

Community Climate Response Plan 2024–2029

Working together towards
climate resilience in the Mallee.





Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land, which now comprises the Mildura Rural City municipality. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and celebrate and respect their continuing cultures and acknowledge the memories of their ancestors.



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This plan presents various opportunities for taking action against climate change across the Mildura Rural City Council municipality. It builds on the work of existing community groups and government agencies that are already focused on climate actions.

The primary objectives of this plan are to:

- Identify the most critical actions required to address climate change.
- Provide guidance and information to key stakeholders regarding the actions that need to be taken to address climate change.

The plan is intended to serve as a reference document for the Climate Emergency Community Advisory Group (CECAG) to understand the initial steps/actions that can be taken to reduce the impacts of climate change in our community. Six priority areas have been identified where action or change is needed:

- Health
- Waste
- Farming
- Education
- Natural Environment
- Urban Environment

This is the first plan produced by the CECAG. Implementation of the actions will be led by the group and supported by the partners identified in the action plan. We will report on the progress of implementing actions on an annual basis, and we will revise the plan every four years to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Council will support this reporting process

Declaration of Climate Emergency

On 26 February 2020, Mildura Rural City Council (Council) became the 30th local government in Victoria and the 94th in Australia to declare a climate emergency. It is a call to action for all levels of government to take meaningful steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to develop strategies to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Council's commitment to reduce emissions and consult with the community on climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies is an important step in the right direction. We must all work together to ensure that our actions today will create a better future for generations to come.

Message from the Climate Emergency Community Advisory Group

We are proud to bring you this Community Climate Response Plan. It's our first step to bringing everyone in the Mallee region together to address climate change. We're talking about everyone – residents, businesses, schools, and local government. Our aim is to come up with plans that will protect our unique environment, help our local economy to grow, and make sure everyone in our community is doing well.

We invite you to read this Community Climate Response Plan. We hope it will inspire you to get involved in your community and join us in our effort to reduce the amount of carbon in our atmosphere.

As we continue to work with the community, we're sure that together, we can make the Mallee a stronger, more prosperous place that takes good care of our environment.

Together, we can create a brighter and more sustainable future for our community.

Introduction

Climate change might seem like a complicated topic, but it's really about too many greenhouse gases in the air. These gases trap heat, sort of like a blanket around the Earth that stops it from cooling down. This has been happening since we started using coal, oil, and gas for energy, and it's causing these gases in the air to go up.

If we want to tackle this issue in the Mallee, we need to be open-minded, sensible, and focused. It's about finding real solutions that help us manage energy use, the economy, and the environment. We know that decisions need to be based on solid evidence. That's why we're committed to having open conversations and working together to find strategies that help both people and the environment, while also supporting economic growth.

Why take action?

Our aim is to provide a clear understanding of the current climate situation and suggest practical steps to reduce our environmental impact while adapting to climate change.

Climate change poses a significant threat to Australians' health. Worsening weather conditions increase the risk of adverse health impacts and put immense pressure on existing health services.

Changes to our climate are resulting in desertification, environmental degradation, rising sea-levels and an increase in frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as heavy rainfall, prolonged droughts and cyclones. These changes are causing an average of more than 20 million people to leave their homes and move to other areas in their countries each year (Climate change and disaster displacement | UNHCR).

Climate change has a range of impacts that can lead to displacement and poor living conditions. In many parts of the world, natural resources such as drinking water are becoming increasingly scarce. It is essential that cropping and livestock systems continue to adapt rapidly to successfully manage the stark trajectory of increased intensity in weather conditions.

Climate change is one of the most significant issues we face, and we are at a critical crossroads. Its impact is being felt across the globe with unprecedented severity and scope. Failure to take decisive action now will make it more challenging and costly to deal with these consequences in the future.

To make this plan, we've looked at scientific data, reviewed current initiatives, and developed strategies that help people and the environment at the same time. We've done this in a fair, refreshing way that encourages everyone in local government and the community to work together.

