

# Environmental Sustainability Report

*2023 - 2024*



Mildura Rural City Council

# Environmental Sustainability Achievements



**Greenhouse Emissions**  
We reduced our overall emissions by **894 tCO<sub>2</sub>-e** with reductions in buildings and facilities, fleet, landfill and scope 3 emissions.



**Energy**  
We've now installed **890kW** of solar panels on Council owned buildings and facilities.



**Fleet**  
We reduced our fleet emissions by **329 tCO<sub>2</sub>-e** from the previous year.



**Biodiversity**  
We planted **1,829** trees in urban areas.

**Community Engagement**  
We engaged **2,768** residents in environmental and waste education.



**Waste**  
We diverted and recycled **12,173** tonnes of kerbside FOGO waste.

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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 2023-2024 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 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 third year reporting on its greenhouse emissions as part of this annual report.

In 2023-2024, a reduction in emissions for buildings and facilities, fleet, landfill and scope 3 emissions (paper and air travel) resulted in an overall decrease of 894 tCO<sub>2</sub>-e in emissions compared to 2022-2023. Electricity saw an increase of 24 tCO<sub>2</sub>-e in emissions due to capturing unmetered electricity accounts for the first time (100 per cent GreenPower was not purchased for unmetered electricity during 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 per cent renewable with zero emissions.

Council recorded a 13 per cent decrease in fuel consumption in 2023-2024 compared to 2022-2023. This decrease was largely due to the introduction of lower emission vehicles in the fleet.

Water consumption in 2023-2024 was 44 per cent higher than the previous year and above the target of 2014-2015 consumption. This is largely due to a drier year than the previous year.

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 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 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, National Tree Day and World Environment 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 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 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 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 2023-2024 emissions compared to the baseline emissions.

Table 1: 2023-24 Emissions compared to the Baseline Emissions by priority area.

Priority Area	Baseline Emissions (tCO2-e)	2023-24 Emissions (tCO2-e)
Landfill	22,568	21,712
Buildings & Facilities (electricity, natural gas & LPG)	5,474	624
Fleet	2,638	2,233
Street Lighting	1,555	0
Water Use, Office Paper & Air Travel (Scope 3)	432	235
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,667</b>	<b>24,804</b>

There has been a slight decrease in landfill emissions between the baseline year of 2018-2019 and 2023-2024. 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, 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 impact 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. Emissions remain only from natural gas and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) use and unmetered electricity (100 per cent GreenPower will be purchased for unmetered electricity from 2024-2025). 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 reduced this year due to a 13 per cent 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.

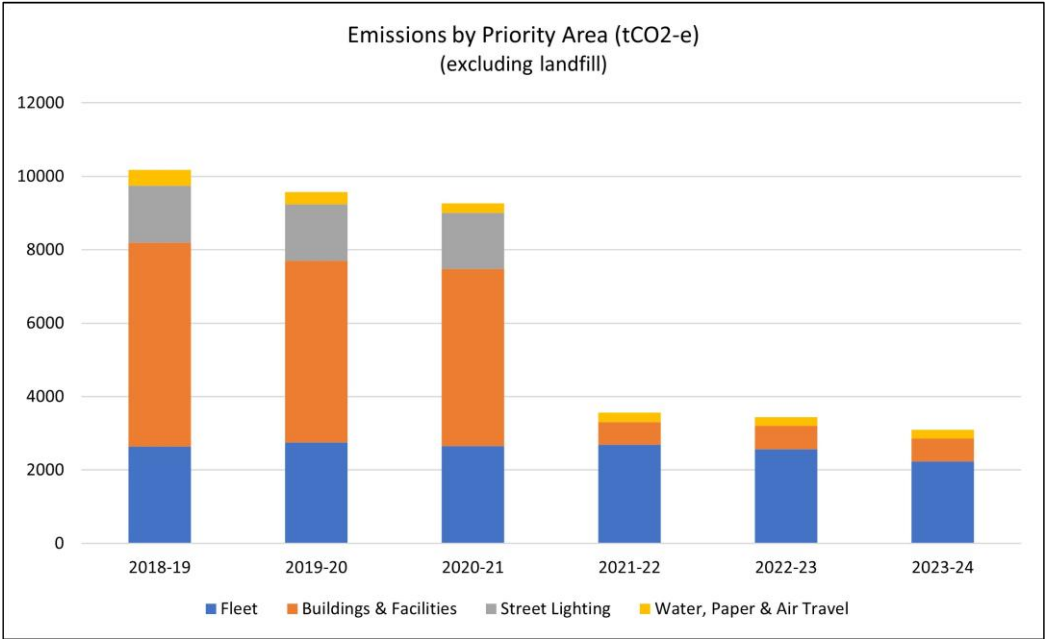


Figure 2: Emissions from Priority Areas, excluding landfill, in tonnes of CO2 equivalent.

## Achievements and Challenges

### Achievements

- Council undertook 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.
- Council began purchasing carbon offsets for flights through Greenfleet. The offsets support re-vegetation projects in Australia and New Zealand.

### 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 fully electric requires a significant budget and is dependent on state/federal government funding.



## 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.

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.

