



Yarra Ranges Council Sustainability Report

2023—24
Financial Year



Yarra Ranges Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri and other Kulin Nations as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of these lands and waterways.

We pay our respects to all Elders, past, present, and emerging, who have been, and always will be, integral to the story of our region. We proudly share custodianship to care for Country together.



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Introduction

The annual Sustainability Report provides insights into how Yarra Ranges Council is achieving the Environment Strategy strategic goals and supporting plans such as the Liveable Climate Plan and Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan.

This year's report also references the Nature Plan 2024-2034 and Tree Canopy Strategy 2024-2044. As these documents are in their first year, year-on-year comparison data will be included in the 2024-25 Sustainability Report.

This year's report has also been expanded to cover the great environmental, sustainability and climate outcomes being achieved by all teams across Council.

Strategic Pillars

Sustainability is a broad term and covers several activities across environment, society and economy. In recognition of this, the Sustainability Report is structured into six key pillars, each with supporting documents. These are summarised below.



 <p>Biodiversity and Natural Environments</p>	Nature Plan	Tree Canopy Strategy	Open Space Strategy
 <p>Climate Adaptation and Mitigation</p>	Liveable Climate Plan Fire Management Plan	Aquatics and Leisure Strategy Energy Transition Plan	Integrated Transport Plan Active Recreation Plan
 <p>Environmental Stewardship</p>	Reconciliation Action Plan	Municipal Recovery Plan	
 <p>Sustainable Economy, Food and Housing</p>	Housing Strategy Health and Wellbeing Strategy	Regenerative Economic Development Strategy Living Places	Framework Green Wedge Management Plan
 <p>Resource Recovery</p>	Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan		
 <p>Water and Catchments</p>	Integrated Water Management Plan	Stormwater Management Plan	Yarra Strategic Plan*

Summary of strategic context. *External plan, YRC is a major contributor

Headline Target Tracker

Council's progress to headline targets across three core sustainability plans are summarised below.

See page 20 for the carbon emissions report.

Strategy	Reference number	Target	Progress	Explanation
Liveable Climate Plan 2020-2030	LCP1	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% on 2005 levels by 2025.	80%	Emissions have been reduced by 48% on 2005 levels.
	LCP2	Transition all Council services and infrastructure to 100% renewable energy by 2030.	38%	Detailed project plan developed to inform transition.
	LCP3	Net zero emissions by 2040.	48%	N/A
	LCP4	Net zero operational energy expenditure by 2040.	25%	N/A
Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan 2023-2030	RRP1	20% reduction in total waste generation per capita by 2030.	NA	Previous years not comparable due to service change. Progress will be reported in future years. 23/24 baseline = 412kg per capita
	RRP2	Divert 90% of waste from landfill by 2030 - Interim target of 75% diversion by 2025.	83% to interim target	Weekly FOGO and fortnightly rubbish collections commenced October 2023 enhancing diversion rate. 22/23 baseline = 47% diversion rate 2023/24 = 62%  15% increase
	RRP3	Cut the volume of organic material going to landfill by 60% by 2030 - Interim reduction target of 25% by 2025.	100% complete interim target	22/23 Baseline = 45% Organics to landfill 23/24 = 16% Organics to landfill  29% decrease

Progress to headline targets across the 3 core plans.



Strategy	Reference number	Target	Progress	Explanation
Nature Plan 2024-2034	NP1	Yarra Ranges achieves an overall 'net gain' in native vegetation cover by 2034.	—	Year 1 Baseline data being collected
	NP2	Triple restoration and revegetation works on private and Council managed land per annum.	—	Year 1 Baseline will be 2024/25
	NP3	Increase the conservation value across our bushland reserve network over the next 10 years.	—	Baseline values established in 2024/25
	NP4	Enable at least 200 land stewards to improve the biodiversity on their land each year.	—	Reporting on this activity to commence in 2024/25

Year in Review

In 2023-24, Yarra Ranges Council continued its commitment to environmental and sustainability outcomes in service to the community. Through innovative projects and partnerships, Council enhanced natural environments and worked to support community resilience.

This report highlights the key achievements and progress made over the past year, showcasing Councils' aspiration of a protected and sustainable Yarra Ranges for future generations.

Biodiversity and Natural Environments

Biggest planting year ever – 100,000+ plants in the ground. (NP1)



Increased conservation value and reduced weed coverage in bushland reserves. (NP3)

Gardens for Wildlife program attracted 213 additional participants and conducted 103 garden visits. (NP4)



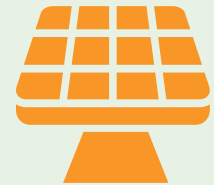
Sustainable Economy, Food and Housing

35 events were hosted, 1,000+ participants attending Gardens for Harvest workshops, Mini-Beasts Festival and Platypus Festival.



Climate Adaptation and Mitigation

Installation of a 44.28kW solar and 95.85kWh battery system on Olinda Sporting Pavilion, enhancing energy resilience. (LCP1, LCP2, LCP3, LCP4)



The Monbulk Resilient Energy Precinct Feasibility Report detailing the viability of a microgrid in Monbulk was published. (LCP1, LCP2, LCP3, LCP4)



Key achievements in 2023-24 across the six Strategy Framework themes. Where an item relates to a headline target, it is colour coded as follows

 Liveable Climate Plan  Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan  Nature Plan

Environmental Stewardship

Return of Cultural fire to Council land in the first Firesticks burn. (NP3)



Eastern Alliance for Sustainable Learning attracted two new Councils and held the biggest Learning for Sustainability Conference yet.

The EASL ResourceSmart Schools (RSS) program supported 115 active schools, certified 33 modules and won 5 awards at the RSS awards.