By thinking this way, we give everyone the chance to make eco-friendly choices in their own homes, while local governments can put measures in place that meet community needs. If we all work together, we can lead healthier lives, use less energy, create more jobs, and be better prepared for the challenges climate change brings. This plan is just the start of getting everyone involved, steering our community towards a successful and green future.

Our District, Our Story

Our diverse agricultural landscape – from sun-kissed citrus orchards and lush table grape vines to wide, rolling fields of grains and legumes – is a testament to the tenacity and resilience of our people and communities. Beyond our irrigated crops, broad acre farming has helped carve the Mallee’s reputation as a leading agricultural hub, delivering bountiful yields of staple crops essential to both domestic and overseas markets.

Throughout the years, our community’s unshakable spirit has seen us through varied challenges, including droughts, floods, and economic changes. These experiences have highlighted our shared adaptability and determination, with all sectors – from small family orchards to expansive grain farms – consistently discovering innovative solutions to prevail over adversity.

Now, as we address the pressing issue of climate change, the Mallee’s rich history offers invaluable lessons on sustainable resource management and the transformative power of collective action. By building on our region’s legacy of resilience and prosperity – visible in every field and farm – we confidently face the future. With concerted efforts, we can devise intelligent strategies to safeguard our environment, invigorate our economy, and enhance the well-being of our communities.



The big picture

The Mallee in North-West Victoria is special. We've got the combination of a dry climate, farming needs, and the effects of climate change. For us to thrive, we need to work together and tackle these issues head-on.

Our journey starts with getting everyone involved: families, businesses, schools, and more. It's about making sure everyone has the information and help they need to pitch in, because we all have a role to play in making our region green, our economy stable, and our people healthy.

Our long-term plan needs to look at everything that makes up our community. From our towns and natural spaces, our health, how we deal with rubbish, what we teach our kids, and how we farm our lands. When we consider all these parts together, we're setting ourselves up for a future that's stronger and greener.

One of the most important parts of our plan is education. We need to give our people, especially our kids, the knowledge and tools they need to make smart choices and make a difference. It's also about making sure our businesses and farms can adapt to a changing climate and market, while pushing for new, sustainable ways of doing things.

Teamwork is crucial, especially when it comes to addressing the impacts of climate change. We recognise that the consequences of this global issue will not be distributed equally and that those who are already less able to respond or adapt will be disproportionately affected.

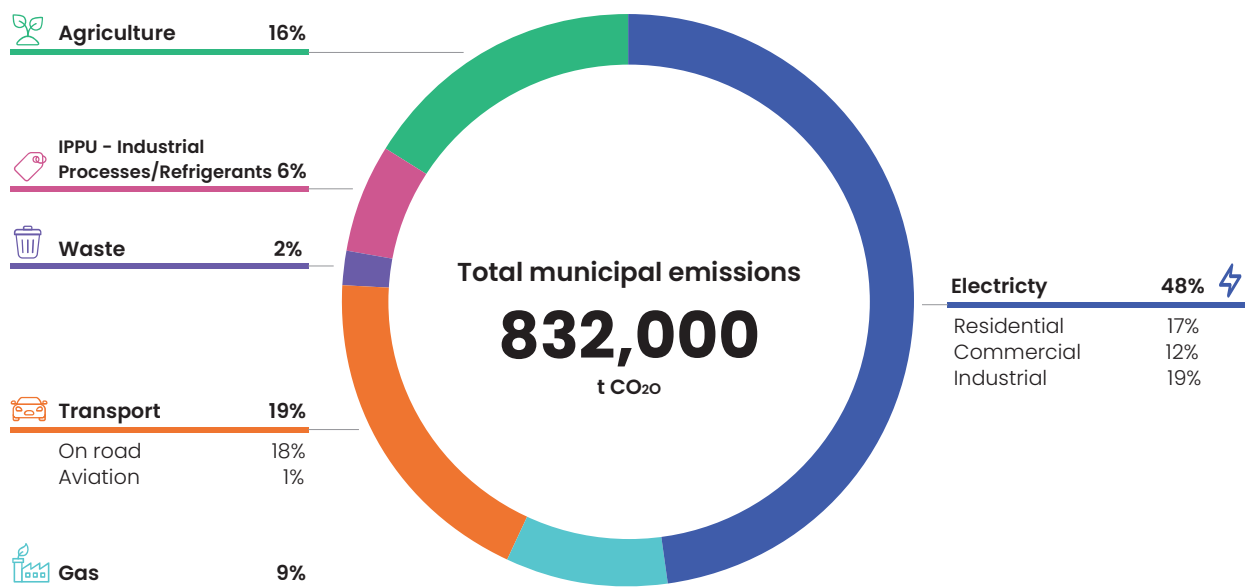
This reality is at the core of our adaptation strategies, which focus on alleviating the burden on members of our community facing difficulties in responding to the ongoing impacts of extreme weather conditions.



