation of 1,070 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 180 kilowatt solar PV system and 212kWh battery storage at the Red Cliffs Early Years Centre.
- Council's Energy Management Team, consisting of management and key staff responsible for large-market sites, provided a strategic approach to energy conservation. 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).
- Supported the installation of over 2,136 kilowatts of solar PV panels through environmental upgrade agreements on nine commercial properties within the municipality.

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.
- Increasing demand on resources with changes in service level provision, such as lighting in public spaces.
- Transitioning buildings, facilities and fleet away from fossil fuel/gas use, will increase electricity consumption.

Fleet

Introduction

Council has made significant progress towards the transition of its light fleet to zero-emission technologies. The target is zero emissions from light fleet by 2030 and from heavy fleet by 2040, in alignment with Council's *Towards Zero Emissions Strategy 2021-2050*.

During 2024-25, Council expanded its electric vehicle portfolio with the acquisition of five new fully electric vehicles:

- Two MG4 Excite hatchbacks
- Three Kia EV3 Air long-range wagons (figure 8)

This momentum will continue into 2025-2026, with the purchase of an additional five electric vehicles, further supporting Council's sustainability objectives.

Council has commenced development of a new Fleet Strategy, informed by a comprehensive review undertaken in 2025. Some of the strategies focus areas will be:

- Enhancing procurement practices for fleet assets.
- Maximising utilisation and operational efficiency of existing vehicles.
- Supporting long-term planning aligned with zero-emission targets.

The Fleet Strategy will serve as a critical roadmap for guiding future investment, operational decisions, and sustainability outcomes.

Information

During 2024-2025, Council's fleet totalled 294 vehicles including: passenger vehicles, utility and commercial vehicles, heavy trucks, light trucks, loaders, graders, mowers, trailers and miscellaneous equipment.

Table 2 below shows the fuel consumption of vehicles for 2024-2025

Table 2: Fuel consumption of vehicles in 2024-2025.

Fuel Type	No. of Vehicles	Total Litres ('000)
Petrol	47	36
Diesel	213	729
LPG	1	0
Electric	12	0
Hybrid	21	16
Total	**294**	**781**

Table 3 shows the fuel efficiency of passenger and light commercial vehicles during 2024-2025.

Table 3: Fuel efficiency of passenger and light commercial vehicles in 2024-2025.

Vehicle & Engine Type	No. of Vehicles in Fleet	Total Litres Used	Total Km Travelled	Litres/100 Km
Passenger Vehicles				
4CYL – Diesel	4	3630	46517	7.80
4CYL – Hybrid	20	15194	197775	7.68
4CYL – Petrol	28	31989	352694	9.07
6CYL – Petrol	1	3764	42977	8.76
Electric	12	0	2033	0.00
Utility and Commercial Vehicles				
4CYL – Diesel	93	129428	1266376	10.22
6CYL – Petrol	1	1085	10045	10.80

Fuel usage totalled 781 kilolitres in 2024-2025, a decrease of 50 kilolitres from 2023-2024. This decrease is a result of reduced diesel usage across utilities and more EV and hybrid passenger vehicles.