Resource Recovery

Weekly food and garden organics and fortnightly rubbish collections significantly increased waste diversion from landfill. Overall recovery rate for recycling and reuse of 62%. (RRP2, RRP3)

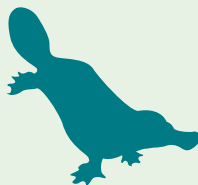


Partnering with 13 Victorian councils, Yarra Ranges Council encouraged over 1,000 families to use reusable nappies. 80% of participants adopted them part or full-time by the project's end. (RRP1, RRP2)



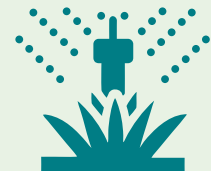
Water and Catchments

47 site assessments were conducted and 3 remote-controlled rainwater tanks were installed as part of the Tanks for Platypus Project.



Stormwater discharge was reduced by 61ML/year, nitrogen by 527kg and gross pollutants by 24 tonnes.

The Monbulk Stormwater Harvesting System came online with a 310kL underground tank supplying treated stormwater for oval irrigation.



Key achievements in 2023-24 across the six Strategy Framework themes. Where an item relates to a headline target, it is colour coded as follows

 Liveable Climate Plan  Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan  Nature Plan

Biodiversity and Natural Environments



Ribbons of Green Program

The Ribbons of Green Program provides native plants to properties over 1 hectare to restore habitats and create 'green corridors' across Yarra Ranges.

During the 2024 planting season, 62,000 indigenous plants were planted across 66 private properties, covering approximately 10 hectares. This comprised of 8 per cent overstorey eucalypts, 17 per cent understorey trees, 45 per cent midstorey shrubs, 14 per cent lower storey shrubs and 16 per cent ground storey.

18 properties are repeat participants in the Ribbons of Green program, working on multi-year habitat restoration projects.

- 37 projects focused on extending or improving vulnerable vegetation communities.
- 14 schools participated in revegetation and habitat education.

Inspiring Initiative Gruyere farm habitat restoration

2020 Fenced a small patch of remnant vegetation, planted middlestorey shrubs.

2021 Fenced a further two hectares, planted with canopy and colonising middlestorey species. Melbourne Water support for fencing.

2022 Two dams and a further four remnant paddock trees fenced and area planted.

2023/24 Infill planting.





Bushland Revegetation Program

Community, Council staff, contractors, schools and volunteer groups planted 41,200 seedlings across 94 bushland reserve sites throughout the municipality.

Bushland Conservation Values

Bushland conservation values increased by two per cent in 2023/24, assessed through a conservation value mapping program. This includes tree canopy cover, native vegetation, weeds, organic materials, patch size, vegetation links, and site disturbance.

In May 2024 the final nest boxes and hollows were installed as part of the Artificial Hollows and Nest Box Program. Infrared cameras identified various bird species and mammals such as Agile Antechinus, Feathertail Glider, Australian Owlet Nightjar, and Greater Gliders. Deakin students assisted with monitoring.

Spotlighting and song meters confirmed species presence including four Greater



Gliders at Wesburn Park. Pole camera monitoring of early installed nest boxes and hollows showed fauna interest, including species such as Krefft's Gliders, Common Ringtail Possums, Australian Wood Ducks, Crimson Rosellas, and bees. Ongoing student placements from Deakin University are ensuring consistent monitoring and reporting.

Bushland Weed Cover

Weed cover has been reduced by five per cent on average across bushland reserves and two per cent in roadside sites. Blackberry remains the most threatening weed, with a 79 per cent presence in reserves and 63 per cent in roadsides, but has decreased by four per cent in reserves and one per cent in roadsides since 2021-22. English Ivy and Sweet Pittosporum follow, with 62 per cent and 61 per cent presence in reserves, and 36 per cent and 35 per cent in roadsides.

Overall many weed species, especially woody weeds like Sallow Wattle, Prunus sp., Cotoneaster, Sycamore Maple, and Japanese Honeysuckle, have seen a reduced presence.

Biodiversity Offsets Program

The Yarra Ranges Biodiversity Offsets Program compensates for unavoidable and permitted vegetation removal by providing local and strategic native vegetation offsets, as required by the State Government.

Currently, the program protects and enhances 70 hectares of native vegetation and fauna habitat on restricted access Council-owned land through weed and pest control and revegetation.

In 2023/24, the program offset over 2.9 hectares of vegetation removal through 30 trades worth over \$122,000, meeting all local offset and cost recovery requirements. This income is reinvested into conservation efforts at biodiversity offset sites, supporting biodiversity and habitat restoration.



Peri Urban Weed Partnership Program

A collaborative program between State and Local Governments, public land managers, Traditional Owners, and the community that targets invasive weeds in Melbourne's peri-urban areas.

- Continued strong engagement and collaboration with agency partners and environmental friends' groups within target areas of the Dandenong Ranges.
- Achieved 980.37 hectares of weed control activities across the program area on agency-managed land.
- Engaged and completed high threat weed control on 23 private properties within Yarra Ranges (Sassafras and Ferny Creek) and Knox City Council (The Basin).

Deer Control Program

This program minimises deer impacts on local biodiversity, water quality, public safety, agriculture, and Aboriginal cultural heritage through coordinated control activities.

- Continued strong engagement and collaboration with Landcare Group in program delivery.
- Engaged and delivered control on 128 private properties, two Council Reserves and one Parks Victoria managed asset.
- Controlled 434 deer, 325 Sambar and 109 Fallow across 20,945 hectares.
- All carcasses processed locally at Coldstream for the pet food industry through the principle use of a local harvest contractor.



“It’s great to know how proactive the Shire and Melbourne Water are being with regeneration of sensitive areas. Great to know the Traditional Owners are involved in the rehabilitation of this area also.”

Billabong Walk Participant

Yering Billabongs Project

The Yering Billabongs Project aims to restore 60 hectares of floodplain along the Yarra River and Olinda Creek, enhancing biodiversity, stormwater management, and cultural, recreational, and environmental opportunities.