Municipality Emissions Profile

Looking at our municipality emission data between 2020 and 2021, we see that our community's emissions come from different places. Most of it comes from making electricity, followed by transport, farming, and gas. Other sources like industry processes, product use, and waste make up a smaller part of the total. Knowing where our emissions come from helps us focus our efforts on finding practical and useful solutions for each area.

Mildura 2020/2021 municipal emissions snapshot



Source: snapshotclimate.com.au

Understanding where the emissions come from lets us come up with new ways to develop our community that meet the needs of our varied economy, including our farming, manufacturing, and tourism sectors. If we all work together, we can come up with plans based on evidence that focus on energy efficiency, managing waste, and using sustainable practices in different industries.

Working together like this lets us deal with climate change in a balanced way while making sure our local economy keeps growing and developing. This will help us become a community that can adapt to the challenges climate change brings and continues to thrive in the future.

How we developed this plan

Our Community Climate Response Plan is the result of joint efforts by the Climate Emergency Community Action Group (CECAG). The group was formed in February 2020, right after Mildura Rural City Council declared a climate emergency. We are a group of volunteers chosen for our different skills and backgrounds. Together, we've created a detailed action plan that matches what the community wants and needs.

In order to understand what the community needed from our plan, we created a survey on climate change and conducted two community consultation sessions to gather feedback on the actions they would like to see in our plan. Through this process, we discovered that the community is deeply concerned about the impact of climate change on their daily lives, particularly in relation to our natural areas and urban environment. They expressed a strong desire for action to be taken to address the effects of climate change that have already been experienced, as well as those that may occur in the future.

The CECAG is committed to giving the people of the Mallee important information and resources. We focus on offering practical ways to manage energy, grow our economy, and protect our environment.

We believe that working together is key. We aim to encourage open conversation and teamwork to create practical solutions that keep our economy, environment, and social needs in balance. We work to find a middle ground that lets us make steady progress without resorting to extreme actions or doing nothing at all. This balanced approach ensures that our community can keep thriving while adjusting to the challenges that come with climate policies. Our ultimate goal is to secure a brighter and stronger future for our community.