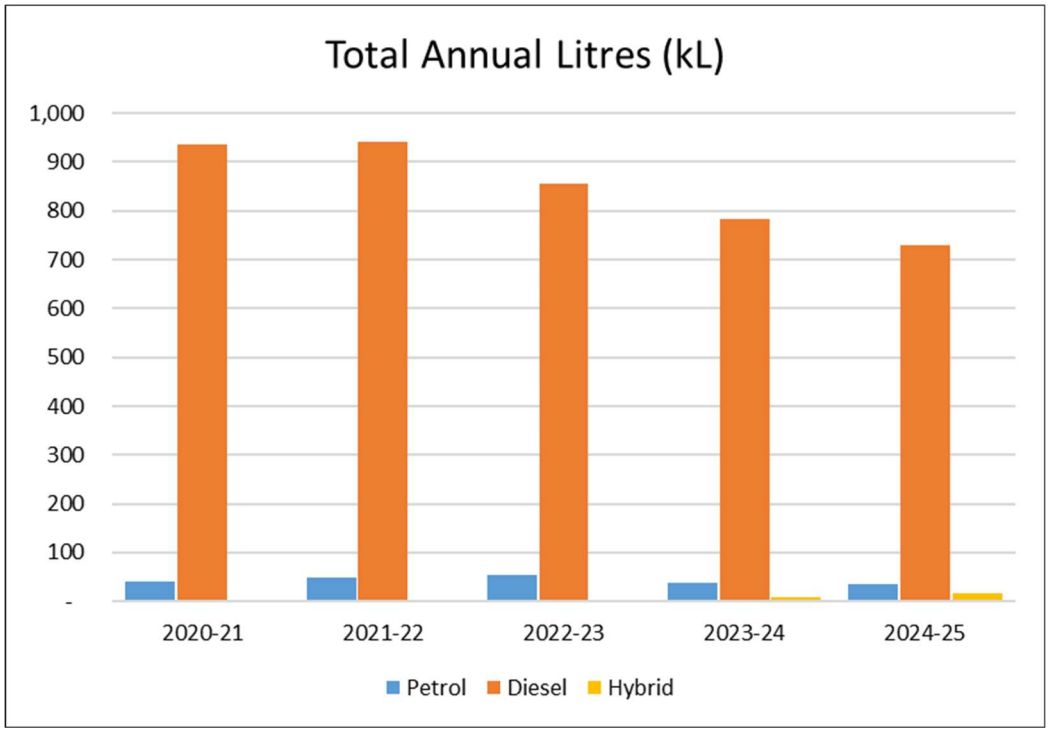

Figure 7: Fuel consumption for fleet vehicles in kilolitres.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- RACV Safe Driver Training for 100 staff in groups and 50 staff one on one sessions, teaching safe driver practices and fuel-efficient way of driving. This was very well received by staff.
- Tender for trucks with higher fuel and load efficiency, reducing emissions and trips undertaken for each project.

Figure 8: Three New Kia EV3 Air Long Range.

Challenges

- Allocating vehicles to sites with limited EV infrastructure.
- Commercially available Utilities and Heavy Plant is very limited.

Water

Introduction

Council is a significant water user within the community, with responsibility for irrigating parks, sporting fields, public gardens and open spaces. 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 water management at Council occurs in line with the following Council documents:

- *Native Vegetation and Pest Management Plan 2024-2028*
- *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 across Mildura and surrounding areas increased by 14% compared to last year, with a total use of 1,673 ML, above the target of 1,486 ML. Urban water use rose by 21%, while rural and recycled water use grew by 10% and 9% respectively (see Figure 8).

The increase in water consumption reflects the expansion of local parks and green spaces, enhancing community amenity, combined with the need to maintain these areas during a drier-than-average year.

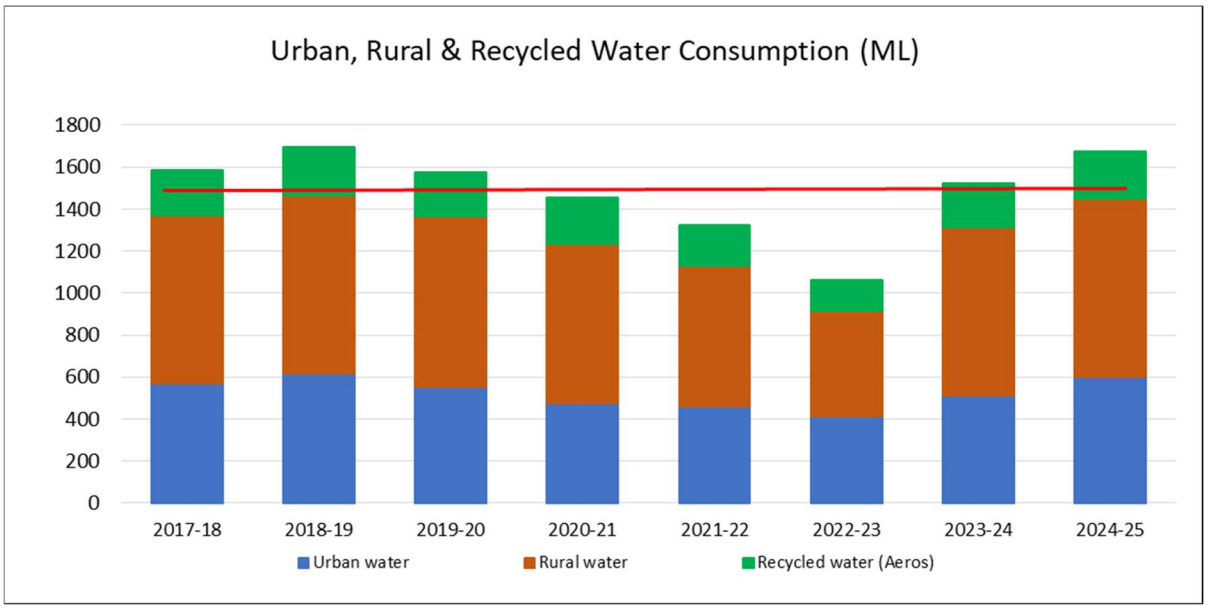

Figure 8: Urban, rural and recycled water consumption against target in megalitres.

Total water consumption for the Mallee Track was 6.5 ML of rural water and 55 ML of urban water.

Stormwater

Council manages three major constructed wetlands:

- Etiwanda Wetlands, 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.

Etiwanda Wetlands continued to regenerate following the 2022-2023 floods, with many *Eucalyptus* trees growing along the Cureton Avenue East boundary.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- New signs developed for Mildura South Wetlands and repair of signs at Lake Ranfurly.
- Disability access tables installed at Etiwanda Wetlands.
- Community Clean Up Australia Day at Etiwanda Wetlands.