Milestones include:

- First Cultural burn conducted by Traditional Owners with support of Bushlands Team and Indigenous Development Team.
- Landscape concept design completed in collaboration with stakeholders.
- Narrap Rangers engaged at the site for:
 - On ground works including weed control, revegetation and other land management activities.
 - Monitoring including vegetation and eDNA.
 - Planning for the future, creating a collaborative management plan incorporating Traditional and non-traditional land management techniques

- Council collaborated with Narrap Rangers to create a video about the Cultural values of the site.
- High threat weeds treated across the site.

- Five local primary schools engaged at the site through Eco Warriors Australia’s Planting the Seed program.
- Two billabong walks at Spadonis Reserve in 2024, attended by 40 people.

Feedback: “Melbourne Water Capital Works project awarded to site (2025-27). This will include works to ‘rewild’ and rehabilitate a highly channelised section of Olinda Creek.”

- Valuable relationships formed:
 - Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
 - Yarra Riverkeeper Association
 - Eco Warriors Australia.

Environmental Assessments

The Environmental Assessment Team reviews planning applications for biodiversity impacts in the Yarra Ranges, ensuring compliance with the 2017 State Guidelines on native vegetation removal.

Statutory Planning Referrals

2023-24:

- 220 planning referrals completed; a 12 per cent increase from 2022-23 (27 permits recommended for approval and 31 requests for further Information).
- 12 new Land Management Plans requested and 20 drafted plans reviewed.
- Total permits issued equate to 7.5 hectares of vegetation removal including 30 large trees, corresponding to 1.73 General Habitat Units (GHUs). Offsets of 3.39GHUs were conditioned in permits and 0.566 GHUs for 2022-23 were reviewed.

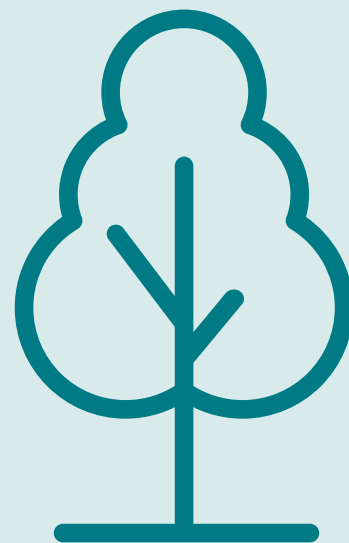
Inspiring Initiative

Brushy Creek Non-Drinking Water Infrastructure Project

This project will provide parts of Croydon, Chirnside Park, and Lilydale, including Kinley Estate, with recycled non-drinking water for activities such as irrigation.

Multiple meetings were held before the planning application was lodged discussing opportunities and concerns, including the 'avoid and minimise the removal of native vegetation principle', with preference to retain large indigenous trees instead of short-lived exotic trees.

The project team took Council's advice on board, and the revised design achieved a reduction in tree removal of 60 per cent (from 153 to 60 trees).



Council Project Referrals

2023-24:

- 57 projects referrals completed.
- 18 projects under construction supervised.
- 27 projects utilised Department Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) Road Safety Exemption Agreement which streamlines the process for road authorities to undertake necessary vegetation management for road safety purposes, ensuring compliance with DEECA's outlined procedures.
- 37 tree impact assessments.
- 14 detailed biodiversity investigations.
- 25 Construction Environmental Management Plans.
- 13 Tree Management Plans.
- 20 site inductions.
- Total issued permits equate to 0.286 hectares of vegetation removal, corresponding to offsets of 0.066GHUs.

Inspiring Initiative

Maddens Lane Gruyere Road Widening and Rehabilitation Project

Maddens Lane in Gruyere was identified as a priority project as the lane width was too narrow for two large vehicles to pass and the road surface was suffering from inadequate drainage.

Stage 1 design required removing 64 trees to create two trafficable lanes with drainage, enhancing road safety and surface longevity. Innovative design, arboriculture investigation and careful supervision reduced the tree removal impact by 66 per cent (from 64 to 22).





Gardens for Wildlife

The Gardens for Wildlife program promotes habitat creation and discusses weed impacts with urban and smaller property inhabitants.

In 2023-24:

- 213 residents joined the Gardens for Wildlife Program, bringing total participation to 797 since 2017.
- 103 garden visits completed.
- 20 garden guide volunteers help run the program.

Highlights

Garden guides visited a small townhouse property in Healesville that demonstrates how tiny gardens can support wildlife and how program participants can work with neighbours to get them involved.

One garden guide volunteer has dedicated half their large garden to a natural bush state, supporting an adjoining reserve.

Climate Adaptation and Mitigation



Climate Resilient Buildings

Leveraging grant funding, Council's Climate Team has enhanced community energy resilience, reduced emissions, improved accessibility, and energy performance of community facilities. These improvements equip facilities for a changing climate and for emergency use when required, significantly improving the community's ability to respond to, and recover from, extreme weather events.

In 2023/2024:

- Community Climate Change and Energy Action Program Stream 3 Grant – LED Lighting Upgrades at six community facilities:
 - CIRE Community House – Mt Evelyn
 - Japara Living and Learning Centre – Plus Annex
 - Japara Day Care Centre
 - Launching Place Pre School
 - Mooroolbark Early Learning
 - Yarra Glen Men's Shed.
- Growing Suburbs fund (GSF) and Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Programme (LRCI) – thermal improvements, energy resilience upgrades, equitable access and energy efficiency measures such as LED lighting, insulation installation, solar and batteries:
 - Healesville Memorial Hall
 - Yarra Glen Memorial Hall
 - Olinda Sporting Pavilion
 - Yarra Centre Pool.



Inspiring Initiative

Olinda Sporting Pavilion Project

The Olinda Sporting Pavilion Project aimed to enhance the facility's sustainability and use for extreme weather events through targeted upgrades.

A 44.28kW solar photovoltaic (PV) system paired with a 95.85kWh battery were installed, reducing the pavilion's reliance on grid electricity lowering carbon emissions and operating costs.

