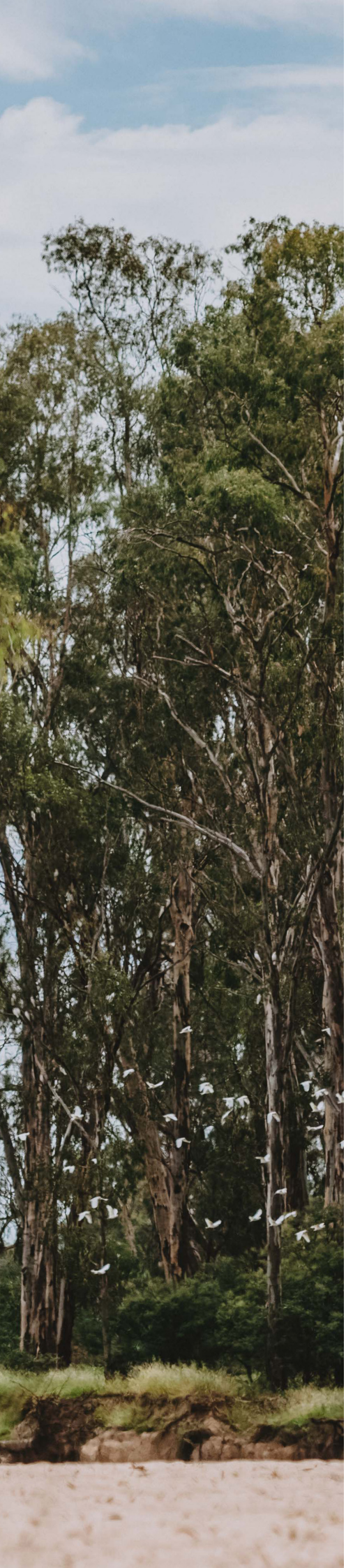
moira
SHIRE

Environmental Sustainability Strategy

2026 - 2031



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Executive Summary

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2026-2031 establishes the Council's strategic direction for environmental sustainability over the next five years. It provides a clear framework for decision-making, investment, partnerships, and service delivery to protect the natural environment, support resource recovery, build climate resilience, and reduce Council's environmental footprint.

The Strategy is structured around four objectives that align with the Council Plan 2025-2029 and the Moira 2045 Community Vision:

- Enhanced natural environments, ecosystems, and biodiversity management.
- Support a circular economy.
- Plan and prepare for climate adaptation.
- Reduce Council's environmental impact.

The Strategy provides measurable outcomes, including 2031 targets for tree planting, urban canopy cover, weed and pest treatment, waste diversion, climate risk assessment, water efficiency, fleet emissions, and building energy efficiency. Annual reporting will provide transparency and enable Council to track progress against the Strategy and the Council Plan.

Purpose and Aim

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2026-2031 establishes Council's strategic direction for environmental sustainability, waste management, biodiversity protection, climate adaptation, and environmental leadership. It provides a framework for Council actions, partnerships, and investments that support the Community Vision and Council Plan.

The Strategy aims to:

- Embed environmental sustainability considerations across Council decision-making.
- Protect and enhance biodiversity, waterways, and natural ecosystems.
- Support the transition to a circular economy and reduce waste generation.
- Strengthen the resilience of Council operations and communities to climate change.
- Reduce Council's environmental impact through efficient use of energy, water, and resources.
- Support delivery of the Council Plan 2025-2029 and Moira 2045 Community Vision.

Objectives

- Embed sustainable and circular economy practices across Council decisions, procurement, and day-to-day operations.
- Reduce Council's operational environmental impact, including greenhouse gas emissions from fleet,
- Buildings, waste, and energy use.
- Lead local innovation in waste avoidance, resource recovery, and landfill diversion.
- Protect and enhance natural environments, waterways, ecosystems, and biodiversity.
- Build Council's capacity to plan for climate risk, adaptation, and resilience.
- Work with Traditional Owners, community groups, agencies, and neighbouring councils to deliver improved environmental outcomes.

Nature Positive Commitment

Council is committed to achieving nature positive outcomes by protecting existing environmental assets, restoring degraded ecosystems, increasing urban greening opportunities, and partnering with landowners and Traditional Owners to enhance biodiversity outcomes across the municipality.

