

Sustainable Environment Advisory Committee MINUTES



Thursday 4 April 2024

Chairperson

Cr Johanna Skelton

Members present

Sarah Bond (YRC), Suzanne Burville (YRC), Graeme George (member), Ron Sawyer (member), Peter Martin (member), Lauren Dwyer (member), Laurence Gaffney (member), Bec Brannigan (member), David Keil (member), Peter Morgan (member), Jared Wake (member), Jasmyn Hills (member)

Apologies

Cr Andrew Fullagar (YRC), Monika Winston (YRC), Amanda Smith (YRC), Tom Meek (YRC), Kym Saunders (YRC), Graham Brew (YRC), Melanie Birtchnell (member), Rowan Barr (member)

Confirmation of minutes of meeting held on 1 February 2024

Moved: Bec Brannigan

Seconded: David Keil

Declaration of interest

None

1. Agreements

1. Respect and Kindness: Treat others well and assume good intentions.
2. Effective Communication: Be concise, listen actively, and use data.
3. Meeting Etiquette: Start on time, stick to the agenda, and address the chair.
4. Open-Mindedness: Embrace diversity, new ideas, and big-picture thinking.
5. Preparedness: Read reports, avoid acronyms, and come ready to meetings.
6. Constructive Engagement: Provide feedback, follow up on actions, and focus on key issues.
7. Community Principles: Uphold community values and respect all members.
8. Learning and Growth: Learn from each other and enjoy the experience.
9. Context and Clarity: Share context, set goals, and avoid perfectionism.
10. External Inspiration: Be open to look beyond Yarra Ranges for fresh ideas.

2. Environment Strategy

2015-2025 Environment Strategy Reflections: Impact, effectiveness, and relevance of the 2015-2025 vision, its elements and the six goals.

We are dedicated to making Yarra Ranges a place of thriving communities, at home in healthy landscapes.

The 6 goals are:

1. Our iconic places and their natural character are actively protected.
2. Our water resource is improved and preserved.
3. Our native plants and animals are protected and their habitat is enhanced.
4. Our local economies are strengthened by environmentally sustainable activities.
5. Our communities are resilient in the face of a changing climate and more extreme events.
6. All who live and work in the Yarra Ranges see themselves as stewards of our environment.

Comments/discussion

- It would be helpful to have a diagram of how Council strategies fit/work together.
- There was an action plan in a previous version of the Environment Strategy, however, it was not included in the 2015-2025. Will the next one feature actions?
- It's difficult to measure some achievements and how effective they are i.e., Trees planted as part of the Ribbons of Green program versus how many trees have been removed illegally.
- There are benefits to have a broader ten-year plan as it allows Council to be fluid.
- Ideally there would be a 'balance scorecard' with tiered metrics. Every initiative is attributing to one of three metrics making it easy to prioritise.
- We need to move to a circular economy.
- We need action plans for reserve restoration in the event of storm damage.
- An additional goal is needed; one that requires Council to report on the other goals.
- Goal 5 needs to be more specific, or does it belong in the Climate Plan?
- All the goals appear to be still relevant as not a lot has changed in ten-years.
- Concern about 'storm over-reaction' and the illegal clearing of trees.
- Are there Tier 2 strategies that fit under the six environmental strategy goals? If so, referencing them will make it clearer to the community.
- Making the goals more distinct (colour coding or referencing the Sustainable Development Goals) and cross-referencing the different strategies would be ideal.
- The vision statement feels weak. Suggestion starting point for new vision "The urban, rural and natural landscapes of the Yarra Ranges support resilient communities living in harmony with sustainable ecosystems."
- Goal 1 should be about habitat quality not just iconic places within the Yarra Ranges.
- Goal 3 should focus more on biodiversity.
- The word 'local' should appear before 'native plants'.
- Sustainability, consumption, and resources use should be considered for inclusion.
- Soil should be mentioned. i.e., a goal covering understanding our environment's metrics.
- Goal 6 could focus more on people being part of our environment instead of being a 'steward'.
- More focus needed on measuring.
- There are no targets in the existing strategy.
- Strategy forecasting/mitigation/preventative.

2. Council Plan and Tree Strategy Update

Council Plan

Public consultation for the Council Plan is now open. This will be the focus of our SEAC June meeting enabling the group to provide collective feedback. As residents you can also provide individual feedback by visiting <https://shaping.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/yarra-ranges-shape-your-future>

There will be a deliberative panel of 30-40 members. To apply to be on the panel visit <https://shaping.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/yarra-ranges-shape-your-future/community-panel-deliberative-engagement>

Tree Strategy

Please see statement from the Trees team and accompanying [documents in the document drive >](#)

3. Open Floor

Fire as a Land Management Tool March Meeting

- Went through previous motions and recommendations.
- A roadside management meeting was held between Bushlands, Darren Wandin (Indigenous Cultural Development Officer) and Healesville Community Emergency Group to discuss Council's role in bushfire risk mitigation.
- A full set of planned burn documents was requested but have not been received as yet.

Beyond Yellingbo

Beyond Yellingbo program is being put on hold due to facilitator funding finishing. Any leads on how to fund this role is appreciated. The program has assisted 121 properties during its seven years.

Nangana Initiative

The Nangana initiative will look at revegetating from Narre Warren/Pakenham to north of Healesville. Three Landcare groups have state government funding to scope the project which aims to engage landholders to commit to revegetating part of their land with the goal to revegetate a total of 100 square kilometres of land.

Melbourne Water

Melbourne Water will no longer be attending SEAC meetings. If there is a particular topic the committee would like to discuss they can approach MW.

Meeting closed: 7:45pm

Upcoming meetings:

Thursday June 6

Thursday August 1

Thursday October 3

Thursday December 5

Submitted topics:

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