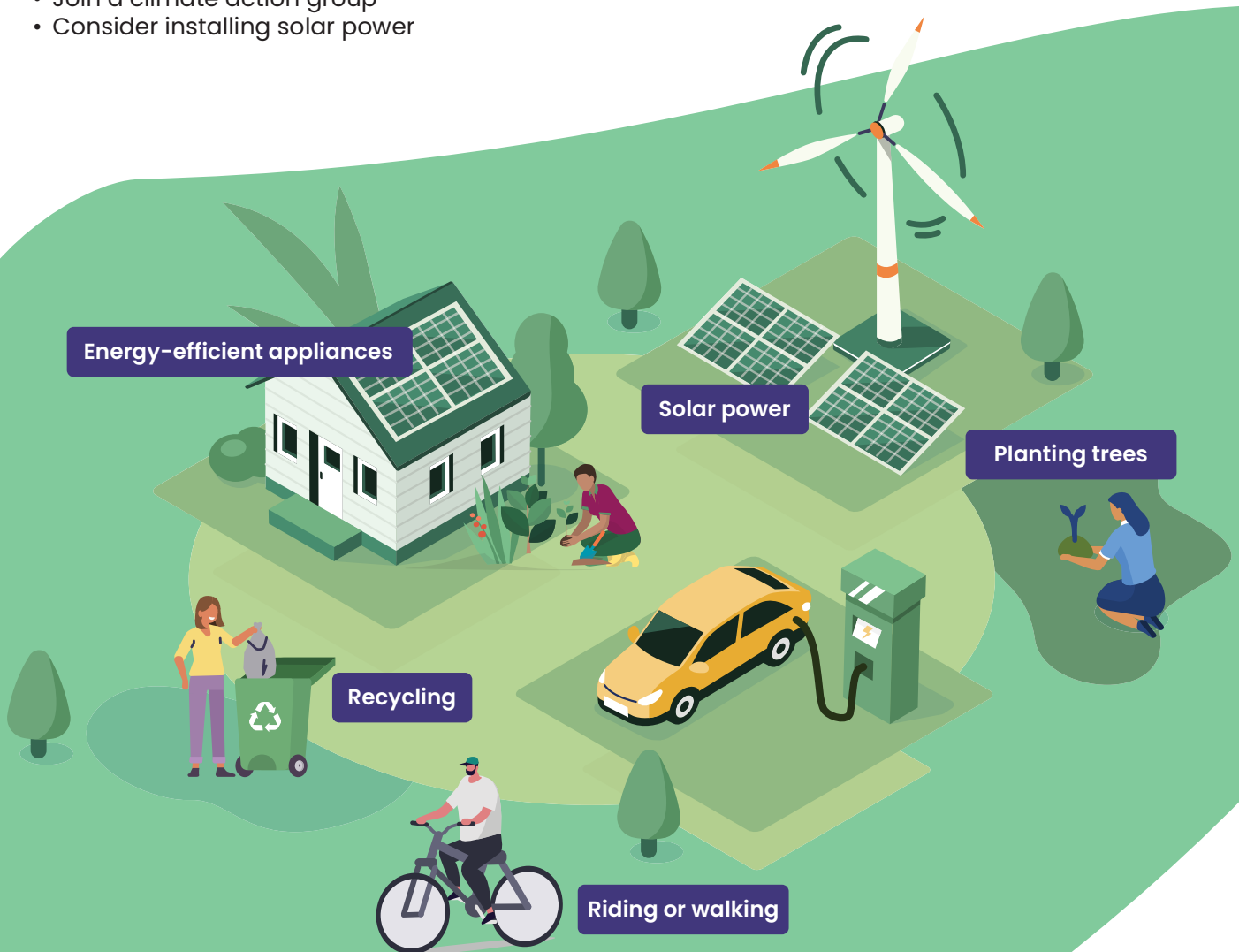
**Let's
take
action.**

Action for Residents

As people living in the Mallee, we're lucky to be part of a community that cares about both our local environment and our economy. We can make a positive change in our community by supporting local businesses and people who are also interested in saving energy, growing the economy, and protecting the environment. By talking with each other and looking for ways to work together, we can help our local economy grow and make our future more sustainable. Remember, it's the small steps we take together that can lead to lasting change and make our community a great place for everyone.

Activity

- Planting native trees and vegetation to improve air quality and create a natural habitat for local wildlife
- Upgrading to energy-efficient appliances to lower energy consumption and save on electricity bills and emissions
- Opting for walking, cycling, or carpooling for short trips to reduce traffic congestion and emissions
- Composting as well as reducing household waste, compost does wonders for your garden
- Supporting local businesses that prioritize eco-friendly practices and contribute to a sustainable community
- Grow your own food
- Move to 100% electric, replace aging and inefficient gas or wood burning appliances with efficient ones like induction cooking, replace gas heating with heat pumps.
- Consider replacing petrol fueled products with battery powered alternatives
- Join a climate action group
- Consider installing solar power



Actions for Schools and Students

Our schools and young people are at the heart of our community here in the Mallee. They play a key role in shaping the future we all will share. If our schools create an environment that encourages curiosity, new ideas, and teamwork, they can help students become thoughtful and proactive community members. By letting students learn by doing, they can understand the importance of balancing energy saving, economic growth, and protecting the environment. If we encourage young minds to come up with creative solutions and make informed choices, they can help our community and the world around us. This is how we can make a more sustainable and successful future.