Council will seek to leave the natural environment in a better condition for future generations, and ensure intergenerational equity, through habitat restoration, biodiversity enhancement, and sustainable land management practices.

How Actions Will Be Delivered

Actions identified in this Strategy will be delivered through Council operations, capital works, policy development, advocacy, community engagement, and partnerships. Delivery will be monitored through an annual Environmental Sustainability Report published on the Council's website.

Actions have been assigned 2031 targets or implementation timelines to support accountability, budget planning, and reporting. Where baseline data is not yet available, Council will establish the baseline early in the Strategy period and report progress annually.

Community Engagement and Partnerships

Council will use engagement methods to communicate, consult, educate, and build community capacity. This includes responding to community enquiries, providing education materials, supporting community-led projects, and advocating to state and federal agencies where local environmental outcomes can be improved.

Partnerships are central to delivering the Strategy. Council will continue to work with local, regional, state and federal partners including Goulburn Murray Water, Goulburn Valley Water, North East Water, Goulburn Broken CMA, North East CMA, Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance, EPA Victoria, Parks Victoria, Recycling Victoria, Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation, Trust for Nature, DEECA and neighbouring local governments.

Council acknowledges the significant cultural and environmental knowledge held by Traditional Owners and will continue to work collaboratively with Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation to support cultural land management, biodiversity protection, and environmental stewardship initiatives.

Scope

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2026-2031 identifies and responds to Moira Shire Council's environmental and waste management challenges. It documents Council's approach to protecting the natural environment and establishes actionable objectives across four key focus areas for the five-year Strategy period.
The Strategy applies to Council operations, services, assets, partnerships, and advocacy activities where Council has a direct role or reasonable influence. It also provides a framework for collaboration with agencies, Traditional Owners, community groups, and other councils.

Out of Scope

- Community-wide emissions inventories, except where Council programs or advocacy can support community emissions reduction.
- Full Scope 3 emissions accounting (contractor and supply chain emissions). This is not currently a mandatory reporting requirement. Council may progressively improve data maturity and procurement-related emissions tracking over time as capacity allows.

Strategic Context

The Strategy aligns with regional, Victorian, and national policy directions and supports implementation of the Council Plan and other Council-endorsed strategies. It provides a coordinated approach to environmental outcomes across Council departments and embeds sustainability across planning, services, assets, and operations.

Community Vision and Council Plan Alignment

The Moira 2045 Community Vision identifies a future of a thriving, connected regional community. The Strategy supports this vision by contributing to sustainable agriculture, well-managed water entitlements, healthy and accessible waterways, urban forestry, circular economy outcomes, renewable energy use, and lower emissions.

The Council Plan 2025-2029 provides the strategic roadmap for Council. This Strategy operates as a delivery mechanism for environmental objectives and strategic indicators within the Council Plan.

Environmental Context

Moira Shire covers approximately 4,045 square kilometres in northern Victoria and contains significant natural assets including the Murray River, Ovens River, Goulburn River, Broken Creek, Barmah National Park, Barmah Forest Ramsar site and Kinnairds Wetland. These waterways, wetlands, woodlands, and grasslands provide habitat for native flora and fauna and support community wellbeing, liveability and regional productivity.

Agriculture is the dominant land use across the municipality and contributes significantly to the local economy. Environmental management must therefore balance biodiversity protection, efficient water use, climate adaptation, sustainable land management, and the continued productivity of the region.

Climate projections for Victoria indicate hotter conditions, changing rainfall patterns, and increased frequency or severity of some extreme weather events. These changes will affect water availability, biodiversity, infrastructure, community health, and Council services. The region has also experienced significant historic events — including major floods, prolonged drought, and bushfires - that have had lasting impacts on the natural environment, community, and local economy. These cumulative events underscore the importance of climate resilience planning. A risk-based approach to climate adaptation is therefore embedded in this Strategy.

Key Challenges

CHALLENGE	STRATEGIC RESPONSE
Habitat removal and fragmentation	Ongoing vegetation loss and habitat fragmentation place pressure on biodiversity, ecological connectivity, and threatened species.
Climate change and climate variability	Hotter conditions, changing rainfall and extreme weather risks affecting built infrastructure, environmental assets, services, waterways, agriculture, and community wellbeing.
Changing land and water use	Competing demands for land and water requires integrated planning, efficient use of resources, and protection of environmental values.
Pest plants and animals	Weed and pest species threaten roadside reserves, native vegetation, agricultural productivity, and ecosystem health.
Waste generation and landfill reliance	Council operates a landfill and resource recovery network. Continued waste avoidance, recycling, organics recovery and landfill diversion are essential.
Operational environmental impact	Council has a direct role in reducing emissions and resource consumption from fleet, buildings, waste, water, and procurement decisions.