The shower area was redesigned into separate cubicles, ensuring the privacy and comfort of users if activated as a shower and power site.

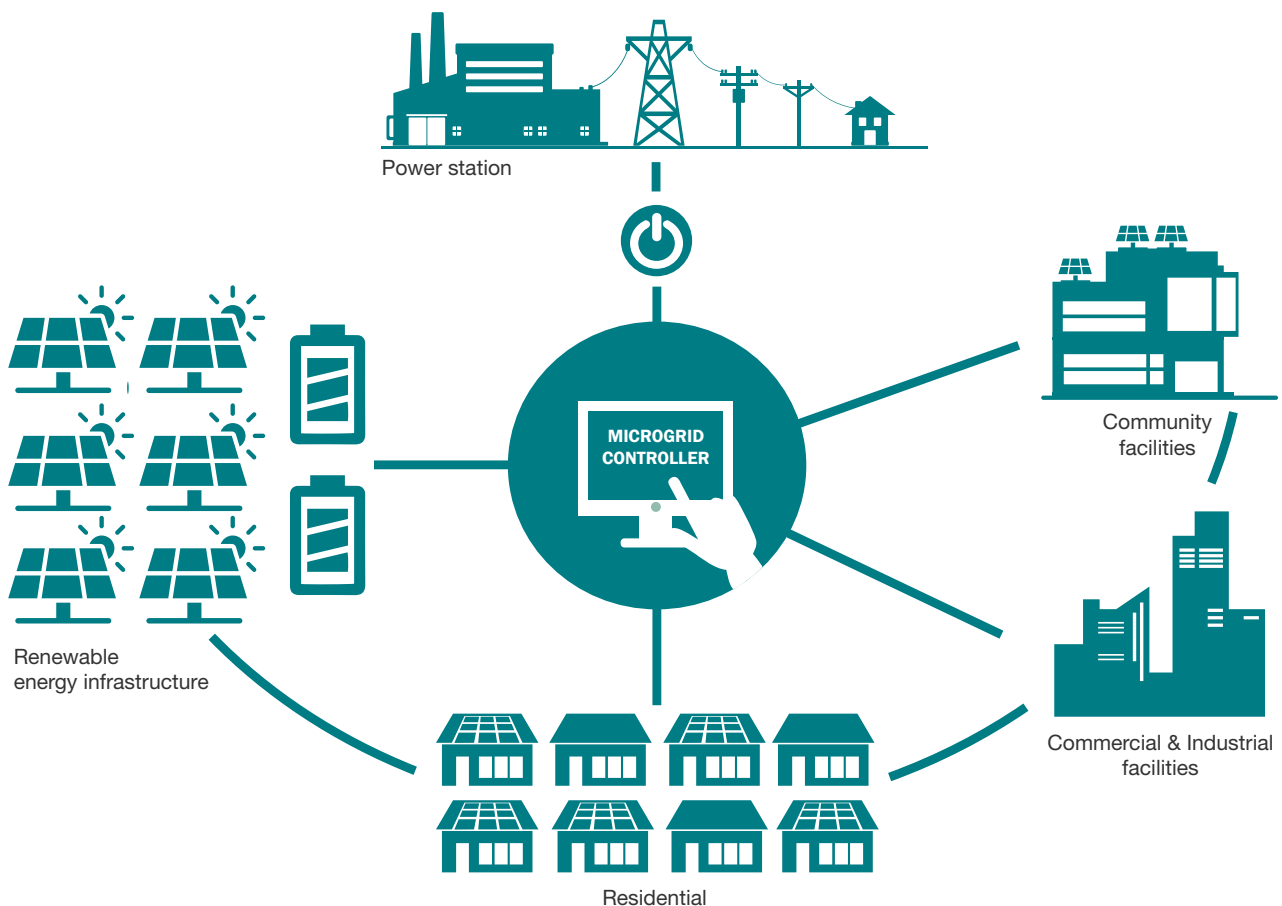


Microgrids

Using funding from the Preparing Australian Communities Fund, Council conducted the Resilient Energy Precinct (REP) microgrid feasibility study in Monbulk. This study involved extensive community engagement and expert assessments, culminating in the publication of the Resilient Energy Precinct Feasibility Report in May 2024.

The report proposed a staged microgrid development, starting with connecting the Sports Pavilion and the Living and Learning Centre to form a small microgrid powered by solar PV and battery storage. This setup will allow the site to operate independently during power outages, ensuring facilities can continue community service as needed.

Construction of the Monbulk Microgrid is underway, including electrical connection, battery installation, a backup generator plug-in point, and new solar PV on the Sports Pavilion, with completion expected in early 2025.



Emissions Profile

Greenhouse gas emissions are categorised into three scopes.

Scope 1

Scope 1 emissions are direct emissions from activities such as Council fleet vehicles and on-site fuel combustion (gas boilers and other gas-powered equipment).

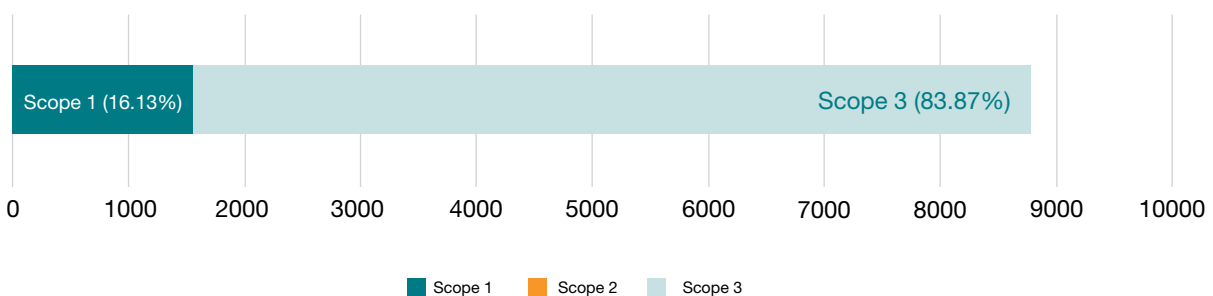
Scope 2

Scope 2 emissions are from purchased electricity – Council does not have any Scope 2 emissions due to its participation in the Victorian Energy Collaboration, a joint power purchasing agreement which sources 100 per cent renewable electricity.

