

# Southern Grampians Shire Council

## Sustainability Strategy

2024-2041



## Discussion Paper

February 2024



**Southern Grampians**  
SHIRE COUNCIL

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# Background



## About this document

**The Southern Grampians Shire Council Sustainability Strategy is the key strategic document for delivering an environmentally sustainable shire.**

The new Sustainability Strategy will set the future direction for the shire across a broad range of focus areas and be developed in consultation with the community.

This discussion paper is the result of Council's notice of motion tabled at the Ordinary Council Meeting on December 8 2021, Councillors resolved:

- That the Southern Grampians Shire Council take the strong leadership position of recognising and urgently responding to Climate Change.
- That the Southern Grampians Shire develop a Climate Change Urgent Action Plan in conjunction with the current review of the Sustainability Plan and further recommendations with strong targets and bold action.

***'A shared vision for a sustainable future'***



## Sustainability stewardship

**The Southern Grampians Shire is in south western Victoria.**

It covers an expansive area of approximately 6,200 square kilometres and is home to a diverse range of landscapes, including rolling hills, volcanic plains, and the iconic Grampians National Park / Gariwerd.

The shire is comprised of several townships, including Hamilton, the main administrative centre, as well as Balmoral, Branxholme / Byaduk, Cavendish, Coleraine, Dunkeld, Glenthompson, Peshurst and Tarrington. With a population of approximately 17,000 residents, the Southern Grampians Shire offers a unique blend of rural charm, natural beauty, and rich cultural heritage.

Agriculture plays a vital role in the Southern Grampians Shire's economy, with a focus on livestock farming, wool production, and cropping. The region is known for its high-quality wool and fine merino sheep.

In recent years, the Southern Grampians Shire has embraced sustainability and environmental stewardship. The community has shown commitment to preserving the region's natural assets, protecting biodiversity, and promoting sustainable land management practices.

# Climate challenges



## The risks

**The threat of a changing climate poses increasing risks to life on our planet. In our region, extreme temperatures mean increasingly destructive bushfires, decreased water security and impacts to health and wellbeing from extreme weather events.**

Many governments globally, including Australia have set emissions reduction targets based on The IPCC's most recent comprehensive assessment report, known as the "Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C" (SR15). This report highlights the importance of limiting global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels to avoid the most severe impacts of climate change. The report suggests that achieving this target would require achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by around 2050. It also emphasizes the need for rapid and ambitious emission reductions in the coming years.

As described in Council's Climate Adaptation Plan 2017 – 2027 the climate for the Barwon Southwest region has changed.

Since 1950, average temperatures for the region are over 1 degree higher and average annual rainfall has dropped by over 100mm.