Legislative and Policy Context

The Strategy reflects Council's obligations and relevant policy settings under Victorian and Federal legislation. The following framework should guide implementation and future reporting.

FRAMEWORK	RELEVANCE TO THE STRATEGY
Local Government Act 2020	Requires Council to give effect to overarching governance principles, including best outcomes for the municipal community and future generations; economic, social, and environmental sustainability; mitigation and planning for climate change risks; engagement; collaboration; and consideration of regional, state and national plans.
Climate Action Act 2017	Provides Victoria's legislative foundation for managing climate change risks, transitioning to a climate-resilient community and economy, and achieving net zero emissions by 2045. The Act embeds climate change in Victorian Government decision-making and establishes reporting and adaptation planning requirements.
Environment Protection Act 2017 and Regulations 2021	Provides the modern environmental protection framework for pollution prevention, environmental risk management, and duties relevant to Council operations and waste facilities.
Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021	Supports Victoria's reformed waste and recycling system, including household waste and recycling service standards and resource recovery reforms.
Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988	Key Victorian legislation for conserving threatened species and communities, managing potentially threatening processes, and supporting the Biodiversity 2037 framework.
Planning and Environment Act 1987	Provides the land use planning framework for the use, development, and protection of land in Victoria.
Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994	Provides a legislative framework for catchment management and pest plant and animal responsibilities, including obligations relevant to Council-managed roadsides.
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999	Commonwealth framework for matters of national environmental significance, including threatened species, ecological communities, wetlands, and migratory species.
Water Act 1989 and Basin Plan settings	Relevant to water entitlements, waterway health, sustainable water use, and Council's advocacy and operational role in water management.
Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)	Informs Council's commitment to meaningful relationships with Traditional Owners and First Nations peoples, supporting culturally sensitive environmental and land.

Objective 1: Enhance Natural Environments, Ecosystems and Biodiversity Management

Council has a key role in preserving habitat, supporting vegetation conservation, managing roadsides, promoting waterway health, public reserves and parks, and working with partners to enhance biodiversity outcomes. This focus area aligns with contemporary biodiversity policy, nature positive principles and Traditional Owner and Natural Resource Management agency partnerships.

Strategic Indicators

- Number of new trees planted by Council.
- Number of roadside kilometres treated for pests and weeds.
- Area of urban tree canopy cover

2031 Targets

INDICATOR	2031 TARGET
New trees planted (Urban Canopy Strategy)	In line with Council's Urban Canopy Strategy, 2,400 additional trees planted on public land between 2025 and 2035, expanding urban canopy coverage by 15% beyond the existing 16,000 registered trees.
Urban canopy cover	Establish an urban canopy tree cover baseline and increase it by 15% from the 2026 baseline.
Weed and pest treatment	Deliver the annual roadside weed treatment program for all priority Controlled and Prohibited weed species in accordance with the Moira Shire Roadside Weed and Pest Management Plan, with outcomes reported annually.
Partnership projects	Deliver at least one biodiversity partnership project annually.

Priority Actions

- Update the existing guide for climate-resilient species for parks, gardens, and road reserves.
- Continue implementation of the Roadside Weed and Pest Animal Control Management Plan.
- Improve Council's understanding of stormwater impacts on riverine environments through baseline water
- quality data.
- Develop a Lake Numurkah masterplan in consultation with the community.
- Partner with community organisations to deliver annual tree planting and biodiversity projects.
- Work with Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation on cultural land management and ecological knowledge projects, consistent with commitments in Council's Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-2027 (to be confirmed once the RAP is formally adopted).
- Continue water monitoring at Thompson's Beach and other sites through the Regional Water Monitoring
- Partnership.

Objective 2: Support a Circular Economy

Council will continue to shift from a traditional linear (take, make, dispose) waste management model to a circular economy approach that prioritises waste avoidance, reuse, repair, recycling, organics recovery and procurement of recycled materials. This focus area supports Victoria's circular economy reforms and Council's objective to reduce landfill dependency.