- National Tree Day community tree planting event at Mildura South Wetlands, with 200 native tube stock planted.

Challenges

- Increases in the size and/or number of open space areas requiring irrigation.
- Ageing of irrigation infrastructure.
- 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 delivers a range of initiatives aimed at maintaining and enhancing native vegetation to strengthen local biodiversity. Priority actions include controlling invasive species such as rabbits and weeds along roadside corridors and managing recreational impacts and weed infestations within Council-managed natural areas.

Council's key strategic documents for biodiversity are:

- *Native Vegetation and Pest Management Plan 2024-2028*
- *Environmental Engagement Action Plan 2024-2028*
- *Roadside Weeds & Pests Program Control Plan 2023–2026.*

Information

Roadsides

Roadside Weeds & Pests Program – Department of Government Services

Council received $85,000 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 2023-2026*. 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 1,308 rabbit warrens (figure 9) were controlled by Landcare across 288.315 km roadsides, along with 17 catus plants and three African boxthorn plants.

Figure 9: Roadside rabbit warren

Roadside Weed Control

Weed control is undertaken annually on Council managed road reserves. Target species include African boxthorn (figure 10), prickly pear and other cactus species, thistles/burrs, athel pine and selected exotic palms and trees. In 2024-2025, control of cactus species, bridal creeper, ice plant and African boxthorn was undertaken, with a particularly large infestation of over 400 boxthorns controlled. In total, weeds were controlled on approximately 46km or 92ha of roadside.

Figure 10: African boxthorn

Significant Roadsides

Council currently has 24 signposted roadside sites that contain significant vegetation. These roadsides are signposted to inform people to take additional care when working in the area. The sites are monitored for weeds, pests, impacts of climate change and other threats.

Natural Areas

Weed and rabbit control is undertaken across Council-managed natural areas to support biodiversity. A targeted rabbit baiting program was delivered at Lake Cullulleraine in partnership with Lower Murray Water, funded by Agriculture Victoria and the Mallee Catchment Management Authority. This initiative involved placing bait stations across 295 hectares, using pindone bait and releasing rabbit hemorrhagic disease virus to manage rabbit populations. Ongoing maintenance of these natural areas also includes the removal of large illegal dumping sites (figure 11) and upkeep of infrastructure to support and manage recreational access.

Figure 11: Fence maintenance and illegal Dumping site

Re-vegetation Projects

Greening Mildura has played a long-standing role in planting, monitoring, and maintaining re-vegetation sites on Council-managed land, contributing significantly to the preservation of native vegetation across the region.

Street tree urban area plantings

A total of 1615 native and exotic street trees were planted in various locations as part of our commitment to achieving 30% canopy coverage under Council's Urban Forest Strategy.

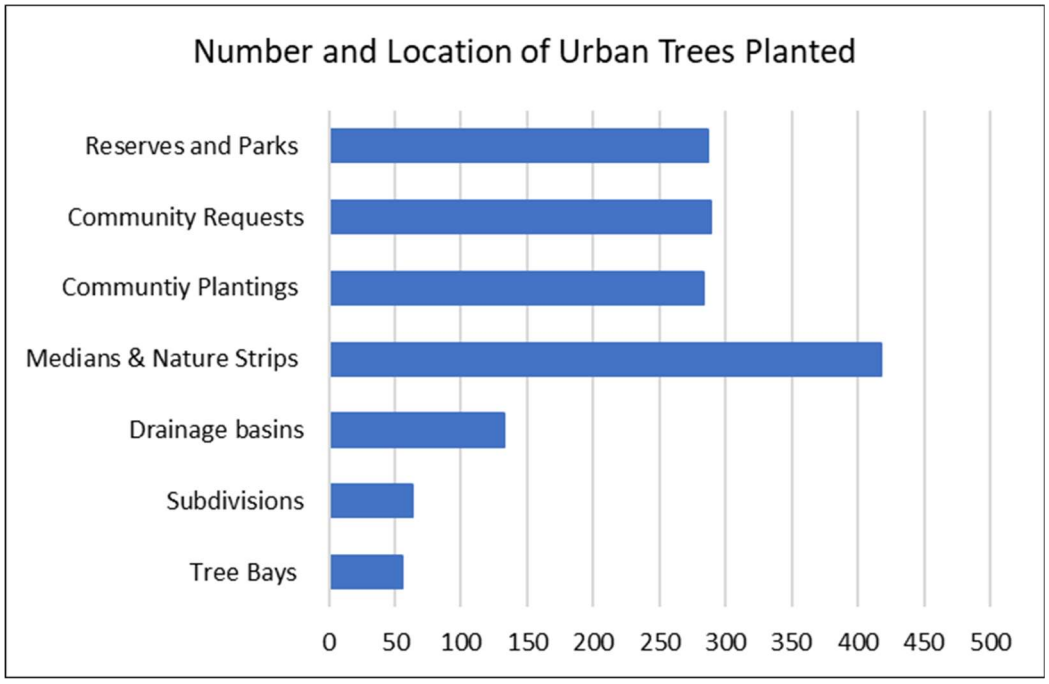

Figure 12: Number and location of trees planted in urban areas.

Figure 13: Street Tree Planting

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- Supporting environmental groups including Landcare and Greening Mildura.
- Supporting 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.
- Supporting Council 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 stakeholders to achieve positive environmental outcomes.
- Increasing community awareness of the importance of urban biodiversity.

Waste

Introduction

Mildura Rural City Council provides a range of waste services to the community. These services help residents, businesses, and visitors responsibly, sort and dispose of waste. This supports sustainability, protects the local and surrounding environment, improves environmental health, recovers valuable resources, and extends the life of landfills.

The waste management services provided by Council include:

- Providing kerbside bin collections for food organics and garden organics (FOGO), garbage, recycling and glass to approximately 27,300 residents and businesses across the municipality.
- Managing two operating landfills, two closed landfills and eight transfer stations, aiming to ensure residents have access to responsibly dispose of waste and recycling where possible.
- Undertaking routine and emergency street sweeping.
- Servicing public place litter and recycling bins.
- Delivering recycling and waste minimisation education to the community.
- Supplying garbage and recycling bins for events.
- Cleaning up illegal dumping on Council managed land.

Council's primary strategic document for waste management is the Waste and Resource Recovery Strategy 2022-2026. Litter and illegal dumping are addressed in the Litter and Illegal Dumping Strategy 2020-2025, with the next update due in 2026.

Information

Waste Diversion

Waste diversion measures the proportion of all waste and recycling brought to Council facilities that are recycled or otherwise diverted from landfills. This includes material from both landfills and transfer stations. In 2024-2025, Council achieved a diversion rate of 59 %, falling short of the 72 % target set for 2025. Council remains committed to achieving 80 % diversion by 2030.

Litter Reduction

Council collects illegal dumping and litter from Council managed land, including roadsides, public spaces and gross pollutant traps. In 2024-2025, this included 15 tonnes of illegal dumping, 1,944 tonnes street sweeping, and 45 tonnes of waste removed from gross pollutant traps.

Council achieved a 51% reduction in gross pollutant trap waste, well above the 10% target set for the financial year. However, during the same period, the number of illegal dumping's increased by 26%.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- From 1 July 2024, Council began its glass-only kerbside recycling service, resulting in the recycling of 540 tonnes of glass during 2024-2025.
- 14,339 tonnes of FOGO/green waste and 3,159 tonnes of comingled recycling were diverted from landfill through kerbside collections during 2024-2025.
- Diversion of 1,388 tyres, 178 mattresses, 2,503 e-waste items, 661 tonnes of steel, 200 tonnes of cardboard, 19,000 litres of oil, and 19,000 chemical drums from landfill.
- In 2024, Council reinstated the Waste Minimisation and Resource Recovery Grant, finalising the first funding round with one successful application awarded $20,000 (excl. GST) in funding to support a project focused on reducing food wastage.
- The 2024 kerbside waste audit identified a four% age (by weight) reduction in FOGO contamination compared to 2023, alongside a 13% age (by weight) increase in garden waste collected from the previous year.
- Following the loss of funding for the Detox Your Home program in late 2023, Council reintroduced battery recycling in mid-2024 through EcoBatt.
- Relaunching of the Recycling Rewards Program to incentivise correct kerbside bin sorting. The program recognises residents who sort waste accurately and provides practical guidance to support improved recycling behaviours.
- An overall waste diversion rate of 59 %.

Challenges

- The Victorian State Government is introducing standardisation for all kerbside bin services across the state. These changes will alter the contents of the four kerbside bins and present a significant challenge, requiring extensive public re-education and engagement to ensure compliance with the new standards. Planning is underway to ensure compliance is achieved by 2027.
- The rise in illegal dumping has been a significant challenge and results in increased costs of both fees and staff hours. Council is currently reviewing its Illegal Dumping and Litter Strategy.
- The 2024 Kerbside Waste Audit identified a leakage rate of 60% in general waste, that is, items that could otherwise be diverted from landfill through recycling or FOGO. The largest contributor was food organics, making up 34% of the general waste bin’s contents. Council is currently working to develop targeted programs and strategies aimed at reducing this leakage.
- The 2024 Kerbside Waste Audit identified a contamination rate of 44 % in commingled recycling and 11 % in FOGO. Council will continue delivering the Recycling Rewards program, which uses incentive-based learning to educate residents. Additional strategies and programs will also be implemented over the coming years to reduce contamination to more acceptable levels.

- The kerbside glass recycling bin presentation rate is consistently low, averaging 11 %. This rate is much lower than other councils. Council will investigate the barriers, through public engagement, and implement strategies to help increase the glass bin presentation rate.

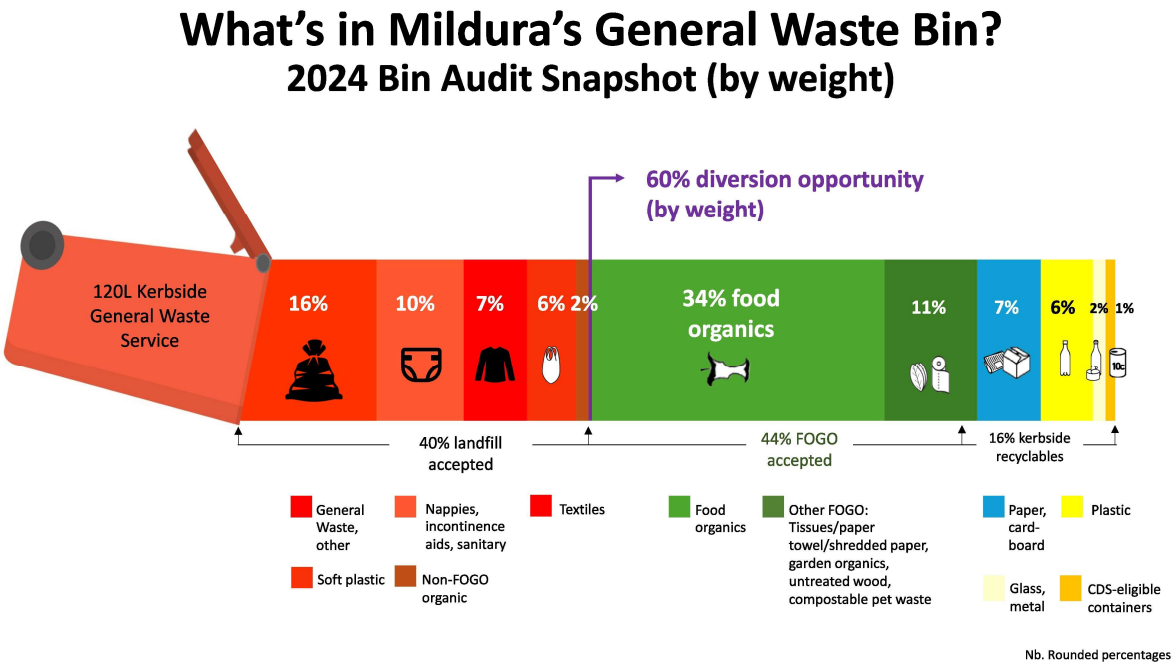

Figure 14: Shows the key percentages from the 2024 Kerbside audit for the general waste bin.

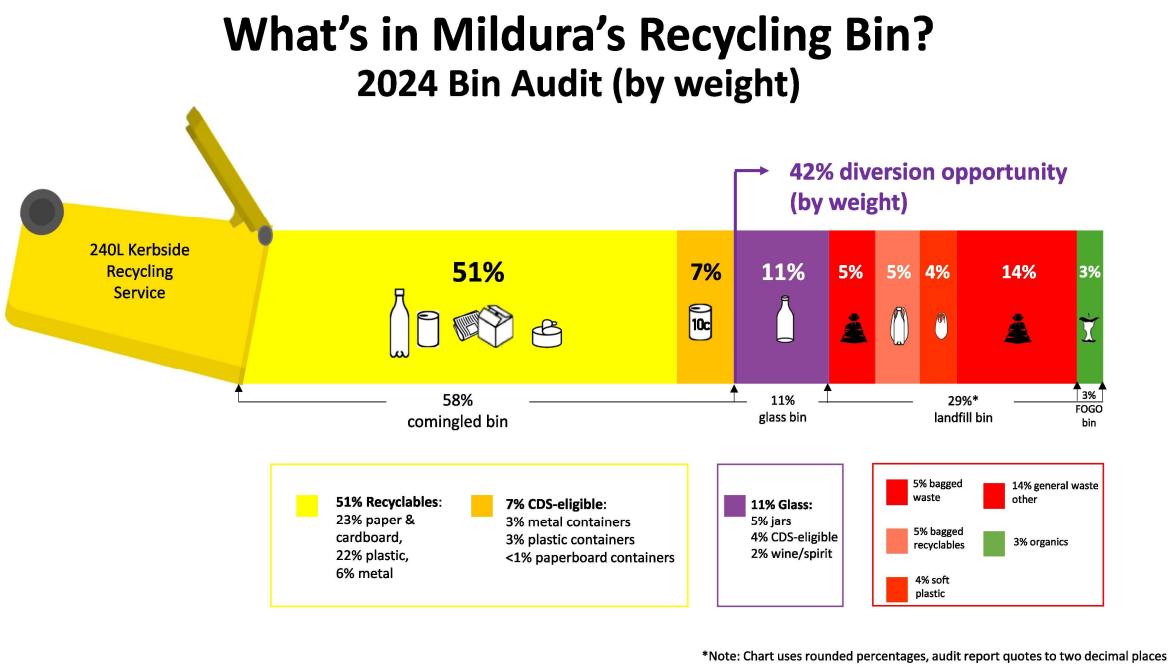

Figure 15: Shows the key percentages from the 2024 Kerbside audit for the commingled recycling waste bin.

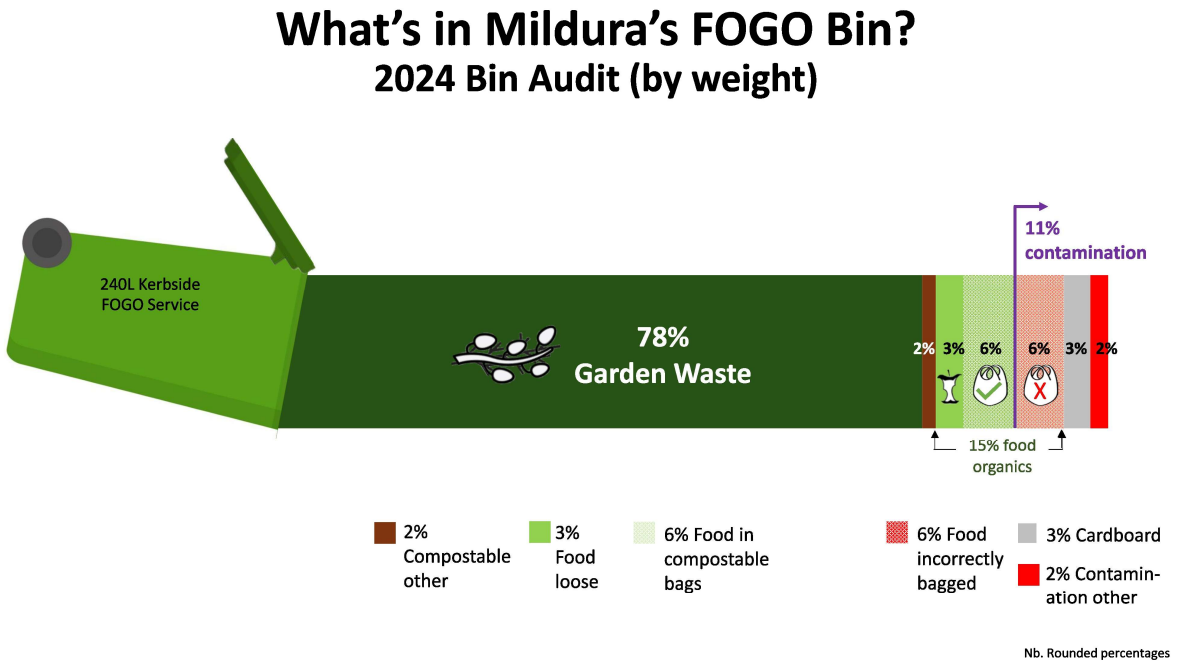

Figure 16: Shows the key percentages from the 2024 Kerbside audit for the FOGO bin.

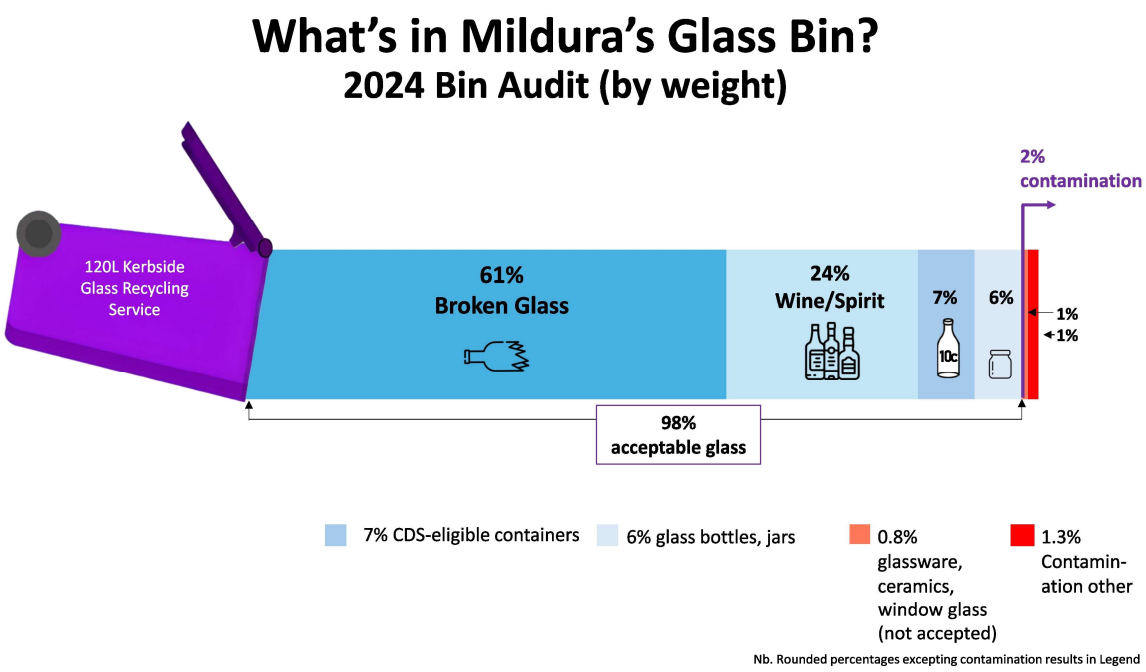

Figure 17: Shows the key percentages from the 202 Kerbside audit for the glass recycling bin.

Community Engagement

Introduction

Community engagement is a crucial element of Council's environmental program. Council delivers environmental education programs for students and community groups at the Mildura Eco Village and facilitates various environmental events and programs including Clean Up Australia Day, National Tree Day, Sunray Warriors and the school's tree program. This aims to promote environmental awareness and responsibility in the community.

Council's Environmental Engagement Action Plan 2024-2028 identifies five key focus areas for engagement: water, energy, climate change, 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.

Figures 17 and 18 show the number of activities conducted and the number of students and community members participating in environmental activities each year.

In total, 64 environmental education activities were delivered in 2024-2025, engaging 2,026 students and community members.

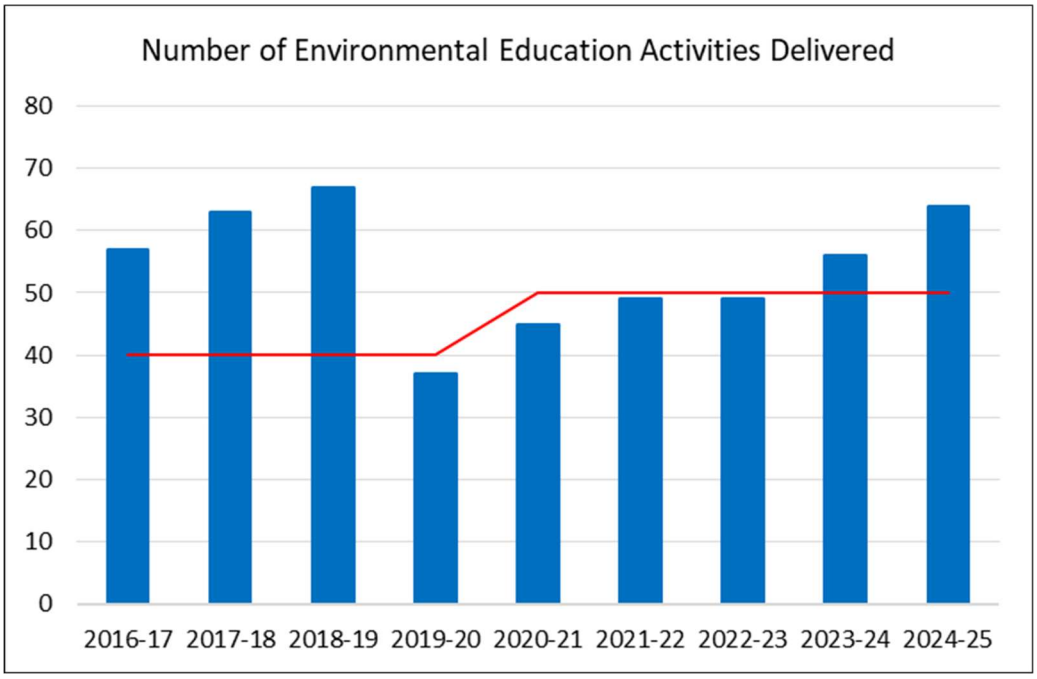

Figure 18: Number of environmental education activities delivered against target.

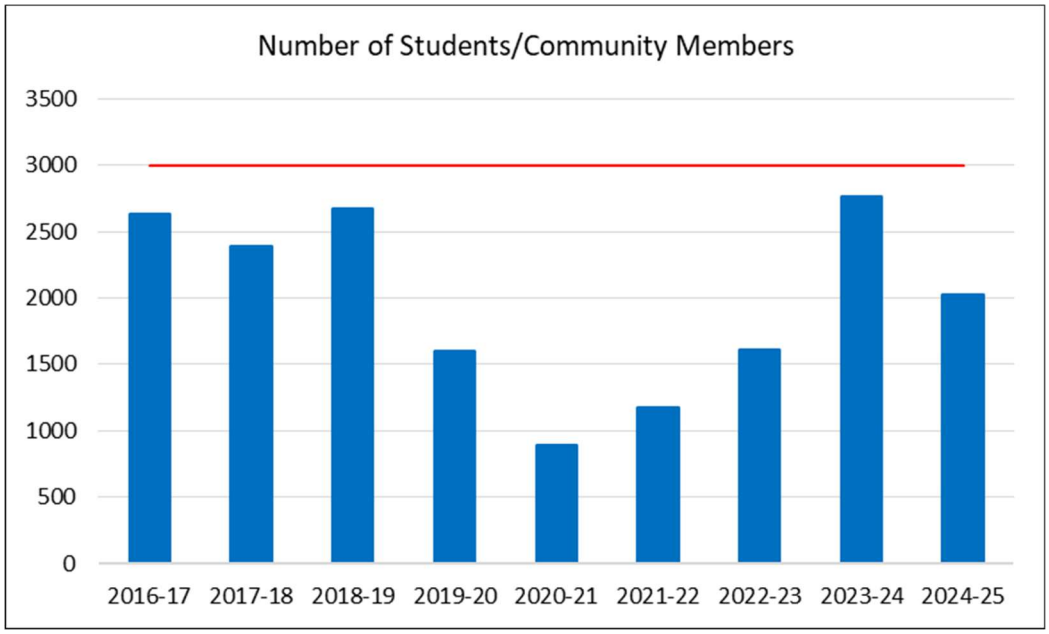

Figure 19: Number of students/community members involved in environmental education activities against target.

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 efficiency environmental education.

Figure 20: Students participating in an Environmental Education Activities at the Mildura Eco Village.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- Delivery of environmental education activities, including:
  - 2,026 participants in environmental and waste education activities.
  - 64 school groups, kindergartens, and community groups engaged in activities.
- World Environment Day event, held in collaboration with other local agencies, focussing on environmental education for primary school aged children.
- 10 schools participated in the school's native tree program, with 250 native plants delivered to schools.
- Continued rollout of the Cool It! Street Tree Planting Program to five streets. Residents are encouraged to care for their nature strip trees. Benefits include improved amenity, reduced summer heat, improved neighbourhood walkability and increased urban biodiversity.
- National Tree Day event including 500 tree giveaways at the Mildura Field Days.
- Community workshops – fruit preserving (figure 20) and electrify everything.
- Delivery of environmental education Sunray Warriors event in collaboration with other agencies - held over 2 days with over 900 local primary school children.

Figure 21: Students participating in an Environmental Education Activity at the Mildura Eco Village.

Figure 22: Lemon and lime preserving workshop.

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.

Community Climate Emergency Advisory Group

Introduction

At its Ordinary Meeting on 26 February 2020, Council became the thirtieth local government in Victoria and the ninety-fourth in Australia to declare a climate emergency.

Council declared we are in a state of climate change emergency requiring urgent action by all levels of government and passed a motion that included: *Conduct community consultation to develop community owned and activated climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies*. The Community Climate Emergency Advisory Group and Community Climate Response Plan 2024-2029 respond to this motion.

Information

The Community Climate Response Plan, developed by the Community Climate Emergency Advisory Group, aims to help the community to understand the current climate situation and offer practical steps to reduce our environmental impact.

It outlines actions for the community to make eco-friendly choices in their own homes, lead healthier lives, use less energy, support the creation of more jobs, and be better prepared for the challenges and risks climate change brings to our community.

The plan includes community owned climate change actions across the themes of health, waste, farming, education, and the natural and urban environments. The Community Climate Emergency Advisory Group lead the implementation of the actions in partnership with other stakeholders including Council.

Figure 21: Community Climate Response Plan 2024-2029.

Achievements and Challenges

Achievements

- Facilitation of the Community Climate Emergency Advisory Group to develop and deliver the community-owned and activated Community Climate Response Plan, as specified under the Climate Emergency Declaration made in 2020.

Challenges

- Maintaining enthusiastic community involvement in the Climate Emergency Community Advisory Group to deliver actions in the Community Climate Response Plan.
- Resourcing to support the delivery of actions in the Community Climate Response Plan.

Environmental Sustainability Targets for 2025-2026

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 % 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 (<1,428ML).
  (*Sustainable Water Use at MRCC, 2017*)

Biodiversity

- Review operational guidelines for natural areas.
- Promote the benefits of native vegetation values
  (*Native Vegetation and Pest Management Plan 2024-2028*)

Waste

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

Community Engagement

- Deliver at least 50 school/community group visits/tours/activities on environmental sustainability per year.
- Implement the Cool It Program.
  Activate and promote the Mildura Eco Village for community environmental sustainability activities.
  (Environmental Engagement Action Plan 2024-2028)

Community Climate Response Plan

- Support the Climate Emergency Community Advisory Group to complete 3 actions in the Community Climate Response Plan.
  (Community Climate Response Plan 2024-2029)

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