Activity

- Creating school gardens and green spaces to provide hands-on learning experiences and enhance school aesthetics
- Implementing energy-saving measures such as LED lighting and smart thermostats in school facilities
- Encouraging environmentally-focused student projects to raise awareness and inspire eco-friendly actions
- Promoting sustainable transport options, like biking or walking, for students and staff to reduce emissions
- Organising educational events and workshops on waste management, recycling, and composting

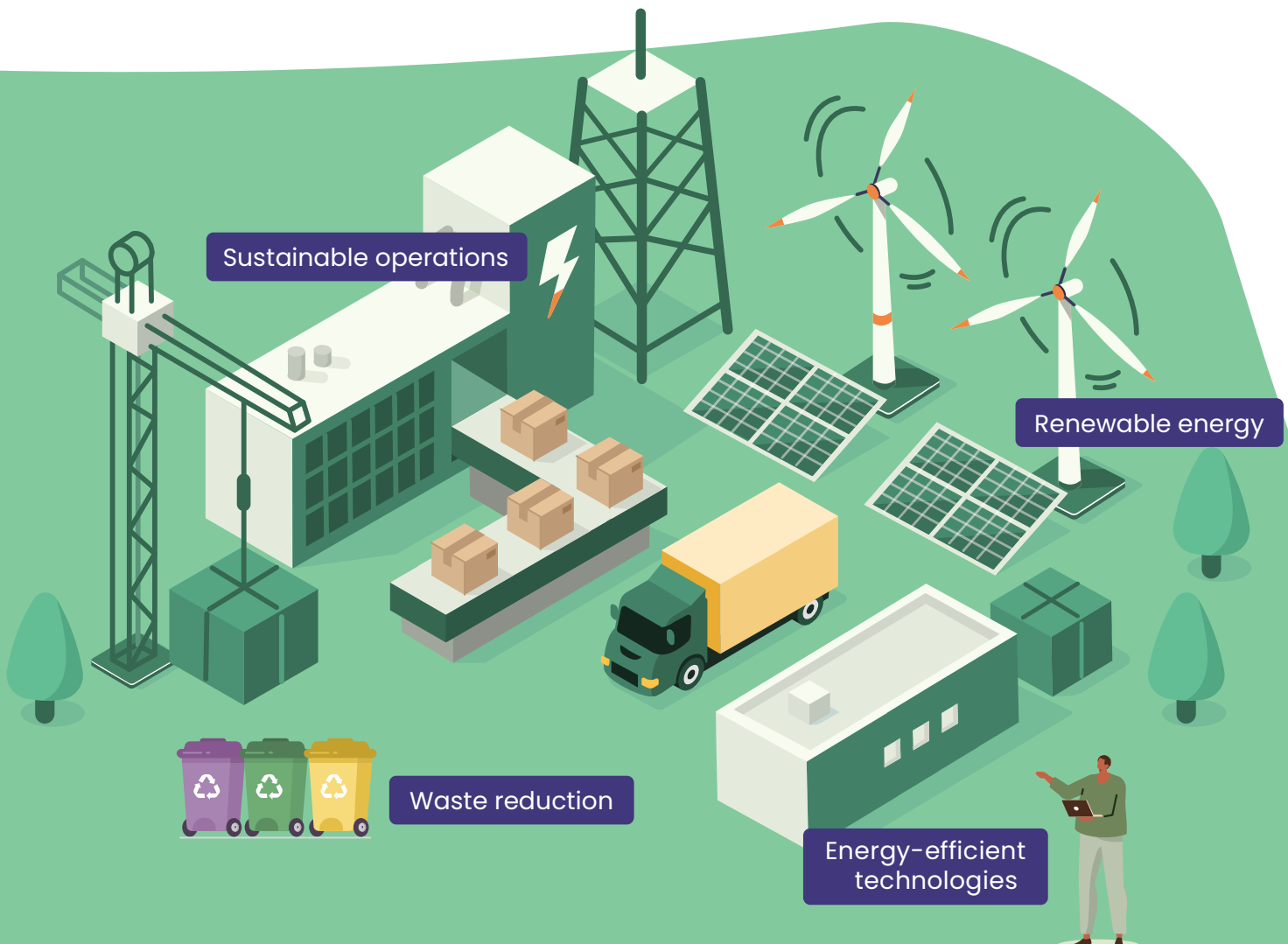


Actions for Diverse Business Sectors

Our diverse businesses, industries, and farms drive our community's economic growth and well-being. As we look ahead, we need to embrace new ideas that take into account energy use, the economy, and the environment. This will help make our community sustainable and successful. By sharing knowledge and working together, we can improve efficiency, reduce waste, and help our local economy grow. At the same time, we're protecting the natural resources that make our region unique. As we move forward, finding the right balance between progress and conservation will pave the way for a bright future that benefits everyone in our community and future generations too.

Activity

- Adopting energy-efficient technologies to reduce operating costs and lower greenhouse gas emissions
- Implementing waste reduction strategies, such as recycling and composting, to minimise environmental impact
- Sharing best practices for sustainable operations with other businesses and organisations
- Exploring renewable energy sources, like solar or wind, for powering facilities and reducing emissions
- Employing environmentally-friendly land management techniques, such as crop rotation and no-till farming, to protect soil health and conserve resources





**It starts
with a
plan.**

Priority Areas

Time frame key

Short term – 1-2 year

Medium term – 2-4 year

Long term – 5 years+

The Climate Response Plan and its actions are proposed to be implemented by the CECAG community group in collaboration with identified partners.

Health

Climate change can affect the health of everyone in our community – physically, mentally, and emotionally. Our Action Plan aims to make our community healthier. We'll do this by working with local residents and businesses, teaching and helping people who need it most, and pushing for solutions that are good for the environment and won't break the bank. Through actions that lead to real results, we want to make sure that everyone in our community is safe, healthy, and can handle the changes that climate change can bring.

Action	Action Description	Time frame	Investment	Partners
Climate/heat health awareness events	Organise annual climate/heat health awareness events in collaboration with local agencies.	Long-term Ongoing	\$\$	Local Health Networks, Local Government
Climate change health education sessions	Provide information sessions on coping with extreme weather conditions, supporting residents that are less able to respond/adapt.	Long-term, Reoccurring Online	\$	Local Schools, Community Centres, Local Government
Affordable eco-friendly solutions	Advocate for affordable heating/cooling solutions and solar power.	Long-term	\$\$\$	Local Government, Energy Companies
Business partnerships for refuge spaces	Collaborate with businesses offering extended hours or refuge spaces during extreme weather.	Long-term	\$	Local government in particular local libraries and pools
Promote green spaces	Advocate for green open spaces with shade, water taps, bike/walking paths, and rest stops in new developments.	Long-term	\$\$\$	Local Government, Community Groups

Waste

Managing waste is an important part of how our community affects the environment. By managing waste properly, we can lower greenhouse gas emissions, save resources, and promote a circular economy where we reuse and recycle more. By encouraging people to throw away things responsibly, recycle more, and create less waste, we support a cleaner and more sustainable community. In our action plan, we aim to come up with new ways to manage waste and involve residents, businesses, and organisations in addressing this important issue together.

Action	Action Description	Time frame	Investment	Partners
Community waste education	Provide education sessions and promotion on social media platforms on waste impact, reduction strategies, and responsible waste management.	Long-term Ongoing Online	\$	Local Schools, Community Centres, partner with Local Government
Repair Café initiative	Establish a Repair Café where volunteers help repair items, reducing landfill waste.	Long-term	\$	Local Businesses, Community Volunteers, Local Government
Behaviour change program	Promote waste reduction, proper recycling, and zero-carbon transportation (biking, walking).	Long-term	\$\$	Local Government, Schools
Support local businesses	Help businesses understand recycling, waste reduction responsibilities, and sustainable practices.	Long-term Ongoing	\$	Business Associations
Community compost programs	Promote and support community compost programs to convert green waste into compost.	Long-term	\$	Community Centres, Local Government

Farming

Farming plays a crucial role in our region. It doesn't just provide us with food, it also supports jobs and drives our local economy. However, unexpected changes in weather and shifting market conditions can make farming more challenging. Efficient farms are essential for ensuring we have enough food and supporting our economy. Our farmers are ready to adapt and succeed in the ever-changing world of agriculture.

Action	Action Description	Time frame	Investment	Partners
Alternative fuel sources advocacy	Promote the need for alternative fuel sources (e.g., green hydrogen) and pursue funding for transitioning in agriculture and transport.	Long-term	\$\$	Farmers' Associations, Energy Companies, farmers for climate action
Efficient freight logistics review	Investigate opportunities for more efficient rail and road freight logistics, ensuring direct routes are serviceable.	Medium-term	\$\$	Transport Companies, Local Government
Farming technology innovation	Advocate for the implementation of innovative technologies to improve efficiency and reduce waste in farming operations.	Long-term	\$\$	Farmers' Associations, Research Institutes, farmers for climate action
Strengthen community awareness	Improve communication and engagement between farmers and the community to increase understanding about sustainable farming practices in the Mallee area.	Long-term	\$	Community Groups, Local Media, Out of the Box and Food Next Door, farmers for climate action
Farm electrification	Encourage farm electrification through Environmental Upgrade Finance for irrigation pumps or processing facilities.	Medium-term	\$\$	Local Government, Energy Companies
Support alternative farming methods for Dry Land Farming	Promote and support alternative farming methods such as pasture cropping to prevent soil erosion.	Medium-term		Mallee Sustainable Farming, Colin Seis, Soils for Life, Smart Soil, farmers for climate action

Education

Education and engagement are key to reducing emissions impacts and making our community sustainable for the future. By offering high-quality education across the region, we can help people make smart decisions and bring about change. We can use both direct teaching and indirect ways to teach about climate change, which will give people the knowledge and skills they need to help create a greener future. By working with local groups and schools, we can help everyone understand and agree on how to deal with climate change and how it affects our community. We can use both direct teaching and indirect ways to teach about climate change to equip our community with the skills needed to move towards a greener future.

Action	Action Description	Time frame	Investment	Partners
Professional development for educators	Offer quality training for teachers and educators to integrate sustainability into their practices.	Long-term Ongoing	\$\$	Local Schools, Tertiary Education Institutes, Resource Smart Schools
Renewable energy public transport	Promote electric vehicles and other sustainable public transport options at key locations.	Long-term	\$\$\$	Local Government, Transport Companies
Sustainability resources such as energy and water efficiency and promotion	Create and display resources on MRCC website, social media, and promote sustainability-supporting businesses. promotion of climate change, electrify everything campaign.	Short-term	\$	Local Media, Community Organisations, Local Government, Sunraysia Sustainability Network
Indirect climate change education	Provide indirect educational opportunities through public art, murals, and labelled bins at events.	Short-term	\$	Arts Mildura, Community Groups, Local Government
Consistent climate change messaging	Deliver constant and consistent information on climate change effects from various sources.	Long-term	Existing	Local Media, Schools, Government, Sunraysia Sustainability Network

Natural Environment

Our region is home to a variety of unique plants, animals, and important water sources. These natural wonders are at risk due to changes in our climate, such as increased droughts and floods. By working together, we can ensure that the natural treasures of our region are protected for everyone to enjoy now and in the future.

Action	Description	Time frame	Investment	Partners
Plant-a-tree fundraiser / community greening	Organise self-funding events for the community to donate and plant trees and shrubs in public spaces.	Long-term Repeatable (Autumn and Spring)	\$	Community Groups, Local Businesses, Local Government, Greening Mildura
Community-supported agriculture and public garden co-operatives	Host fundraising events to support local community supported agriculture and public garden projects, promoting fresh local produce.	Long-term Repeatable	\$	Local Farmers, Community Groups, Local Government
Citizen science: water monitoring	Establish a citizen science water monitoring group to regularly test and report local water quality, identifying and addressing pollution sources.	Long-term Ongoing Every 2 Weeks	\$	Mallee Catchment Management Authority, Schools
Habitat restoration projects	Implement projects aimed at restoring and preserving native habitats, such as wetlands and forests, to support local biodiversity.	Long-term	\$\$	Mallee Catchment Management Authority, Environment Groups, Greening Mildura
Invasive species management	Develop and promote community-led initiatives to control and manage invasive species, protecting native ecosystems.	Long-term Ongoing	\$\$	Parks Victoria, Local Schools, Local government and Mallee Catchment Management Authority, Landcare groups

Urban Environment

Our city environment plays a big role in how well people connect and live. The Council has taken steps like planting trees, installing electric vehicle charging stations, and using streetlights that save energy to lower emissions. But air pollution and extreme weather still happen, so we need more actions and strategies to deal with energy use, the economy, and environmental issues. These might include better public transport and more parks. By investing in education and working with local groups, we can make our city environment more sustainable and able to handle change.

Action	Description	Time frame	Investment	Partners
Promote sustainable transportation	Encourage residents to choose public transport, biking, electric vehicles or walking for short trips.	Short-term	\$	Local Government, Public Transport Providers
Support energy-efficient upgrades	Encourage home and business owners to install LED lighting and energy-efficient appliances. Advocate to state and local governments for stronger guidelines for energy efficient housing design features and housing estate layouts.	Short-term	\$	Local Businesses, Energy Companies, Local Government
Tree planting initiative	Plant trees in public parks and green spaces to mitigate the heat island effect.	Short-term	\$\$	Community Groups, Schools, Local Government, Greening Mildura
Sustainable business practices	Advocate for businesses to use eco-friendly materials and minimise waste.	Short-term	\$	Business Associations
Urban gardens	Establish community urban gardens to cultivate vegetables and herbs.	Short-term	\$\$-\$\$\$	Community Centres, Local Schools, Local Government
Advocate for innovative and alternative energy sources.	Advocate to the State and Federal government for the development and application of new and alternative energy sources.	Short term	\$	Local government



**It's
our
future.**

Monitor and report. Next steps: get involved

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of our Climate Response Plan, it is important to monitor the impact of the actions within the plan and determine what is working and what is not. The Mildura Rural City Council's Annual Environmental Sustainability report will include a report on this plan.

Uniting for a Future-Conscious Community

The Mallee community believes in working together. Understanding each other and being committed to everyone's well-being is at the heart of what we do. Handling the complex issue of climate change requires open communication, respect for each other, and teamwork. The solutions we're looking for are practical and cover many areas. We want to balance the needs of our economy, environment, and society.

Our strength comes from our diversity and the unique viewpoints and experiences of each person in our community. We're all in this together to create a sustainable future. Instead of using language that divides us, we believe in using our shared power. We want to make changes that are deep and long-lasting, to make a better future for everyone.



Glossary

Carbon emissions:

Carbon neutral – You are carbon neutral if the amount of carbon emissions your home, business or community puts into the atmosphere (through energy use or agricultural for example) is the same amount that you remove from the atmosphere (through trees and soils or producing renewable energy).

Zero Carbon – is broadly the same as being carbon neutral.

Circular Economy – A process that allows us to avoid waste through good design and effective recovery of material that can be reused. It seeks to reduce the environmental impacts of production and consumption and encourage intense and efficient product use.

Climate Change – Changes to the Earth’s climate caused by human activity including burning fossil fuel (coal, gas, petrol, and diesel) and clearing vegetation. These changes in weather patterns increase the occurrence, severity, and distribution of events such as drought, flooding, heatwaves, extreme rainfall, bushfires, and rising sea levels.

Emissions – The production and discharge of something, especially gas or radiation.

Energy efficient – An appliance or vehicle that is energy efficient, reducing the amount of energy required to provide products or services.

Greenhouse Gases – Carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and other gases that build up in our atmosphere.

Mitigation – Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases that cause climate change.

Renewable Energy – Energy generated by renewable sources such as the sun, wind, and movement of water.





Disclaimer

Information contained in this publication was correct at the time of printing. Every effort has been made to ensure its accuracy, however no liability is accepted for any inclusions, advice given or omissions.