Strategic Indicators

- Increase in the percentage of waste diverted from landfill, including food and garden organics, commingled recycling and glass.

Circular Economy Transition

Council supports the objectives of Environment Protection Authority Victoria and the Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021 by transitioning from a traditional waste management approach to a circular economy model. This approach prioritises avoiding waste generation, reusing materials, maximising recycling and resource recovery, supporting local circular economy opportunities, reducing landfill dependency, and increasing procurement of recycled and recovered materials.

2031 Targets

INDICATOR	2031 TARGET
Waste diversion	Achieve 80% diversion from landfill by 2031 (baseline to be established from 2026 data).
Organics recovery	Maintain annual improvement in food and garden organics recovery.
Kerbside contamination	Maintain less than 1% contamination levels in organics bins Deliver targeted education to reduce recoverable materials in the landfill bin, with a focus on the top misplaced materials identified in the 2025 Kerbside Bin Audit: food and organics (21.2%), mixed recyclables (13.9%), and textiles (3.5%). Achieve a 10% reduction in contamination in recycling bins from the 2026 baseline.
Community education	Deliver at least one annual waste education campaign.
Sustainable procurement	Adopt a Sustainable Procurement Framework incorporating circular economy principles by 2027.

Priority Actions

- Undertake biannual kerbside audits and targeted education for contamination and problem materials.
- Deliver reduce-and-avoid programs for households, community groups, businesses, and Council operations.
- Investigate construction and demolition and commercial and industrial waste diversion opportunities.
- Maintain regulatory compliance and drive continuous improvement across all waste management and resource recovery facilities
- Integrate sustainability and circular economy principles across Council operations.
- Develop and implement a Sustainable Procurement Framework that incorporates recycled content preferences, circular economy principles, and life-cycle considerations into Council purchasing decisions.

Objective 3: Plan and Prepare for Climate Adaptation

Council recognises climate change as a strategic risk affecting infrastructure, services, water availability, biodiversity, agriculture, community wellbeing, and economic productivity. This focus area is framed around climate risk, resilience, integrated water management, and practical adaptation pathways.

Strategic Indicators

- Percentage of Council projects with Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) initiatives considered.
- Decreasing volume of Council water use and increasing volumes of reuse.

Climate Risk and Resilience

Council will progressively assess climate-related risks to Council assets and services, incorporate climate considerations into asset management and infrastructure planning, support adaptation planning across Council operations, and improve understanding of extreme heat, drought, flooding, and severe weather impacts. A risk-based approach will help Council decide about future investment and service delivery under changing conditions.

2031 Targets

INDICATOR	2031 TARGET
Water Sensitive Urban Design assessment	Assess 100% of applicable capital projects for Water Sensitive Urban Design opportunities (WSUD). Applicable projects will be identified through the project Management Framework.
Water efficiency	Reduce potable water consumption by 15% from the 2026 baseline.
Climate risk	Complete a climate risk and resilience assessment for Council assets, services and the natural environment by 2028.
Water reuse	Increase alternative (non-potable) water use and reuse, with progress reported annually against a 2026 baseline.
Annual outlook	Publish an annual climate outlook and adaptation update in the Annual Environmental Sustainability Report.

Priority Actions

- Support Council facilities to deliver water efficiency measures.
- Encourage the use of recycled water in the first instance, followed by raw water, before drawing on potable water, in order to reduce Council's reliance on potable water supplies.
- Complete design and delivery of the Victoria Park Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP).
- Continue participation in Goulburn Broken and North East Integrated Water Management forums.
- Prepare and publish an annual climate outlook and adaptation update through the Annual Environmental Sustainability Report.
- Offer energy efficiency education resources for the community
- Complete a climate risk and resilience assessment for Council assets, services and natural environment by 2028.
- Assess 100% of applicable capital projects for Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) opportunities, as identified through the Project Management Framework.

Objective 4: Reduce Council's Environmental Impact

Council will reduce its environmental impact through emissions reduction, energy efficiency, fleet transition, building improvements, reduced gas reliance, renewable energy, sustainable procurement, and improved resource consumption data.

Strategic Indicators

- Decrease in electricity consumption from non-renewable sources.
- Emissions from Council's fleet of plant, heavy and passenger vehicles reduced.
- Number of Environmentally Sustainable Design elements in new Council building projects.

