

Sustainable Environment Advisory Committee MINUTES



Thursday 14 December 2023

Chairperson

Cr Johanna Skelton

Members present

Cr Andrew Fullagar (YRC), Monika Winston (YRC), Sarah Bond (YRC), Amanda Smith (YRC), Tom Meek (YRC), David Carr (YRC), Suzanne Burville (YRC), Graeme George (member), Ron Sawyer (member), Peter Martin (member), Lauren Dwyer (member), Laurence Gaffney (member), Melanie Birtchnell (member), Ross Bleazby (Melbourne Water), Merryn Kelly (DEECA)

Apologies

Kym Saunders (YRC), Graham Brew (YRC), Bec Brannigan (member), Jonathan Gay (member)

Confirmation of minutes of meeting held on 5th October 2023

Moved: Lauren Dwyer

Seconded: Ron Sawyer

Declaration of interest

None

Outstanding Actions

ACTION	Find out if there is a brief on the Wonga Vine removal. Completed.	Ross Bleazby
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New Actions

ACTION	Schedule Fire as a Land Management Tool input session with Laurence, Ron and any other committee member who would like to provide additional response in January 2024.	Tom Meek/Suzanne Burville
ACTION	Provide FOGO update	Pete Tatterson

1. Agency Updates

Melbourne Water – Ross Bleazby

- Yering backswamp rainfall event
- liveable communities liveable waterways update
- willow removal
- deer control works

DEECA – Merryn Kelly

- Liwik Barring landscape conservation area update
- Future plans

Member comment: Liwik Barring is a high-risk project creating contention with landowners. Boundary issues need to be handled in a diplomatic way due to the history of belief they own the land. The project has the

potential to cause issues for other environmental projects in the area i.e. the Helmeted Honeyeater. The community reference group needs to be up and running and used effectively.

Question: How many people are on ground working with the project?

Response: Justin and 4 staff. We are partnering with Melbourne Water for efficiency.

Comment: Fences Melbourne Water put in are in the wrong place.

Response: Rain/water levels can affect the survey.

Comment: The revegetation of riparian zone (Wesburn) is an increased fire risk for people who have assets on the river.

Response: a bushfire risk management plan was done.

Parks Vic

Not present

2. Fire as a Land Management Tool – Dave Carr and Tom Meek

- Policy was due for an update in 2019
- Prior to the policy being introduced, burning was not conducted for decades on council land. Council created this formal approvals process to allow burning activities after the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.
- Council has conducted burns and had learnings from them since this time.
- Some outcomes can be achieved without burning i.e. vegetation removal.
- Council burns have a strong emphasis on neutral/positive ecological outcome.
- Council has a fuel management agreement with the CFA before burns.
- Plan burn complexity is considered; Council will do simple burns, complex burns will be outsourced to the CFA.
- Cultural burns/firestick has been introduced into the policy.
- Staff have recently undergone training to conduct burns.

Comment: To get through the checks/balances to conduct a burn is a huge task, which if it needs to be done for 600+ different sites, creates a built-in delay that doesn't allow for action to be taken when most needed.

Comment: Post 2009 5% Requirements don't need to be in the background document.

Comment: Candling of stringybark is a bit of an unknown.

Comment: Climate change should be mentioned in the policy, including carbon in the ground.

Comment: Background section of the document wasn't reviewed; it refers to selective old science and needs to be updated. If the background document is out of date, the new policy cannot be 'sound'.

Members enquired as to what stage the policy review process was at as it appeared to be the final document.

Comment: Beliefs shouldn't be included in the policy i.e. tons per hectare relates to spread.

Comment: The idea that fuel reduction, ecological burns and cultural burns can be separated is not correct. All burns contain the three elements.

ACTION	Schedule Fire as a Land Management Tool input session	Suzanne Burville/Tom Meek
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3. Looking Forward

Topics for 2024 will include:

- Stormwater management plan
- Integrated water management plan
- Nature Plan implementation
- Environment strategy refresh
- Resource recovery and circular economy

4. Open Floor

FOGO

Update on FOGO requested.

Meeting schedule

Is the first Thursday of every second month still suitable as a meeting time?

Response: Yes.

SEAC Recruitment

We had 15 applicants for the vacant position. We now have a shortlist of preferred candidates who will be interviewed before the end of the year.

Waste truck fires

Fires in garbage trucks is increasing because of lithium batteries. We need to do more communications around correct disposal.

Response: New trucks now have fire alerts/cameras and onboard equipment to put out fires.

ACTION

Provide FOGO update

Pete Tatterson

Meeting closed: 8:15pm

Next meeting Thursday 1st February 5.30pm

Submitted topics:

- Urban Tree Canopy Strategy
- Amendment C148 – Yarra Ranges Planning Scheme
- Firestick program
- Progress data set from DEECA
- Watts River Strategy