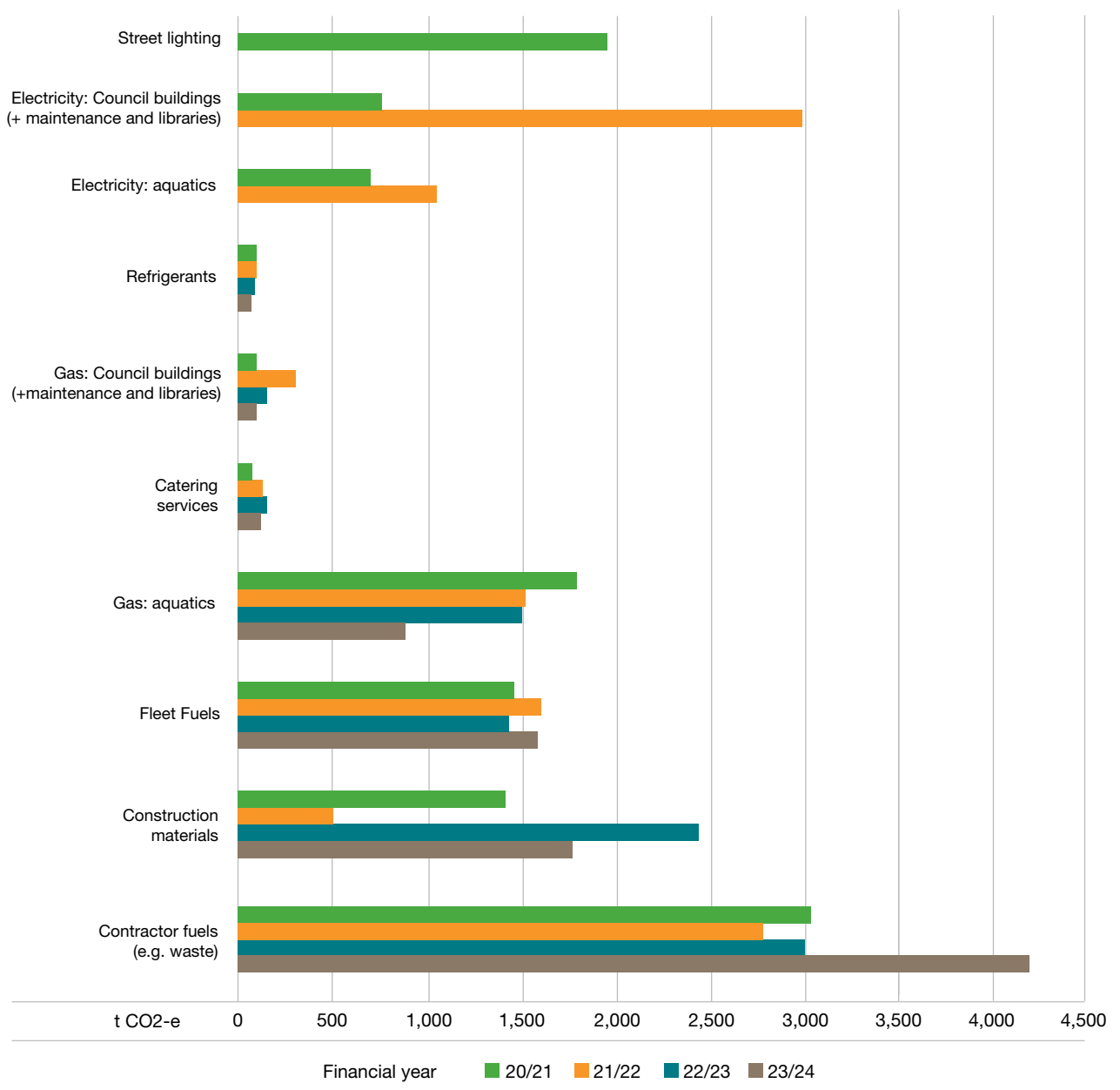
Scope 3

Scope 3 emissions are indirect emissions generally associated with the supply chain of an organisation, or its supporting activities. This includes contractor vehicle emissions and staff business travel.

The total net greenhouse gas emissions generated by the Council for the financial year 2023-24 are 8,593tCO₂-e. This is a minor increase of 41tCO₂-e (0.48 per cent) from the previous year (2022/23: 8,551.6tCO₂-e). This rise is mainly due to higher fuel emissions from both direct (stationary and transport) and indirect (contractor’s transport) sources. Additionally, a new fuel source was added, and the emissions factors for Scope 3 liquid fuels have significantly increased compared with the previous report.



Scope 3 emissions represent the largest source of emissions for Council.



Zero Emissions Fleet

Council purchased the following vehicles and equipment to reduce its emissions:

- An electric forklift to replace a gas-powered unit at Yarra Junction.
- A Hino hybrid truck replacing a full diesel one.
- Nine electric small plant items replacing petrol/diesel ones.

To support the charging requirements of an expanding electric vehicle fleet, Council has installed two more electric vehicle (EV) chargers for charging Council's fleet EVs at:

- Monbulk Living and Learning Centre
- Yarra Junction Community Link.

These EV chargers were funded by Council and a grant from the Victorian Government's Electric Vehicle Charging for Council Fleets Grant Program. Council EV chargers provide staff with charging options when delivering services across the municipality and enables more electric vehicles to be added to the fleet. More fleet electric vehicles will progress Council towards its target of a zero emissions fleet by 2030.