2031 Targets

INDICATOR	2031 TARGET
Fleet emissions	Reduce fleet emissions by 20% from the 2025 baseline.
Light fleet transition	Achieve 100% of light fleet electric or hybrid by 2031, subject to operational suitability and market availability.
Solar and batteries	Install solar on all feasible Council-owned facilities and consider batteries where financially and operationally viable.
Building energy efficiency	Reduce building energy consumption by 15% from the 2026 baseline.
Gas transition	Develop a phased gas transition plan for Council facilities by 2028.
Sustainable buildings	Adopt sustainability standards for new Council buildings by 2027.

Priority Actions

- Investigate long-term solutions to remove or reduce gas use in Council buildings.
- Continue to reduce emissions from Council fleet through replacement planning, fit-for-purpose vehicle selection and lower-emissions alternatives.
- Transition suitable light fleet vehicles to electric or hybrid options.
- Install solar on all feasible Council-owned facilities.
- Identify and implement energy efficiency improvements across Council-managed buildings.
- Promote behind-the-meter energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions.
- Develop sustainability standards for new Council buildings and major refurbishments.
- Offer energy efficiency education resources for Council staff.
- Continue participation and engagement through the Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance.

2031 Targets and Measures Summary

OBJECTIVE	KEY 2031 TARGETS
Biodiversity	In line with Council's Urban Canopy Strategy, 2,400 additional trees planted on public land between 2025 and 2035, expanding urban canopy coverage by 15% beyond the existing 16,000 registered trees. Urban canopy cover increased by 15% from 2026 baseline. Roadside treatment of priority Controlled and Prohibited weeds delivered in line with the Moira Shire Roadside Weed and Pest Management Plan. At least one biodiversity partnership project delivered annually.
Circular economy	80% diversion from landfill by 2031 (2026 baseline to be established). Annual improvement in food and garden organics recovery. 10% reduction in contamination in recycling bins from the 2026 baseline. Annual waste education campaign delivered. Sustainable Procurement Framework adopted by 2027.
Climate adaptation	100% of applicable capital projects assessed for WSUD (applicable projects identified via the Project Management Framework). 15% reduction in potable water consumption from the 2026 baseline. Climate risk and resilience assessment completed by 2028. Alternative (non-potable) water reuse opportunities identified and progressed. Annual climate outlook published in the Annual Environmental Sustainability Report.
Operational impact	20% reduction in fleet emissions from the 2025 baseline. 100% of light fleet electric or hybrid by 2031 (subject to operational suitability and market availability). Solar installed on all feasible Council-owned facilities. 15% reduction in building energy consumption from the 2026 baseline. Gas transition plan for Council facilities developed by 2028.

Action Plan

The Action Plan converts the Strategy into measurable delivery commitments. Actions may be refined through annual reporting, budget processes, and updated data baselines.

Objective 1: Enhanced Natural Environments, Ecosystems and Biodiversity Management

ACTION	MEASURE/KPI	TIMELINE	LEAD
Update the existing guide for climate-resilient species for parks, gardens, and road reserves.	Guide adopted and applied to relevant planting programs.	2026-2027	Council
Continue implementation of the Roadside Weed and Pest Animal Control Management Plan.	Km's roadside treated for controlled and prohibited weeds.	2026-2031	Council
Improve Council's understanding of stormwater impacts on riverine environments through baseline water quality data.	Baseline data collected and reported.	2026-2031	Council
Develop a Lake Numurkah masterplan in consultation with the community.	Masterplan completed and engagement outcomes documented.	2026-2031	Council
Partner with community organisations to deliver annual tree planting and biodiversity projects.	Minimum one project delivered annually.	2027-2031	Partnership
Work with Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation on cultural land management and ecological knowledge projects, consistent with commitments in Council's Reconciliation Action Plan 2025-2027 (to be confirmed once the RAP is formally adopted).	Partnership opportunities identified and progressed.	2026-2031	Partnership
Continue water monitoring at Thompson's Beach and other sites through the Regional Water Monitoring Partnership.	Participation and water quality data reported annually.	2026-2031	Partnership