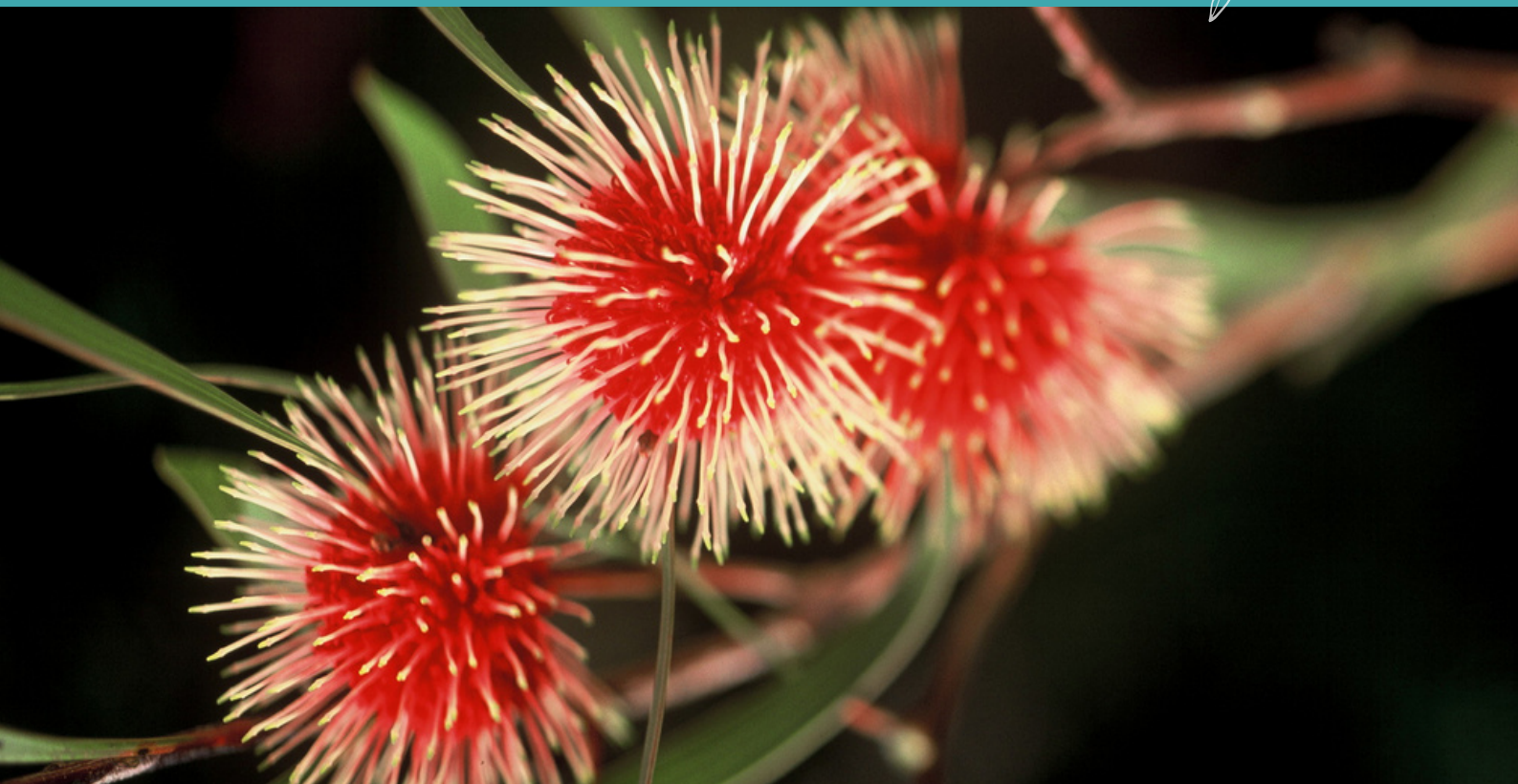
The region has been getting warmer and drier. In the future the region can expect:

- Temperatures to continue to increase year round
- Less rainfall in winter and spring
- Harsher fire weather and longer fire season
- Increased frequency and height of extreme sea level events
- More hot days and warm spells, and fewer frosts
- More frequent and more intense downpours
- Rising sea levels

A change in climate for the Southern Grampians Shire will create threats across all sectors of our community. This sustainability strategy intends to mitigate the impact of climate change and ensure our shire and its community are prepared and adapted for a change in climate.



# Strategic context



## Community vision

**This discussion paper has been developed on the principles of Council's community vision framework 2041 to be a growing, inclusive and connected community that fosters sustainability, diversity and innovation.**

Over 400 people helped shape the vision of the community plan where sustainability is strongly represented across two strategic pillars: Economy and Business (strategic pillar two); and Built Environment and Infrastructure (strategic pillar three).

A new sustainability strategy was outlined as a key Strategic indicator in the SGSC Council Plan 2021 – 2025 as part of the Key Priority no. 4 Protect Our Natural Environment and in the Southern Grampians 2041 Community Vision Framework.

In addition, the sustainability strategy will support Council's plan key priorities:

- Support our community
- Grow our Regional Economy
- Maintain and Renew our Infrastructure
- Protect our Natural Environment
- Provide Strong Governance and Leadership

# Strategic context



## The previous strategy

**A new Sustainability Strategy will supersede the previous 2010 - 2020 Sustainability Strategy, that delivered many outcomes for the shire, which we will continue to build on and expand with the new strategy in place.**

Some key outcomes from the 2010 - 2020 Sustainability Strategy were:

- Mapping of weeds and native vegetation on all shire roads
- Introduction of an organic waste kerbside service
- Replacement of 1000 streetlights with LEDs and plans to replace a further 500 cost-shared lights
- Extensive energy efficiency retrofits in council buildings and facilities
- Development of a carbon management plan
- Development of a climate change adaptation plan
- Establishment of a reuse shop at the Hamilton landfill site
- Inclusion of environmental criteria in the purchase of fleet vehicles, the procurement policy, business cases and tenders
- Installation of public place recycling facilities in many locations across the Shire
- Establishment of an effective network across the region of councils' sustainability officers who work together on projects that have a regional focus
- Improved metering and monitoring of water use and removal of redundant mains water supplies
- Improved monitoring of gas and electricity use
- Council's electricity requirements sourced from renewable energy sources

## Where are we now?

Development of the Sustainability Strategy will formalise the link between the sustainability goals of the shire and the projects required to deliver those outcomes. However, work is ongoing in this area in the absence of a current strategy.

Such in-progress and ongoing work includes construction of a waste transfer shed at the Hamilton Transfer Station, continued solar panel and rainwater capture rollout on council buildings, a commercial waste exchange platform for regional business, a community mulch program and a council-driven school sustainability competition.



# Previous consultation



## Community responses

**As part of the community consultation for the Council Vision 2041 and Council Plan 2021 - 25, the community was given the opportunity to provide council with feedback on a range of topics including sustainability.**

Council received 197 responses relating to different areas of sustainability which are summarised below.

### **Our community priorities were identified as:**

- Preserving and protecting biodiversity
- Supporting zero and low emission transportation
- Lower tipping fees
- Better recycling education and capacity
- Green energy initiatives including micro grids and solar
- Building community resilience





# Council's role



**The success of the strategy will require council, community, private business and other government agencies to work together towards reducing the carbon footprint within the shire, while protecting and enhancing our natural environment.**

The strategy will be divided into six key themes, and it will include a set of actions for both council and the community.

Council will lead by example and set ambitious targets to guide our community and local businesses.

In order to achieve the targets set within the strategy, council will be required to be a:



## Partner

Shared responsibility for funding or on-ground service delivery.



## Driver

Directly responsible for service deliver or asset management.



## Advocate

High priority projects or needs within the community beyond council capacity or legislated role to deliver.





# KEY FOCUS AREA 1

## Towards Net Zero

### Vision

**“Council and its community will be bold and embrace innovative ideas and technologies to enable a Net Zero carbon future.”**

### Considerations

The Victorian State Government has committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2045; five years ahead of the net zero target set by the Federal Government.

This target will encompass government operations, households, and the business sector.

Under this framework, Southern Grampians Shire Council will continue to move towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions for all Council operations by 2035.

In addition, Council will continue to work with our community, businesses, and industries to create opportunities and develop partnerships to become a carbon neutral Shire by 2045.

This will involve a broad range of activities including continuing the transition to renewable energy, minimising our waste, implementing sustainable agricultural practices, community education programs, leveraging technology and innovation, and enhancing our natural resources.



***What role do you think Council plays in lowering carbon emissions within our Shire?***

***How should Council prioritize lowering carbon emissions as an organization?***

# KEY FOCUS AREA 2

## Built Environment



### Vision

**“Through integrating environmentally sustainable design principles, harnessing the potential of smart cities, and preserving and expanding green open spaces, we will create communities that thrive while prioritising sustainability.”**

### Considerations

Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) principles are the current best practice industry standards which place sustainability and energy efficiency at the forefront of any new build, renew or upgrade project. Implementation of ESD in new buildings and spaces would increase energy efficiency and environmentally conscious materials requirements.

The Smart Cities framework is a technology focused toolkit which measures how well a city or region is meeting the requirements of its residents in terms of access to services and employment but with a focus on sustainability namely, the municipality's ability to provide and expand on the above areas in a way which will not impact future opportunities. Smart cities seeks to leverage digital tools to best utilize energy, transport and services to increase quality of life, opportunity, safety and convenience.

Green Open Spaces includes parks, public gardens, reserves, waterways, squares, community project areas (including gardens and compost hubs), playgrounds and other community infrastructure and have been shown to increase the health and wellbeing of communities. In addition, green spaces mitigate impacts of extreme heat events by creating urban cooling zones.

***What opportunities does our region have around sustainable infrastructure and green open spaces?***

***How should Council prioritise a more connected, efficient and sustainable infrastructure network including roads, bicycle tracks, footpaths, outdoor spaces and Council assets?***





# KEY FOCUS AREA 3

## Waste to zero

### Vision

**“Together we will build a future where waste is no longer a burden on the environment, but a valuable resource. We are committed to achieving zero recoverable waste to landfill by adopting sustainable practices that maximise the value of waste streams.”**

### Considerations

The Victorian State government introduced the Circular Economy Act in 2021 and established Recycling Victoria to oversee Victoria’s transition to a circular economy.

From a regional perspective, a circular economy means achieving zero recoverable waste to landfill, maximizing the value of diverted resource streams and creating local economies around a modern resource recovery system.

Council will need to invest in upgraded infrastructure at our transfer stations to ensure we are positioned to exploit opportunities in this space which benefit all residents within the Shire.

Such projects include a transfer station waste shed which will house a greater number of separate waste streams, on-site processing of kerbside FOGO, implementation of digital tools including waste trading platforms and landfill Biogas capture.

In addition, Council will need to ensure procurement policies include considerations around circular economy including use of recycled materials where possible and increasing the lifespan of assets.



***What are the most important aspects of our waste system?***

***How should Council endeavor to transition to a more Circular Economy?***

## KEY FOCUS AREA 4

# Water conservation



### Vision

**“Our precious water resources will be utilised responsibly, supporting the current and future needs of communities, industries, and ecosystems by fostering sustainable practices and protecting the vitality of our waterways.”**



### Considerations

An integrated water management principle across all projects would allow council to reduce its potable water usage by implementing further rainwater capture infrastructure, minimising the water intensity of its operations and investigating new technologies including water treatment infrastructure for water reutilisation.

Improving the health and regeneration of our natural waterways will involve facilitating habitat regeneration projects, urban planning and stormwater design that enhances the natural environment and through continued community education programs around waste, contaminated stormwater, and runoff impacts.

*How do we capture the value of water in our region?*

*How can Council lead by example in management of our supply network and natural waterways?*

## KEY FOCUS AREA 5

# Land use and biodiversity



### Vision

**“Our focus on sustainable land use through responsible land management practices that prioritise the protection and conservation of biodiversity will create a harmonious balance between environmental preservation and societal needs for a sustainable future.**

### Considerations

Responsible land management stems from implementing land use plans that consider long term ecological and social implications of development and promote responsible land use practices.

Sustainable agriculture can be leveraged through digital platforms and process innovations, while support and advocacy for small scale producers and local markets will reduce the carbon footprint of long-distance transport.

Protecting, integrating, and regenerating our biodiverse natural ecosystems will involve good planning and governance of biodiversity actions, prioritisation of existing biodiversity and habitat on both council and private land and collaboration with the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority and community Landcare groups.



*How can we ensure protection of our natural resources?*

*How can Council support sustainable agricultural practices?*

## KEY FOCUS AREA 6

# Community engagement



### Vision

**“By fostering connections, sharing knowledge, and mobilising resources, we create a strong network of resilient communities ready to tackle climate change and build a sustainable and thriving future.”**



### Considerations

Council engagement with community members and stakeholders is key to develop and implement sustainability initiatives, raise awareness about environmental issues, and foster a sense of collective responsibility for creating a sustainable future.

Jointly facilitated education programs and targeted projects between council, community groups and schools will reconnect people to nature and foster a socially and environmentally responsible community.

Community engagement programs, organisational partnerships and education initiatives on climate resilience will empower connected communities to mitigate the impacts of climate change events such as fires, floods, and heatwaves.

***How could Council and the community work together to deliver a sustainable future for the Shire?***

***What education programs and community-led initiatives are most needed?***







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Southern Grampians Shire Council

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

Southern Grampians Shire Council acknowledges that our shire is on the traditional lands of the Gunditjmara, Djab Wurrung, Jardwadjali and Buandig people.

We recognise the important ongoing role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have in our community and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