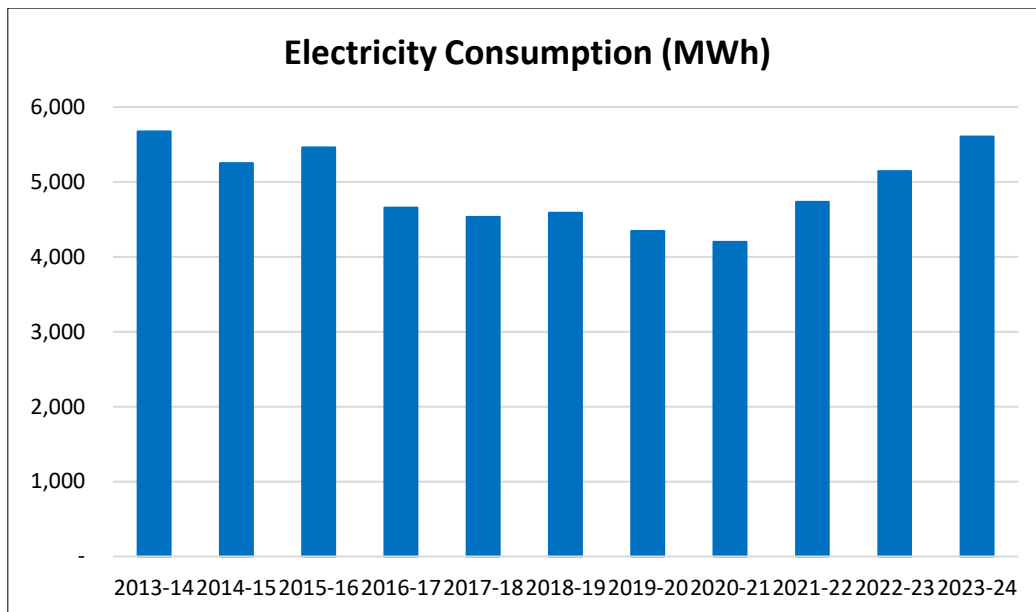


Figure 3: Electricity consumption in megawatt hours.

In 2023-2024 Council saw an increase in large and small market electricity consumption by nine per cent from the previous financial year. This is largely due to the increase in facilities at the Mildura Sporting Precinct being activated.



Figure 4: Solar installed at the Mildura Sporting Precinct.



Figure 5: Solar battery installed at the Red Cliffs Depot.

In 2023-24 Council saw a decrease in natural gas consumption by six per cent from the previous financial year. This is mainly due to a 16 per cent decrease in natural gas consumption at the Mildura Arts Centre. Council also saw a five per cent decrease in LPG consumption from the previous financial year.

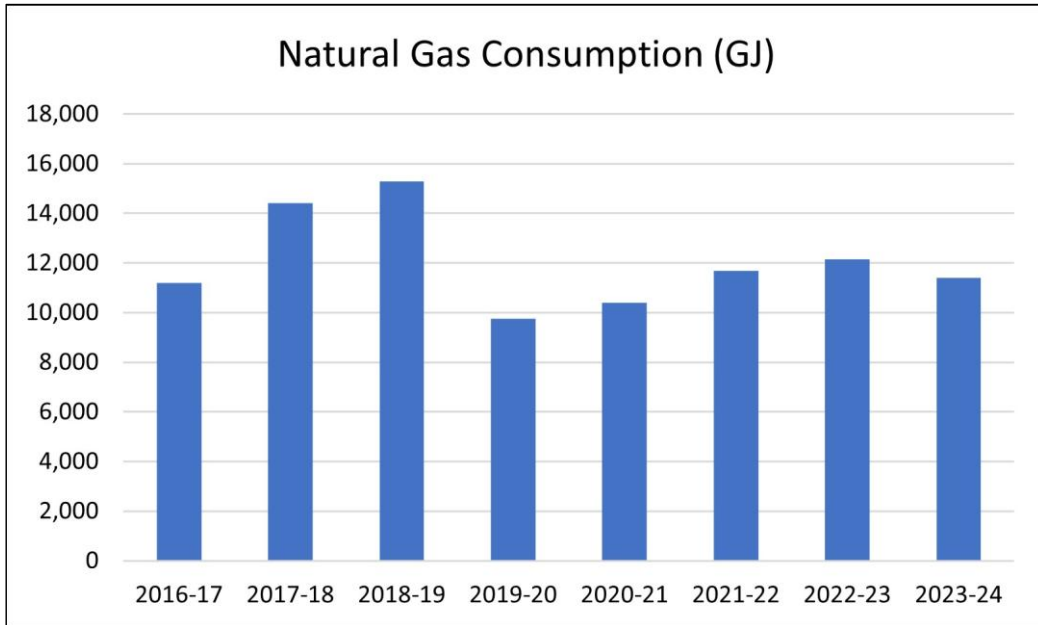


Figure 6: Natural gas consumption in gigajoules.

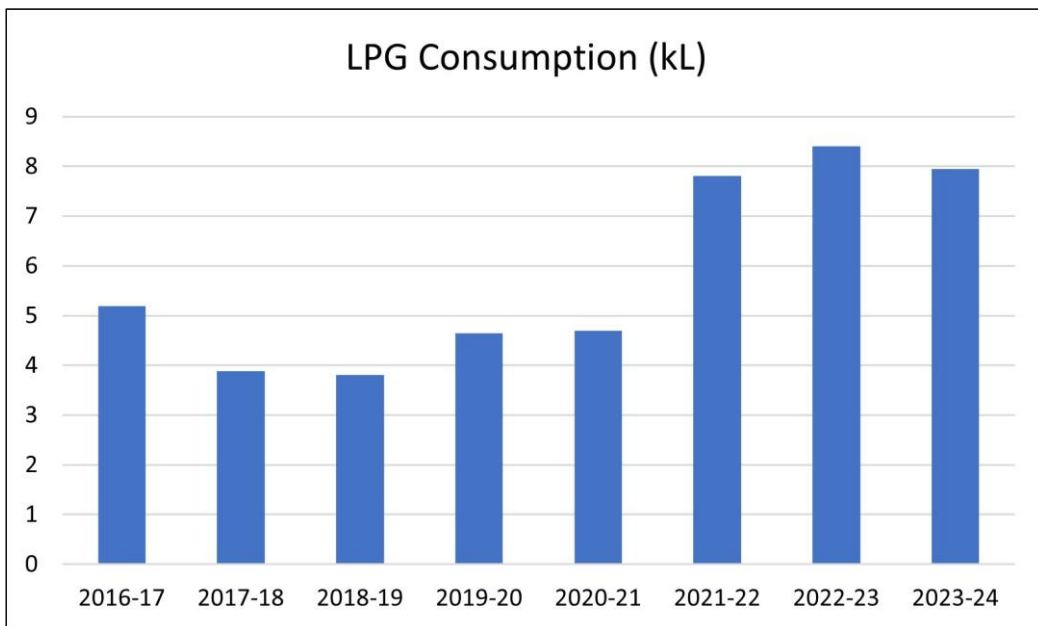


Figure 7: LPG consumption in kilolitres.

## Achievements and Challenges

### Achievements

- Installation of 890 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 99 kilowatt solar PV system at the Mildura Sporting Precinct, 39kW solar PV system and 22kWh battery storage at Powerhouse Place, an additional 30kW solar PV and 13kWh battery storage at the Red Cliffs Depot, and 13kWh battery storage at the Mildura Eco Village.
- 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 over 2,135 kilowatts of solar PV panels on nine commercial properties within the municipality.
- 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.

Fleet is moving its light fleet (passenger vehicles) to electric, with another 5 electric vehicles to be purchased in 2024-2025. Fleet is also researching other heavy plant options for the transition. New vehicles are assessed on a case-by-case basis to find the most efficient and lowest emission vehicles for the job to be undertaken.

Fleet have commenced a fleet review and strategy to examine better methods of obtaining a new fleet and how to utilise the vehicles they have more efficiently. This will be instrumental in Fleet’s planning the way forward.

## Information

During 2023-2024, the Council’s fleet totalled 280 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 2023-2024.

Table 3 shows the fuel efficiency of passenger and light commercial vehicles during 2023-2024. The most efficient vehicles in Council’s fleet are the electric vehicles. Of the petrol combustion vehicles, the four-cylinder hybrid vehicles are the most efficient.

**Table 2: Fuel consumption of vehicles in 2023-2024.**

Fuel Type	No. of Vehicles	Total Litres ('000)
Petrol	50	39
Diesel	206	784
LPG	1	0
Electric	7	0
Hybrid	16	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>831</b>

Table 3: Fuel efficiency of passenger and light commercial vehicles in 2023-2024.

Vehicle & Engine Type	No. of Vehicles in Fleet	Total Litres Used	Total Km Travelled	Litres/100 Km
<b>Passenger Vehicles</b>				
4CYL – Diesel	5	1,578	21,478	7.21
4CYL – Hybrid	16	8,327	108,350	7.69
4CYL – Petrol	34	34,013	366,175	9.29
6CYL – Petrol	6	838	7,348	11.41
Electric	6	0	24,112	0
<b>Utility and Commercial Vehicles</b>				
4CYL – Diesel	88	122,936	1,130,084	10.88
6CYL – Petrol	1	1,019	8,977	10.35

Fuel usage totalled 831 kilolitres in 2023-2024, a decrease of 88 kilolitres from 2022-2023. This decrease is due to reduced diesel usage across utilities and passenger vehicles and more hybrid vehicles in the fleet.

Implementing new fleet reporting systems will result in a continuing emphasis on fuel efficiencies, reporting, route planning and works scheduling.

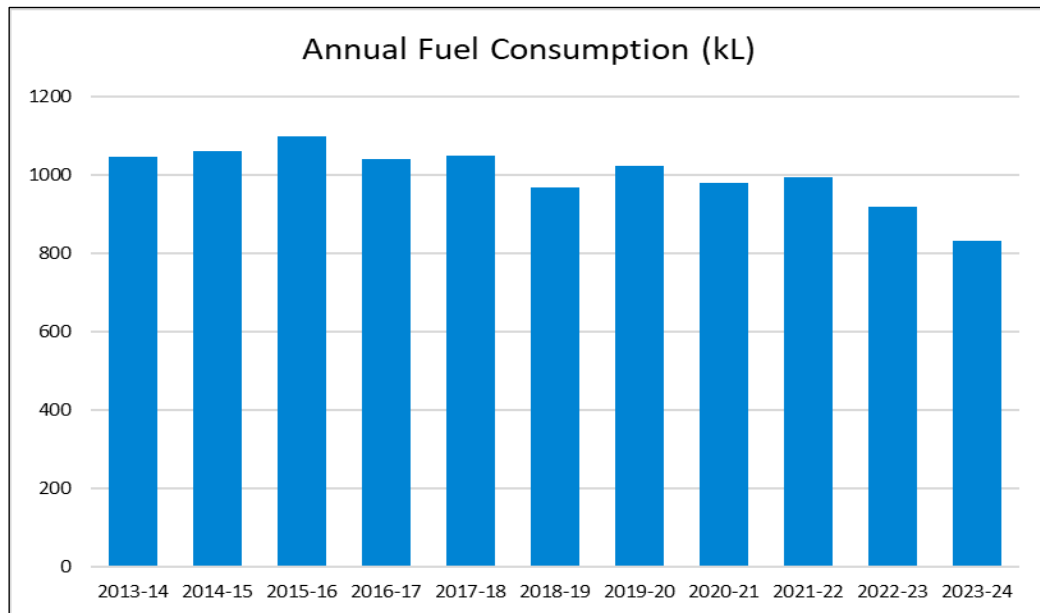


Figure 8: Fuel consumption for all fleet vehicles in kilolitres.

## Achievements and Challenges

### Achievements

- Implementation of carpool booking policy and usage of pool booking site for clearer utilisation reporting, and more efficient usage of current vehicles.
- Installation of an additional four electric vehicle charging ports at Hughes Street, Ouyen.
- Commencement of Fleet Strategy with the aim of aligning fleets' future with the Towards Zero Emissions Strategy and achieving the best possible outcomes.



Figure 9: Electric vehicle charging stations in Hughes Street, Ouyen.

### Challenges

- Implementation of a new fleet management system to better monitor vehicle usage and efficiencies and inform future savings opportunities.
- Implementing a consistent approach to carpooling 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 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 in the 2023-2024 financial year increased by 44 per cent from the previous year and was above the target of 1,428 ML (2014-15 consumption). Urban water usage increased by 24 per cent overall, and a significant increase was seen in rural water usage (59 per cent) and recycled water (49 per cent).

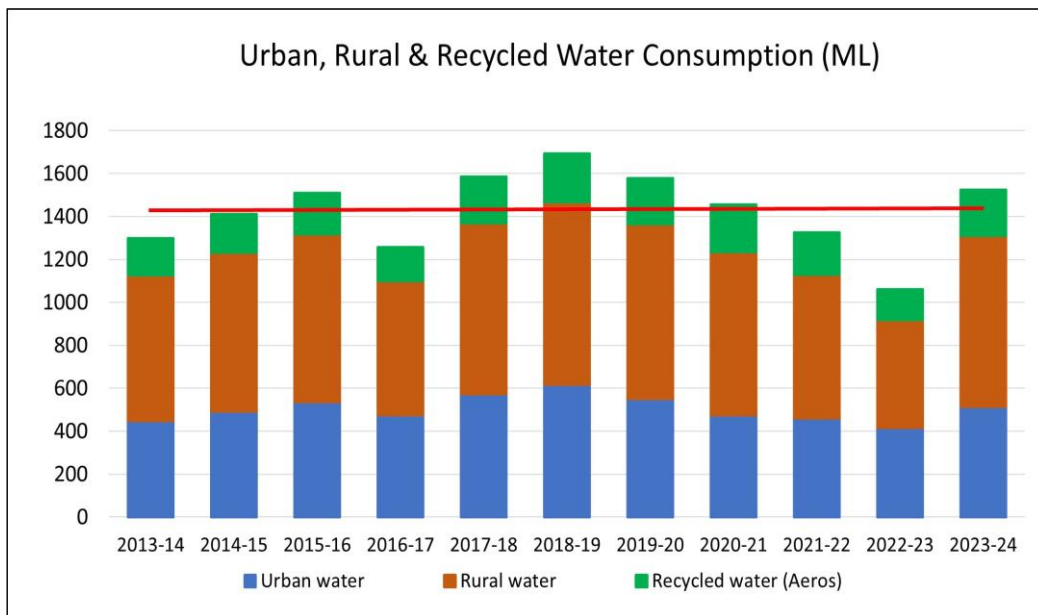


Figure 10: Urban, rural and recycled water consumption against target in megalitres.

### Stormwater

Council manages the following 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. Etiwanda Wetlands saw the installation of a disability access table. New signs have been developed and printed for Mildura South Wetlands and Lake Ranfurly.

## Achievements and Challenges

### Achievements

- New signs developed for Mildura South Wetlands and repair of signs at Lake Ranfurly.
- The first of two disability access tables installed at Etiwanda Wetlands.
- Natural regeneration of large numbers of Eucalypt trees 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:

- *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 1,460 rabbit warrens were controlled by Council and Landcare across roadsides and natural areas, along with five bridal creeper plants and 243 African boxthorn plants.

##### *Drought Recovery Project – Agriculture Victoria*

Drought Recovery Grant funding was utilised to control rabbits on roadsides which resulted in 9,768 warrens being controlled across 46.5 kilometres of roadside.

##### *Other Rabbit Control*

Across the municipality, reported rabbit hotspots were treated, resulting in 1,301 warrens treated across approximately 40 kilometres of roadside. Through Council's Community Grants Program, 218 warrens were treated across approximately 22 kilometres.

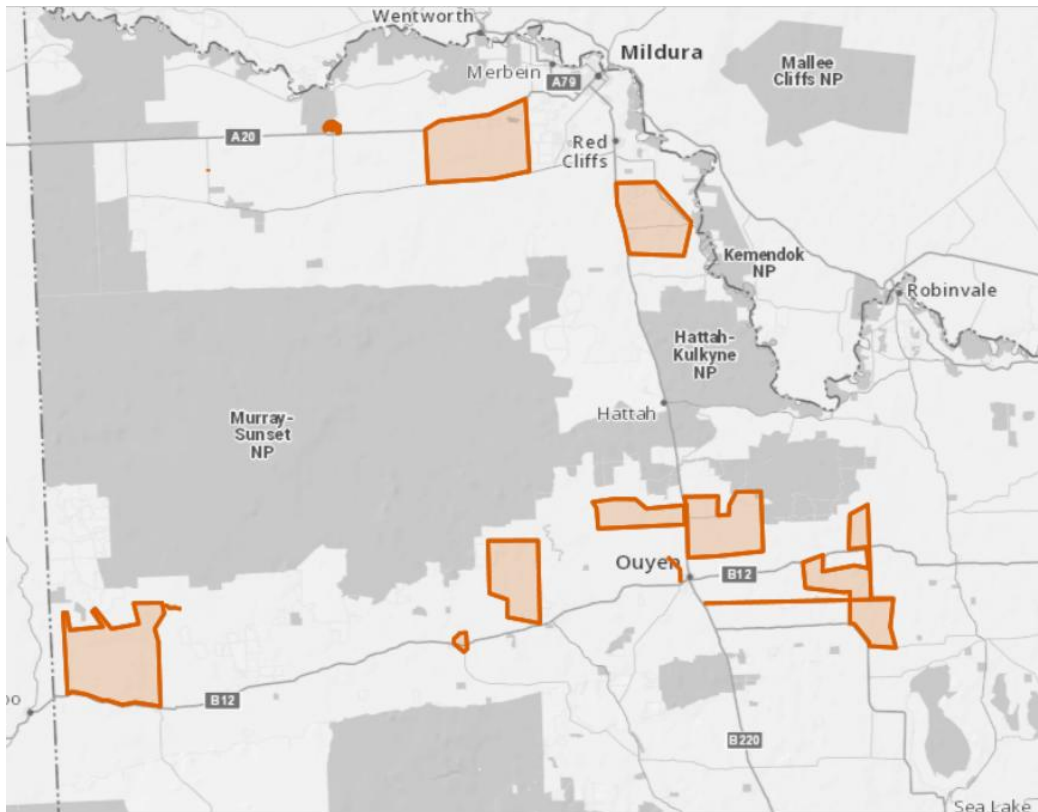


Figure 11: Mapped locations of rabbit control in 2023-2024 across the municipality.

### *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 at Blandowski Walk and buffel grass in Merbein were controlled.

At Lake Cullulleraine a rabbit baiting program was undertaken in conjunction with Lower Murray Water and funded by the Mallee Catchment Management Authority. This work resulted in 130 warrens treated and bait laid in 34 bait stations across 297 hectares.

### *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.

In addition, one landholder applied for the Rural Roadside Revegetation program and received 100 plants of locally occurring species for revegetation.

### *Drought Recovery Project – Agriculture Victoria*

The Millewa region, which had been impacted by sand drift, was revegetated; 20.59 kilometres of roadside were seeded with locally occurring species, and 200 *Eucalyptus dumosa* seedlings were planted.

To restore the natural environment, 7,000 locally occurring trees, shrubs, and groundcovers were planted on private property.



Figure 12: Local species planted on private property.

### **Street tree urban area plantings**

A total of 1,829 street trees, including both native and exotic species, were planted in our municipality in a variety of locations over the 2023-2024 financial year.

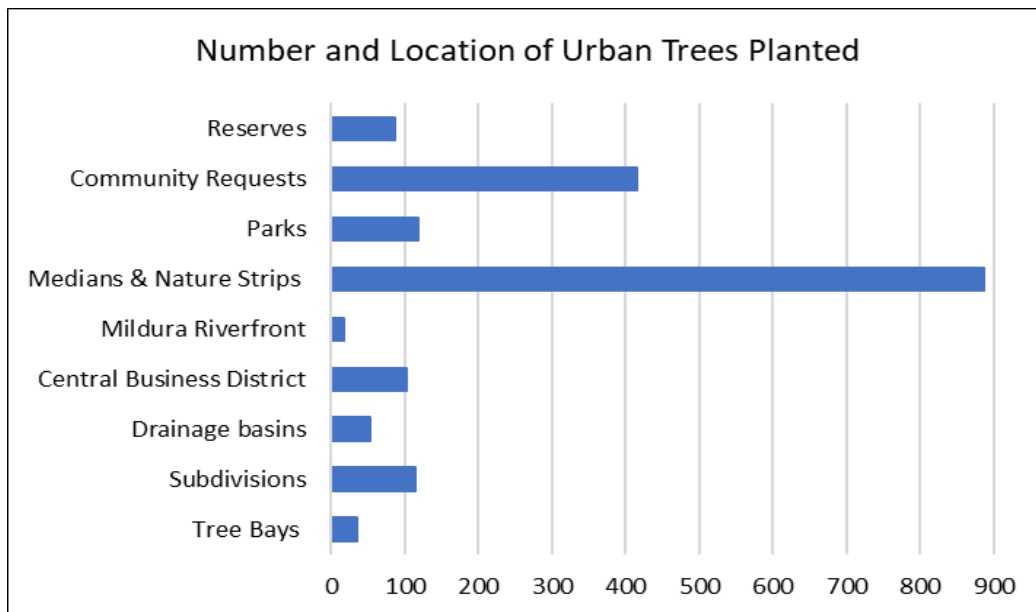


Figure 13: Number and location of trees planted in urban areas.

## Achievements and Challenges

### Achievements

- Supporting environmental groups such as Landcare and Greening Mildura.
- Supporting private landholders to revegetate their properties with locally occurring species.
- 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

Mildura Rural City Council provides many waste services to the community and residents. These services allow residents, businesses, and visitors to responsibly sort and dispose of the waste they produce. These services assist in improving sustainability, protecting the local and surrounding environment, improving general environmental health, recovering valuable resources, extending the life of landfills, and educating residents and visitors on good and sustainable waste practices.