Environmental Stewardship



Community Education and Events

In 2023-24, there were 38 events engaging over 1,000 participants. These events foster community engagement and awareness, promoting sustainable practices and conservation efforts. By involving residents in activities like habitat restoration, back-yard gardening and biodiversity enhancement, these events help protect and improve the local environment.

The events align with Council's vision of thriving communities within healthy landscapes, ensuring a sustainable and resilient future for the Yarra Ranges.

Events included:

- Gardens for Harvest workshops and webinars
- Learning for Sustainability Conference for educators
- Sustainability drop-in sessions at libraries
- Location walk and talks (such as at Yering Billabongs)
- Mini-Beasts festival
- Tree planting days with schools and community
- Electric vehicles and charging infrastructure webinar
- Community battery information sessions
- Puffing Billy Railway student volunteer talk (Tanks for Platypus)
- Tanks for Platypus webinar
- Platypus spotting
- Platypus festival.



Eastern Alliance for Sustainable Learning

The Eastern Alliance for Sustainable Learning (EASL) is a coalition of councils dedicated to helping schools and early years services integrate sustainability into their curriculum, facilities, and policies. By fostering sustainable practices in education, EASL aims to embed sustainability within the broader community. EASL also serves as the delivery partner for the ResourceSmart Schools (RSS) program across eastern Melbourne.

In 2023-24:

- EASL attracted two new council members. Members include Boroondara (new), Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash (new), Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges Councils.
- 220 people attended the Learning for Sustainability Conference which featured keynote speaker Zena Cumpston and a performance by Indigenous Djirri Djirri dancers.
- Four online professional development/networking sessions with 59 education providers were held.
- Held two early years focused workshops with 31 attendees.



ResourceSmart Schools

The Sustainability Victoria ResourceSmart Schools (RSS) program supports schools to embed sustainability into curriculum, campus and community and make measurable reductions in waste, energy and water as well as improvements to biodiversity. The program is divided into eight regions across the State with each region supported by a local delivery partner. EASL is the delivery partner for the Eastern Metro Region which includes Boroondara, Knox, Manningham, Maroondah, Monash, Whitehorse and Yarra Ranges Councils.

In 2023/24:

- 115 active schools across the Eastern region (27 from Yarra Ranges).
- 33 modules and associated stars certified.
- ResourceSmart School Awards had 15 EASL entries, winning five awards:
 - Emerging school of the Year — Wandin North Primary School (Yarra Ranges Council).
 - RSS Teacher of the Year (Secondary) — Andrew Feher from Mount Lilydale Mercy College (Yarra Ranges Council).
 - Curriculum Leadership of the Year (Primary) — Heathmont East Primary School (Maroondah City Council).
 - Community Leadership of the Year (Primary) — Tecoma Primary School (Yarra Ranges Council).
 - Community Leadership of the Year (Secondary)— Mount Lilydale Mercy College (Yarra Ranges Council).
 - Sustainability Through Your Own Lens Photography Competition: 'Persevering to reach new heights' by Emily Griffiths, Billanook College (Yarra Ranges Council).

EASL's eastern region schools saved \$861,060 through energy efficiencies including:





Volunteering

Council works with approximately 60 environmental volunteer groups/entities who operate within the Yarra Ranges. These include:

- Friends of and Landcare groups
- Gardens for Wildlife Garden Guides
- Community gardens
- Indigenous nurseries
- Renewable energy community groups.

Council supports volunteer groups in a variety of ways including training, financial support, staff/contractor assistance and communications.

Sustainable Environment Advisory Committee

The Sustainable Environment Advisory Committee (SEAC) is comprised of community representatives who provide environmental and sustainability insights and advice on Council matters.

The committee's achievements include supporting policy improvements for the use of fire on Council land, streamlining communication approaches as part of the Stormwater Management Plan and reflecting on the continued relevance of the Environment Strategy. SEAC engaged on the following topics during 2023-24:

- Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan
- Upper Regional Development Strategy
- Fire as a Land Management Tool
- Stormwater Management Plan
- Environment Strategy.

Sustainable Economy, Food and Housing



Environmentally Sustainable Design and Planning Referrals

Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) focuses on creating buildings and infrastructure that minimises environmental impact, enhances energy efficiency, and promotes the wellbeing of occupants.

In 2023-24:

- From January 1 2024, new gas connections for residential developments were banned by the Victorian Government.
- Yarra Ranges' membership with the Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) continued, supporting a platform for idea exchange and access to significant online resources.
- 113 statutory ESD referrals were completed in line with planning scheme requirements to ensure high quality development in Yarra Ranges, supporting community emissions reduction and occupant operating expenses.

Gardens for Harvest Program

The Gardens for Harvest Program hosts in-person and online events that aim to enhance food security across the community. Workshops on food preservation, planting, and soil improvement were held with over 500 people attending.

Program participants receive a monthly newsletter containing gardening advice and event information.



Community Gardens Network

The Community Gardens Network brings together gardening enthusiasts who grow and share fresh vegetables and fruit

- Council coordinates monthly network meetings which include idea sharing and support.
- A range of communications including videos and website listings were created to promote individual gardens and food gardens in general.
- Program facilitator collaborated across Council to streamline the application and support process for establishing new community gardens.



Priority Investments

Inclusion in Five Priority Investment Discussions for Projects Over \$10 Million

Early engagement with developers and investors in high-value projects has been instrumental in aligning economic development goals with sustainability priorities. Active involvement from the Sustainability team has provided tailored guidance, enabling developers to incorporate measures that improve environmental outcomes, such as enhanced stormwater management, native planting, and sustainable material use.

This proactive approach aligns with the strategy's emphasis on creating high-quality developments that support economic growth while addressing environmental considerations.

Business Energy and Water Saving Kit Initiative

The Business Energy and Water Saving Kit supports businesses to measure and reduce their energy use, water use, and waste output. Each kit contains specialised tools, including a thermal imaging camera, power meter, thermometer, and instructional guide, enabling users to identify water leaks, high-energy consuming items, and design inefficiencies.

The initiative has received positive feedback from users who have found the kits valuable in identifying opportunities to save money and reduce emissions. While demand for the kits is still building, the program demonstrates the growing interest of businesses to implement sustainable measures.

This collaborative work demonstrates the Yarra Ranges' commitment to balancing economic growth with sustainability, contributing to a thriving, innovative, and environmentally conscious local economy.



Health and Wellbeing Activities

The Health and Wellbeing team enhances the health, safety and wellbeing of the Yarra Ranges community.

Highlights included:

- Appointed a dedicated Housing and Homelessness Officer to strengthen connections with local homelessness agencies and explore social and affordable housing strategies. This is critical as people experiencing homelessness are especially vulnerable to the impacts of severe weather such as heatwaves and storms.
- Received funding through the Federal Government's Preparing Australian Communities (PAC) Grant which boosted the Yarra Ranges Emergency Relief Network (YRERN), allowing them to employ a part-time project coordinator to strengthen capacity of network.
- Enhanced collaboration with over 70 local groups, improving delivery of food, material aid, and support services during emergencies.

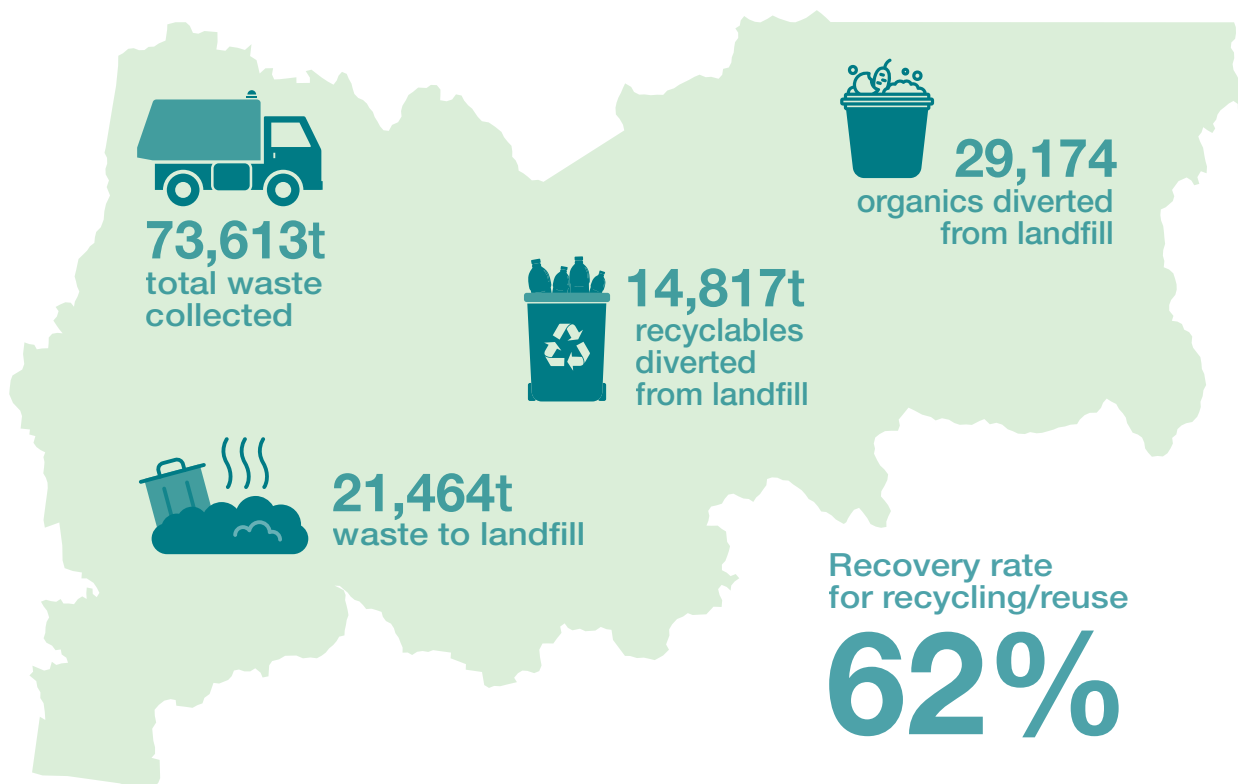


Resource Recovery



In October 2023, Yarra Ranges introduced changes to waste collection services, including weekly food and garden organics (FOGO) and fortnightly rubbish collections. These changes have significantly increased the diversion of waste from landfill and the universal FOGO service has benefited community by reducing the need for open-air burning of garden waste.

While there has been a notable reduction in landfill waste, this progress is balanced by the rise in organic waste collected in FOGO bins. Annual waste audits show a decrease in food waste in rubbish bins since the introduction of FOGO collections, with room for improvement.



2023/24 waste totals – kerbside bins collected from homes and businesses

Total waste collection includes hard rubbish, park and street bins, Detox Your Home, and bundled branches collections.

Targets for Waste Minimisation

The Community Waste and Resource Recovery Plan 2023-2030 outlines three key targets for waste minimisation. After the first year of implementation, our community has made significant progress toward achievement of the targets:

Target One

20% reduction in total waste generation per capita between 2020 and 2030.

While there has been a significant reduction in the amount of waste our community sends to landfill, these reductions are offset by the doubling of the amount of organic waste collected in FOGO bins.

Although there has been no significant movement toward Target One this year, increased organic collection provides many benefits to our community, including a reduction in the need for open-air burning of garden waste on smaller properties in the hills and Yarra Valley.

Target Two

Divert 90% of waste from landfill by 2030, with an interim target of 75% by 2025.

Changes to waste collections in Yarra Ranges began in October 2023, with the introduction of weekly food and garden organics (FOGO) and fortnightly rubbish collections.

Adoption of these new services has led to the diversion of 62% of all waste from landfill during 2023/24, up from 47% in 2022/23.

Waste audits conducted in May 2024 showed that some food waste is still being disposed into household rubbish bins.

Encouraging residents to place all their food waste into FOGO bins will ensure the interim target can be reached by 2025.

Target Three

Cut the volume of organic material going to landfill by 60% between 2020 and 2030, with an interim target of 25% by 2025.

Council conducts annual audits of waste from rubbish, recycling and FOGO bins across Yarra Ranges. These audits provide an average of the volume of organic material found in rubbish bins.

Audits conducted in May 2024 showed that, with the introduction of FOGO collections, the fraction of food waste found in the average household rubbish bin had decreased by 29%.

Detox Your Home

Detox Your Home is a household hazardous waste drop off day held in conjunction with Sustainability Victoria. A Yarra Ranges drop off day was held at the Council depot in Lilydale, with 330 people attending. This was a 26 per cent increase in the number of people attending compared to the previous year.

The Nappy Project

Yarra Ranges Council partnered with 13 Victorian councils to deliver The Nappy Project. With funding from Sustainability Victoria's Circular Economy Fund, the project encouraged expectant parents and families with children in nappies to begin using reusable nappies.

The project delivered online and in-person workshops across the 14 municipalities. Workshop participants received a nappy starter kit including reusable nappies, reusable wipes and a wet bag.

More than 1,000 families participated in the project, including 70 families from Yarra Ranges. At the completion of the project, eighty per cent of participants were using reusable nappies on a part or full-time basis, up from 24 per cent at the beginning of the project. More than half obtained additional reusable nappies for their children.



Waste as an Energy Source – SEMAWP

Landfills are rapidly filling up, with no more planned to be built.

Nine councils across the south east of Melbourne have established a company called South East Metropolitan Advanced Waste Processing (SEMAWP) Pty Ltd to work together to deliver an advanced waste processing alternative to landfill. SEMAWP is leading the procurement process.

The Councils involved are:

- Bayside City Council
- Cardinia Shire Council
- City of Casey
- City of Greater Dandenong
- Frankston City Council
- Kingston City Council
- Knox City Council
- Whitehorse City Council
- Yarra Ranges Shire Council.

In July 2024, SEMAWP entered into a Waste Supply Agreement for an advanced waste processing facility located in Maryvale to deliver a smarter solution than landfill for household waste in Melbourne's south east.

Advanced waste processing provides an alternative to landfill that makes better use of household waste than burying it in the ground.

At least 95 per cent less waste will go into landfill from nine councils in Melbourne's south east, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, creating investment and employment and preserving land for better uses than landfills.

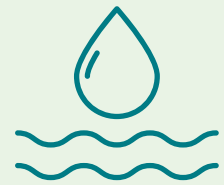
Advanced waste processing solutions have great potential as part of a total approach to managing the waste we produce. Advanced waste processing technologies can include:

- advanced sorting to extract valuable materials (e.g. metals) plus treatment of food and green waste to reduce the amount of organic material that is sent to landfill
- technologies that transform waste to energy and produce electricity, heat or gas.

These technologies provide an alternative solution to sending household waste straight to landfill.

The Agreement is between SEMAWP, Veolia Australia and New Zealand, Opal Australian Paper, and Masdar Tribe Australia (together known as Maryvale EfW Project Co Pty Ltd).

Waterways and Catchments



Tanks for Platypus

The Tanks for Platypus project installs remote-controlled rainwater tanks on private and public properties to reduce flood risk, improve streamflow, and reduce potable water use. Collaboration partners include Yarra Ranges Council, University of Melbourne, Melbourne Water, South East Water Corporations, and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action.

Progress so far:

- Three sites equipped and commissioned.
- 47 site assessments completed (17 residential and 4 non-residential suitable for installation).

Achievements:

- Data sharing agreement created.
- Preferred equipment list created.
- Promotional video developed.
- Performance Solution Template created for specialist plumbing panel with a civil engineer.



Water Sensitive Urban Design

Council manages 136 water sensitive urban design (WSUD) assets (swales, raingardens, wetlands), reducing stormwater discharge by 61 ML/year, nitrogen by 527 kg/year, and gross pollutants by 24 tonnes/year.

Council increased stormwater use for irrigating sports fields, operating harvesting systems at three sites – Pinks Reserve, Morrisons Reserve, Monbulk Recreation Reserve – supplying up to 12 million litres/year of treated stormwater.

The Melbourne Water stormwater partnership continued, contributing to Healthy Waterways Strategy targets. Projects included investigations and feasibility assessments in priority catchments, with detailed designs completed for ephemeral wetlands in Yarra Junction and Mt Evelyn.

Inspiring Initiative

Monbulk Stormwater Harvesting System

Yarra Ranges Council has introduced a stormwater harvesting system at Monbulk Recreation Reserve, enhancing water sustainability.

The system, featuring a 310kL underground tank, supplies treated stormwater with 80 per cent reliability and includes mains water backup.

This initiative reduces mains water reliance and supports sustainable irrigation practices.

Reliable Supply

Ensures steady stormwater availability, even during dry periods.



Advanced Treatment

Monitors and treats water to meet safety standards.



Efficient Design

Underground tank maximises space and prevents damage from heavy vehicles.



Pool Covers

Pool covers have been implemented at three outdoor pools (Healesville, Lilydale and Belgrave).

The covers are placed over the pool after it closes for the season. This reduces the volume of waste and debris that collects and allows chemicals to be retained to assist with water quality.

Prior to implementation of the pool covers, the pool water was emptied and then refilled at the beginning of the season and required a significant amount of chemical dosing to achieve optimal water quality. Covering the pools during the off season means that the filtration systems can be started immediately and with minimal chemical dosing, eliminating the dumping of water from last season.

Cumulatively, these pool covers save over 120,000,000 litres of water per year.





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