Objective 2: Support a Circular Economy

ACTION	MEASURE/KPI	TIMELINE	LEAD
Undertake biannual kerbside audits and targeted education for contamination and problem materials.	Audit completed and contamination reduction program delivered.	2026-2031	Council
Deliver reduce-and-avoid programs for households, community groups, businesses, and Council operations.	Annual program delivered and reported.	2026-2031	Council
Investigate construction and demolition and commercial and industrial waste diversion opportunities.	Options assessment completed and implementation pathway identified.	2027	Council
Maintain regulatory compliance and drive continuous improvement across all waste management and resource recovery facilities.	Regulatory compliance status and improvement actions reported annually.	2026-2031	Council
Develop and implement a Sustainable Procurement Framework that incorporates recycled content preferences, circular economy principles, and life-cycle considerations into Council purchasing decisions.	Framework adopted and applied to relevant procurement decisions.	2027	Council
Integrate sustainability and circular economy principles across Council operations.	Internal guidance and priority initiatives are implemented.	2026-2031	Council

Objective 3: Plan and Prepare for Climate Adaptation

ACTION	MEASURE/KPI	TIMELINE	LEAD
Complete a climate risk and resilience assessment for Council assets, services and the natural environment by 2028.	Assessment completed and priority adaptation actions identified.	2028	Council
Assess 100% of applicable capital projects for Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) opportunities, as identified through the Project Management Framework.	100% of applicable capital projects assessed (projects identified via the Project Management Framework).	2026-2031	Council
Support Council facilities to deliver water efficiency measures.	Water efficiency opportunities identified and implemented where feasible.	2026-2031	Council
Encourage the use of recycled water in the first instance, followed by raw water, before drawing on potable water, in order to reduce Council's reliance on potable water supplies.	Water use hierarchy applied (recycled > raw > potable); opportunities identified and progressed.	2026-2031	Council
Complete design and delivery of Victoria Park IWMP.	Design and delivery milestones completed.	2027	Council
Participate in Goulburn Broken and North East IWM forums.	Participation reported annually.	2026-2031	Partnership
Prepare and publish an annual climate outlook and adaptation update through the Annual Environmental Sustainability Report.	Update included in the Annual Environmental Sustainability Report.	2026-2031	Council
Offer energy efficiency education resources for the community.	Resources promoted annually.	2026-2031	Council

Objective 4: Reduce Council's Environmental Impact

ACTION	MEASURE/KPI	TIMELINE	LEAD
Investigate long-term solutions to remove or reduce gas use in Council buildings.	Plan completed and priority sites identified.	2028	Council
Continue to reduce emissions from Council fleet through replacement planning, fit-for-purpose vehicle selection and lower-emissions alternatives.	Fleet emissions tracked and reduction pathways reported.	2026-2031	Council
Transition suitable light fleet vehicles to electric or hybrid options.	100% of light fleet electric or hybrid by 2031, subject to suitability and availability.	2026-2031	Council
Identify and implement energy efficiency improvements across Council-managed buildings.	15% reduction from 2026 baseline by 2031.	2026-2031	Council
Install solar on all feasible Council-owned facilities.	Solar feasibility assessment completed; number of Council sites with solar installations reported annually.	2026-2031	Council
Promote behind-the-meter energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions.	Solutions promoted to Council facilities and community; uptake tracked.	2026-2031	Council
Develop sustainability standards for new Council buildings and major refurbishments.	Standards adopted and used in new building projects.	2027	Council
Offer community and Council staff energy efficiency education resources.	Resources promoted annually.	2026-2031	Council
Continue engagement through the Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance.	Participation and outcomes are reported annually.	2026-2031	Partnership

Monitoring and Evaluation

Council will monitor implementation of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy through annual reporting against Council Plan strategic indicators, ESS actions, biodiversity outcomes, waste diversion performance, water consumption and reuse, greenhouse gas emissions, climate adaptation initiatives, and partnership outcomes.

An annual Environmental Sustainability Report will be published on the Council's website. The Strategy will be reviewed before the development of any successor strategy, with performance data and community engagement outcomes used to inform future priorities.

Relevant Policy and Legislation

- Local Government Act 2020
- Climate Action Act 2017
- Environment Protection Act 2017
- Environment Protection Regulations 2021
- Circular Economy (Waste Reduction and Recycling) Act 2021
- Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994
- Water Act 1989
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
- Victoria's Climate Change Strategy
- Recycling Victoria: A New Economy
- Protecting Victoria's Environment: Biodiversity 2037
- Victorian Waterway Management Strategy
- Murray-Darling Basin Plan
- Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy
- North East Regional Catchment Strategy
- Hume Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy