



Mansfield Shire Council

Environment Strategy

2019-2023



MANSFIELD SHIRE

Endorsed 15 October 2019



Artwork: Michelle Monk

Acknowledgements

Mansfield Shire Council acknowledges the Taungurung Traditional Custodians of the land on which the Council operates. We pay respects to Elders, past present and emerging and recognise the valuable contribution they have made to this Environment Strategy.

The task of developing the Strategy involved many stakeholders and community members and without their input, this document would not have been truly reflective of the Mansfield region. The Mansfield Shire Council acknowledges and thanks all involved.

Cover photo: Lake Eildon at Bonnie Doon, Brad McSweeney

***Treat the land with respect
and the land in turn will
look after you***

- Taungurung Clans

VISION:

**Working together to protect
and enhance the natural
environment**

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Photo: Australian Reed-warbler at Mullum Wetlands, Lachlan Read



Photo: Gang-gang cockatoo, Steve Wilson

Council's Foreword

Welcome to the Mansfield Shire Council's Environment Strategy. This Strategy is a statement of Council's intention and commitment to improve our natural environment at an organisational level and reflects the aspirations of our community for action.

The four focus areas of our strategy are waste, water, land and sustainable development.

Each focus areas presents both challenges and opportunities for our natural environment. These challenges for our natural environment are amplified with climate change. Mansfield Shire Council acknowledges that climate change is a real threat to our community's way of life. For Council, we seek to significantly reduce emissions from our own operations and work with stakeholders to support community in climate change action.

This Strategy also identifies actions that you, as community members, can undertake to support Council's efforts to protect and enhance our natural environment.

Finally, thank you to the community members and agency stakeholders who were involved in developing this Environment Strategy. Through your contribution, collaboration and commitment we now have a Strategy we can all be proud of.

We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with our community to make this work a reality.



Photo: Tree planting at Jamieson, Kerstie Lee







Artwork: Michelle Monk

Environment Strategy summary

Mansfield Shire is fortunate to have breathtaking natural beauty. Our clean water, fertile soil and diverse environment are the foundation of our economic development, community liveability and individual wellbeing. But our environment is under severe pressure from climate change and unsustainable development. In this context, over 150 people from across the Shire shared their insights on what we, as a community, must do to protect our most important natural assets. The summary of our consultation process is in Appendix 1.

This Environment Strategy sets out the action that must be taken now to combat these challenges, to protect, promote and rejuvenate our natural environment. It will guide Council's decision-making, so that future generations can continue to enjoy the living world around us.

Vision: Working together to protect and enhance the natural environment

Focus areas	Performance indicators (by 2021)	Communities can support by:
 Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce per capita waste volume to landfill • Waste Management Strategy developed • 100% e-waste diversion from landfill • Waste education resources developed to increase waste diversion from landfill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy products with less packaging to influence suppliers • Advocate for schools, hospital, businesses to trial community food and garden organic waste collection
 Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalise arrangements for Traditional Owner involvement in waterway management • Adopt Mansfield Township Integrated Water Management Plan • Reduced water usage in Council operations from 2018/19 levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install residential water tanks and adopt water saving behaviours • Consider innovative approaches to maximise water use efficiency in agricultural lands
 Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced prevalence of roadside weeds from 2018/19 levels • Land Use Strategy developed • Strong partnerships with biodiversity groups and agencies i.e. Landcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and develop a network of landscape scale biodiversity corridors • Protect and promote native vegetation on private property – particularly historic red gums
 Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of renewable energy in Council and community from 2018/19 levels • Climate Action Plan developed and implemented • Reduced Council utility costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install solar panels or switch to a renewable energy provider • Support community renewable initiatives • Consume less, waste less

Strategic context

Council

This Environment Strategy will guide Council in setting environmental policies and priorities for implementation. Our commitment to the environment is significant and real. We understand economic growth, human wellbeing and a sustainable future in our region are intimately connected. By protecting and enhancing the environment, we are promoting the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

The Strategy sets out our focus for the next four years; waste, water, land and development. Council will be a leader in policy and advocacy and work to support businesses, communities and federal/state agencies to ensure our goals are met.

History

Mansfield Shire Council's previous Environment Strategy was formally endorsed by Council in 2012.

The strategy was supported by the Mansfield Shire Environment Action Plan 2013-2017, which focussed on three key areas: the control of pest plants and animals, wastewater management and roadside conservation and management.

In 2015, Council undertook a review that resulted in additional priority areas being added for implementation including: implement biodiversity initiatives, implement the Great Victorian Rail Trail management initiatives and develop a project management checklist. However, the introduction of rate capping in 2016 significantly reduced Council's capacity to fund new initiatives.

In 2017, Council adopted a new Council Plan outlining a number of priorities for 2017-2021, some of which are specifically related to the environment including:

- Review the Mansfield Shire Environment Strategy to ensure its ongoing relevance and actions for implementation.
- Support the work of the key environmental groups and organisations.
- Review and progressively implement the Mansfield Shire Waste Management Strategy.
- Articulate Council and community views on major Federal and State government initiatives including protection and enhancement of the environment in partnership with local community groups.
- Develop and implement a local policy on housing provision covering issues such as type, mix, subdivision design and best practice environmental outcomes.
- Prepare and implement an Integrated Water Management Plan for the Mansfield Township.

In May 2019, Council again acknowledged climate change as a threat to our community's way of life as we know it. Council committed to identifying the challenges that this creates and produce a Climate Change Action Plan to outline how Council can significantly reduce emissions from its own operations and work with stakeholders to support our community in climate change action.

Council recommits to the key environmental programs and partnerships it is currently delivering under the previous Environment Strategy and the Council Plan.

Operating context

This strategy sets a direction for our local government organisation with respect to our own operations, as well as how we support community led environmental action. The delivery of this strategy will primarily be led by Council's environmental management and sustainable development staff.

Advising and supporting Council's environmental management and sustainable development staff is the Environmental Advisory Committee. The Committee's membership includes local agency and community organisational representation, along with student and community representatives. The Committee meets six times per year.

Mansfield Shire Council works closely with environmentally focussed community organisations including: Up2Us Landcare Alliance and its member groups and, where opportunities arise, with Trust for Nature and Waterwatch.

There are several key policies and legislation that are relevant to this Environment Strategy. The main policies and legislation are:

- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
- Water Act 2007
- State Environment Protection Policy (Waters of Victoria)
- Fisheries Act 1995
- Wildlife Act 1975
- Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988
- Managing Native Vegetation on Roadsides
- Victorian Planning Provisions Clause 52.17 Native Vegetation
- Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994
- Environment Protection Act 1970
- Planning and Environment Act 1987
- Climate Change Act 2017



Photo: Great Victorian Rail Trail, Ross Vaughan

Taungurung Traditional Owners

Wumindjika Taungurung Biik

(Welcome to Taungurung Country)

*Waydjak bunbunarik liwik-nganjin yaraga-ngala dhumbali daada gurnap biik-nganjin yulendj-ngajin.
Nganga-ngala biik-nganjin yaraga-ngalaburndap gerr ngarrnga buk wilanja-nganjin*

(We are the descendants of our old people, and we have an ongoing responsibility to look after inheritance, which is our country and our culture. We look after our country because we have an intimate relationship like thousands of generations before us.)

The Traditional Owners of the land where Mansfield Shire operates are the Taungurung people. The Taungurung Land and Water Council (Aboriginal Corporation) are the Registered Aboriginal Party, that holds decision-making responsibilities under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 for protecting Aboriginal Heritage in a specified geographical area.

Taungurung Country encompasses all of the Mansfield Shire Council and extends from east of Heathcote, towards Rushworth and Euroa in the north, down to near Mount Buller and as far south as Marysville and Kilmore.

Taungurung Nation is a diverse group of people who live throughout Victoria and elsewhere. Taungurung People are strongly connected to Country through the mountains, rivers and lakes.