The waste management services that Council provides include:

- The provision of kerbside bin collections for food organics and garden organics (FOGO), garbage, and recycling for approximately 27,700 residents and businesses across the municipality.
- Management of two operating landfills, two closed landfills and eight transfer stations, providing reasonable access to all residents to responsibly dispose of waste and recycling when and 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 Mildura Rural City Council waste facilities divided by the amount that is recycled or diverted from landfill. This includes all waste from our landfill and transfer stations. In 2023-2024 Council achieved a total waste diversion from landfill rate of 55 per cent. Council has a target of 72 per cent diversion by 2025 and 80 per cent diversion by 2030.

#### Litter Reduction

Each year Council collects illegal dumping and litter from Council land including roadsides, public land, and gross pollutant traps. In 2023-2024, 20 tonnes of illegal dumping including 33 tyres, 35 mattresses and 15 electronic waste items were collected, and 95 tonnes of waste was removed from gross



pollutant traps. We had a 25 per cent increase in the number of CRM reports for illegal dumping in 2023-2024 (the highest received to date).

Council has a target of a 10 per cent reduction in the tonnes of illegal dumping collected, 10 per cent reduction in 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.

## Achievements and Challenges

### Achievements

- In 2024 Council rolled out the glass only recycling bins in alignment with the Victoria State Government Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021. This requires all residential properties with access to kerbside collections receive a glass only recycling bin along with an education pack. The collection service began on 1 July 2024.
- 12,173 tonnes of FOGO and 4,241 tonnes of comingled recycling were diverted from landfill through the kerbside collections over the LGA.
- 2,600 tonnes of green waste were diverted from landfill from all Council waste facilities.
- 6,523 tyres, 1,475 mattresses, 2,361 e-waste items, 2,183 tonnes of steel, 83 tonnes of cardboard, 17,153 litres of oil, and 13,391 chemical drums were diverted from landfill from all Council waste facilities.
- An overall waste diversion rate of 55 per cent was achieved.



Figure 14: Kerbside glass bin being rolled out to residents in April 2024.



## Challenges

- The 2023 kerbside collection waste audits conducted in October 2023 showed the following stats:
  - General waste bin (red lid) showed a contamination rate of 55 per cent, the main contributors being food organics at 27 percent, followed by comingled recycling at 18 per cent. The average output showed 4.49 kilograms per residential bin, this shows a steady decrease since 2021.
  - Comingled recycling (yellow lid) had a contamination rate of 19 percent, this saw contributors such as drink containers that are eligible for the new Victorian Container Deposit Scheme (CDS). Other contaminants included bagged general waste, non-recyclable rigid plastics, and soft plastics in the form of films/bags.
  - Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO – green lid) had a contamination rate of 15 per cent, 8 per cent contamination was food waste incorrectly bagged.
- Encouraging the community and businesses to recycle more materials. The introduction of the new kerbside glass bin diverting more waste from landfill.
- Illegal dumping in natural areas, parks and on roadsides. Number of illegal dumping requests has increased by 25 per cent with the highest number reported to date.
- The State Government has released draft Service Standards for Household Waste and Recycling that will impact how Council is to provide certain waste services across the community.
- Providing an environmentally, economically, and socially practical service in the face of increasing regulatory and financial pressures. The Victorian landfill levy will be significantly increasing in the 2025-2026 financial year.

## What's in Mildura's General Waste Bin? 2023 Bin Audit Snapshot (by weight)

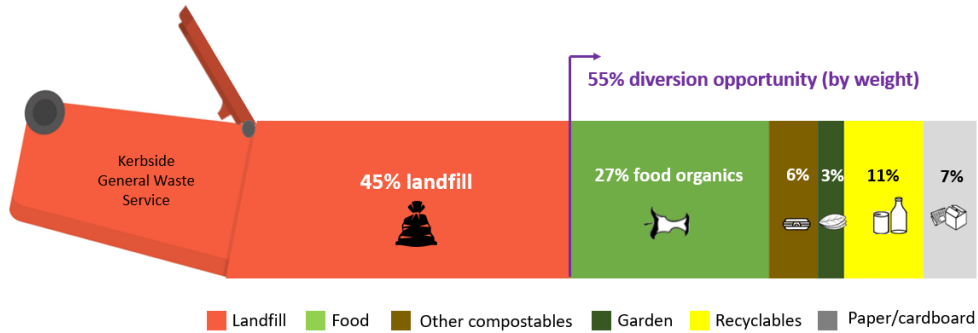


Figure 15: Shows the key percentages from the 2023 Kerbside audit for the general waste bin.

## What's in Mildura's Organics Bin? 2023 Bin Audit (by weight)



Figure 16: Shows the key percentages from the 2023 Kerbside audit for the FOGO waste bin.

## What's in Mildura's Recycling Bin? 2023 Bin Audit (by weight)

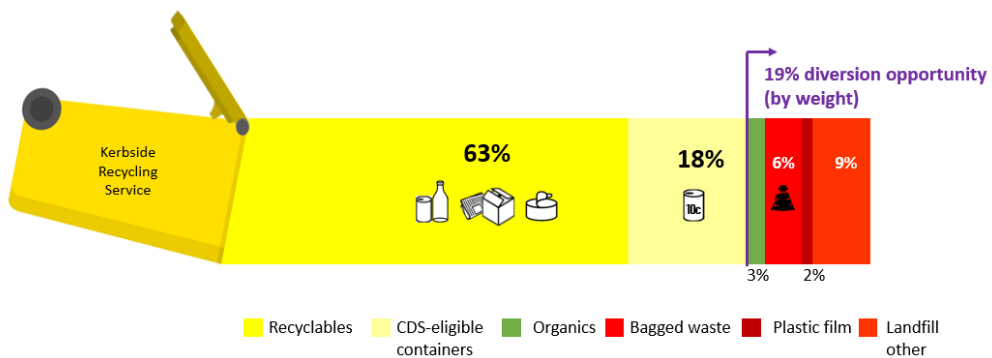


Figure 17: Shows the key percentages from the 2023 Kerbside audit for the comingled recycling bin.

## 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 Engagement Action Plan for 2024-2028 aims to provide a comprehensive approach to environmental education. Key areas of focus for community engagement in environmental issues include 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 18 and 19 show the number of activities conducted and the number of students and community members participating in environmental activities each year.

In total, 56 environmental education activities were delivered in 2023-2024, engaging 2,768 students and community members.

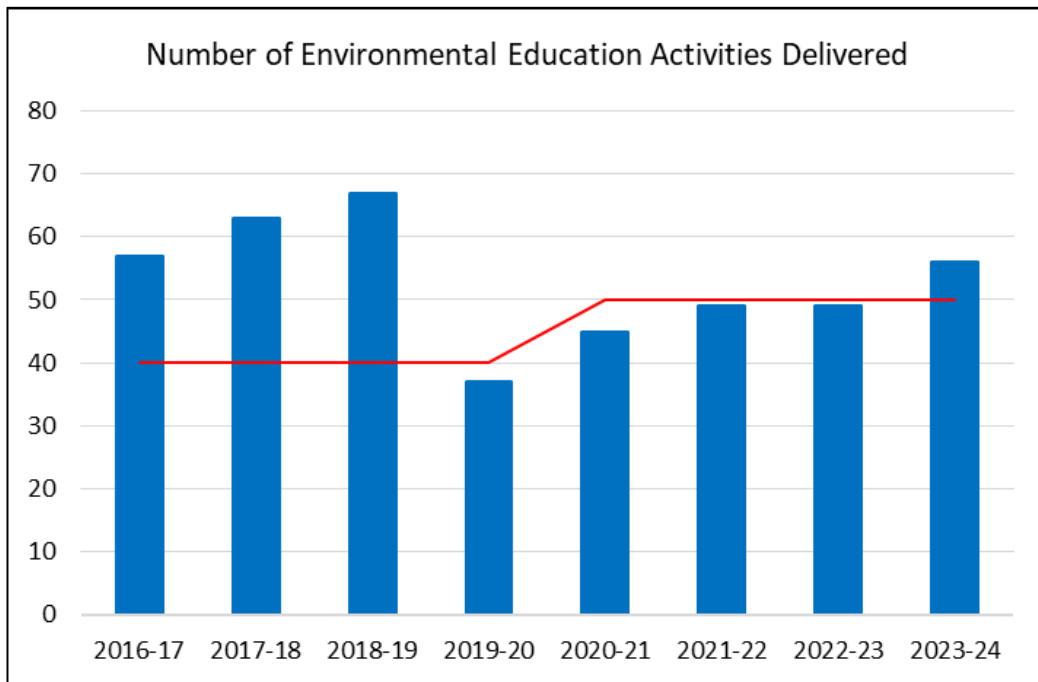


Figure 18: Number of environmental education activities delivered against target.

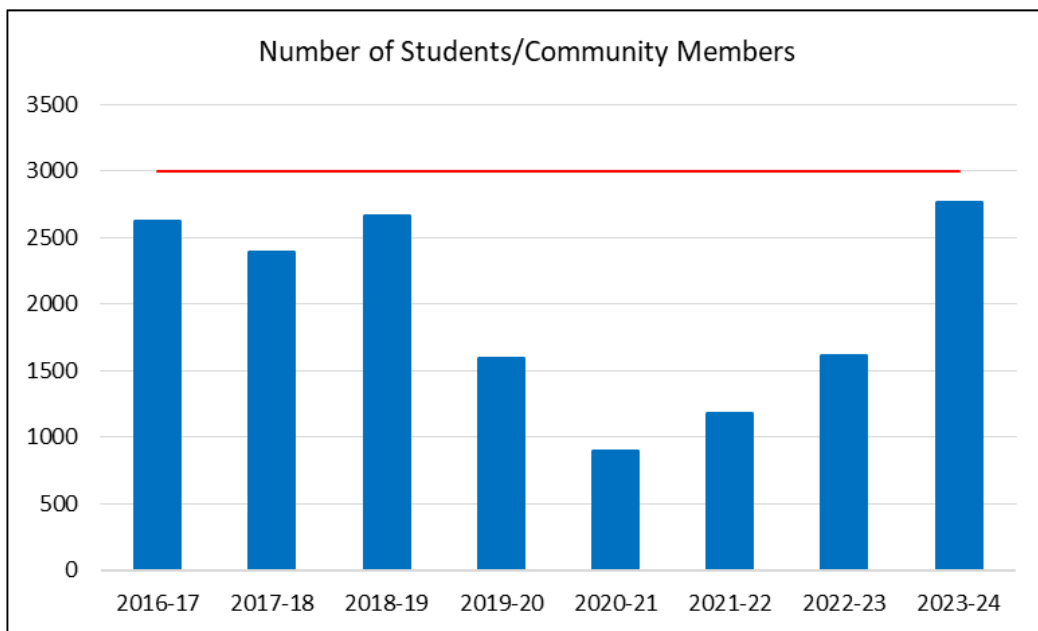


Figure 19: Number of students/community members involved in environmental education activities against target.

### 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 Activity at the Mildura Eco Village.

## Achievements and Challenges

### Achievements

- Finalised the Environmental Education Plan 2020-2024.
- Developed the Environmental Engagement Action Plan 2024-2028.
- 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:
  - 2,768 participants in environmental and waste education activities.
  - 56 school groups, kindergartens, and community groups engaged and completed activities.

- 15 schools participated in the school's native tree program, with 500 native plants delivered to schools.
- One event held at the Mildura Eco Village, "Tis the season to be sustainable" community day, including a tree decorating workshop using recycled materials as decorations.
- Continued rollout of the Cool It! Street Tree Replacement Program to 46 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.
- Two Cool It related events:
  - Cooling the Streets
  - It's Not Easy Being Green in partnership with The Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit and Greening Mildura.
- National Tree Day event, Mildura Field Days 500 tree giveaway.



Figure 21: It's Not Easy Being Green Event.





Figure 22: Cool It trees ready to be planted.

## 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.

# Community Climate Response Plan 2024-2029

## Introduction

Presented below (Figure 23) is historical climate data starting from 1950 to current showing the recorded mean maximum temperature, mean minimum temperature and total annual rainfall for each year. This data was collated from the Bureau of Meteorology site.

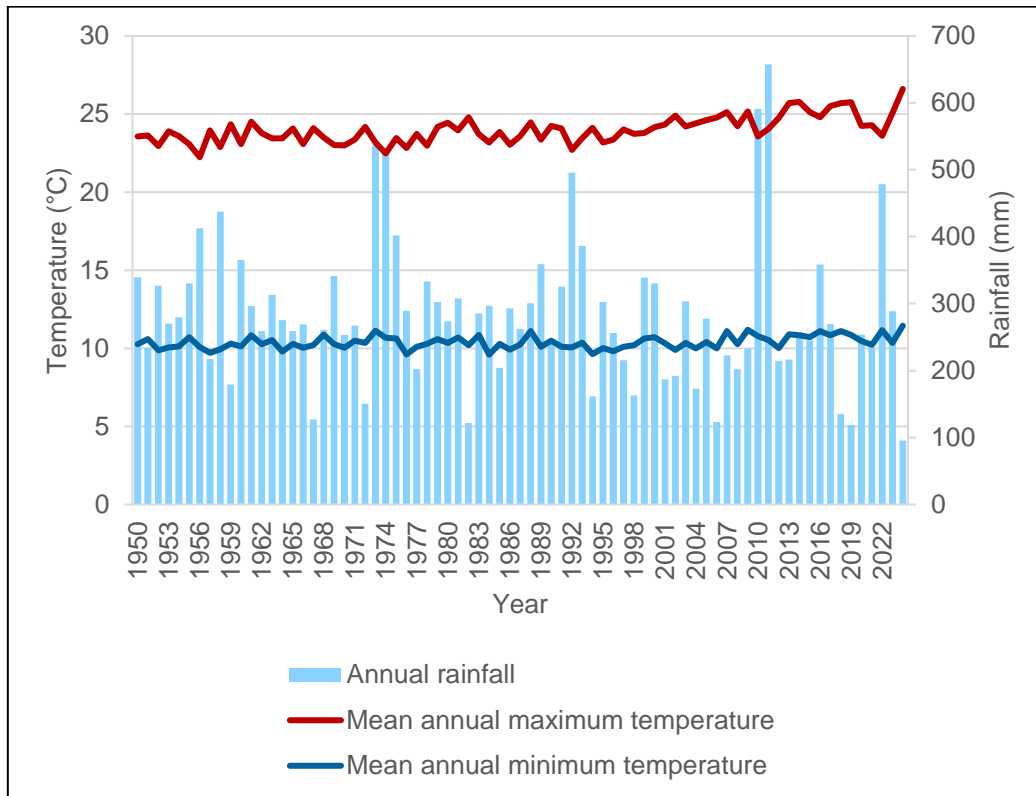


Figure 23: Historical climate data.

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 to:

- I. Write to all State and Federal parliamentarians whose offices lie within the MRCC municipal boundaries, and to the Prime Minister, the federal Opposition Leader and the Victorian Premier, expressing our position on the climate emergency (completed);
- II. Obtain current baseline greenhouse gas emission levels on municipal services, operations and infrastructure, and implement and report on a strategy to reduce these emissions including an analysis of our capacity to reach a target of zero-net emissions by 2050 (strategy developed and being implemented); and



- III. Conduct community consultation to develop community owned and activated climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

This Plan addresses item (iii) of the motion.

## Information

The Community Climate Response Plan, endorsed by Council in February 2024, is a community plan that aims to help everyone 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 will lead the implementation of the actions in partnership with other stakeholders including Council.



Figure 24: Community Climate Response Plan 2024-2029.

## Achievements and Challenges

### **Achievements**

- Facilitation of the Community Climate Emergency Advisory Group (CCEAG) to develop the community-owned and activated Community Climate Response Plan 2024-2029, as specified under the Climate Emergency Declaration made in 2020.

### **Challenges**

- Maintaining momentum within the Climate Emergency Community Advisory Group after the plan was developed.

## Environmental Sustainability Targets for 2024-2025

### 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 (<1,428ML).

*(Sustainable Water Use at MRCC, 2017)*

### Biodiversity

- Develop operational guidelines for rural roadsides.
- Produce a road works/maintenance Quick Guide for the Road Safety Exemption.

*(Native Vegetation and Pest Management Plan 2024-2028)*

### 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 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.

*(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.

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