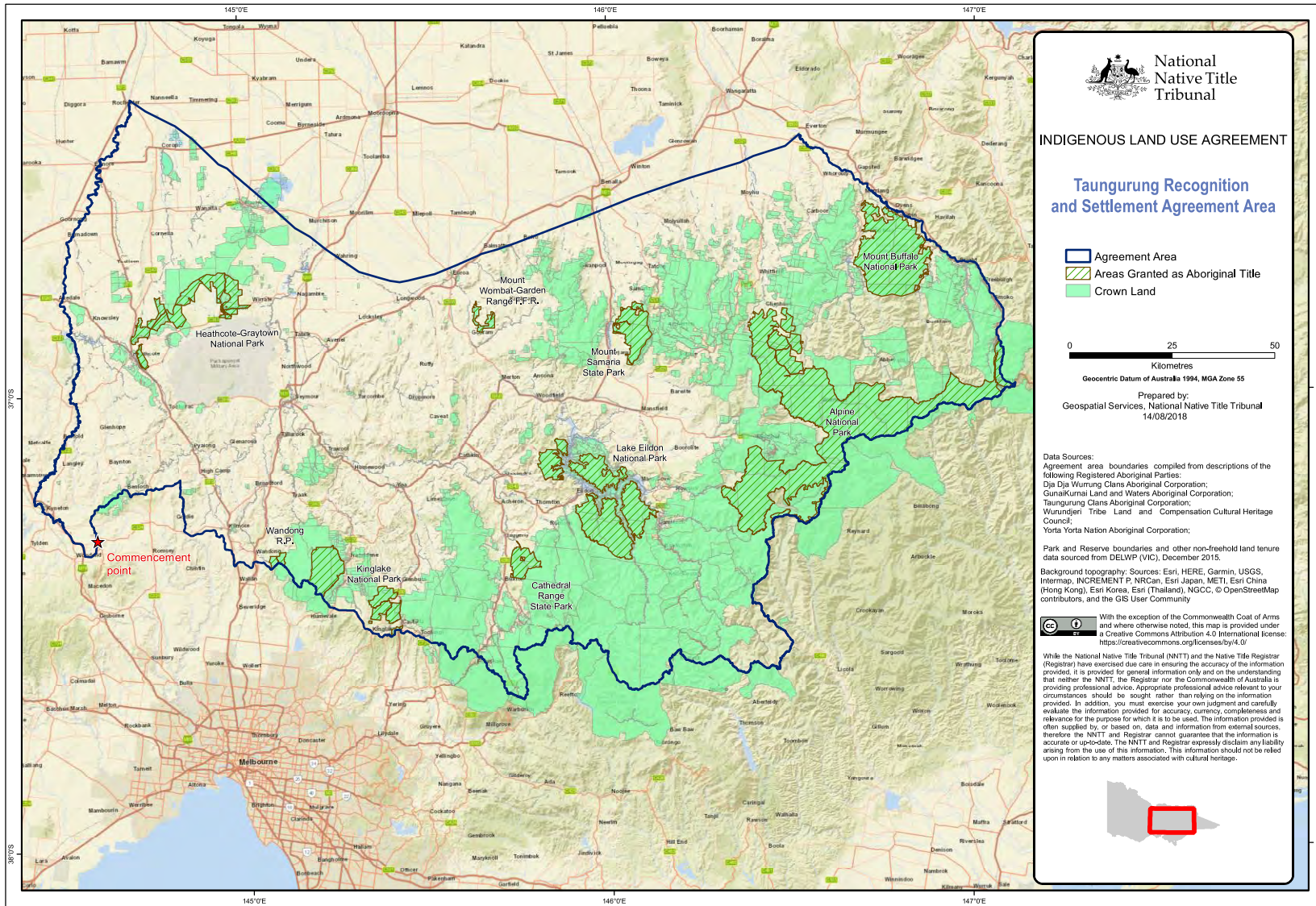
There are many significant cultural sites throughout the region including scarred trees on Mount Buller and

Mount Stirling. The lower parts of Country were for food and higher Country was for food and traditional ceremonies. The mountains housed small marsupials, alpine plants and Bogong moths that were important sources of food for people.

Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation developed the Taungurung Country Plan which outlines key priorities for action, which are:

- Identity, Recognition and Rights
- Health and Wellbeing
- Cultural Heritage
- Taungurung Traditional Knowledge
- Caring for Our Country
- Economic Independence

The Country Plan also provides a foundation for developing strong partnerships and relationships with land and water management agencies and community organisations that care for Country (*Taungurung Land and Waters Council, 2016*).



Filepath: P:\GEO_INFO\Products\VIC\ILUA\2018\18\01_Taungurung_Recognition_and_Settlement_Agreement_Area_ILUA\Maping\GT2018_1185_Map_&_TD\20180802_VIA2018_001_MGA55_A3L.mxd

Geotrack Number: GT2018/1185

Map: Taungurung Recognition and Settlement Agreement Area

Our Region – Assets and Challenges

Natural assets

Mansfield Shire is located in North-East Victoria, covering 3,843 square kilometres. More than 60% of the shire is designated Crown Land and 30% is owned by private landholders. Approximately, 90% of private landholdings are zoned for farming.

Our Shire is an agricultural, lifestyle and tourist destination known for its natural environment. It is comprised of several towns and regions including: Ancona, Barjarg, Bridge Creek, Bonnie Doon, Goughs Bay, Howqua, Jamieson, Kevington, Macs Cove, Maindample, Merrijig, Merton, Piries, Sawmill Settlement/Alpine Ridge, Tolmie and Woods Point.

Our Shire's natural environment is highly valued for its picturesque landscape and natural features. Our Shire has a diverse environment due to its topographic variation and microclimates and consists of four bio-regions, including: Highlands Northern Fall, Highlands Southern Fall, Victorian Alps and Central Victorian Uplands. Located in these areas are Mt Buller and Mt Stirling.

Our region has many flora and fauna species, some of which are listed as critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable under *Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Mansfield Shire Council, 2013). This includes pockets of the vulnerable Striped Legless Lizard found at Mt Battery and Dry Creek and the critically endangered Leadbeater's possum. A summary of endangered and vulnerable species is included in Appendix 2.

Six major waterways flow through the region – the Broken River, Delatite River, Howqua River, Goulburn River, Big River and Jamieson River. All of these rivers are catchments for the water storages at Eildon and Nillahcootie and ultimately contribute to the flow and health of the Murray Darling system.

These lakes and rivers have significant environmental and cultural value and are significant to the Shire (Mansfield Shire Council, 2019a).



Photo: Tawny Frogmouth – Mullum Wetlands, Lachlan Read

Primary land uses

Agriculture is one of our region's key economic drivers and major land uses. Agriculture contributes around \$60.7M to the economy (*Mansfield Shire Council, 2019a*). Cattle and sheep grazing as well as seed production are the predominant industries. Grape and tomato production industries are also present in the Shire as well as many agricultural related services.

Small acreage agricultural producers are increasing the diversity of produce now grown in our region including crops such as garlic, capers, saffron and berries to name few. Both small and large agricultural enterprises present significant opportunities to enhance our regional biodiversity and tackle local weed challenges.

Resource use

Mansfield Shire has municipal waste and recycling collection. In the 2017-18 financial year, the Shire collected 4,234 tonnes of waste and recycled 1,302 tonnes. Mansfield Shire Council has operational responsibility for the Mansfield Resource Recovery Centre providing waste diversion and recycling opportunities at a local transfer station.

Population and growth

Mansfield Shire is a fast-growing municipality with a population growth of approximately 2% per year since 2001. This has been driven by the lifestyle, rural amenity, affordable housing and its close proximity to Melbourne (*Mansfield Shire Council, 2019a*). Population growth and associated economic development must be managed to ensure that needs of the present generation do not compromise the ability for future generations to meet their own needs.

Mansfield Shire has a permanent resident population of 8,584 persons (*ABS, 2018*) and median average weekday population of 10,355 including visitors. The total daily population increases to over 23,000 people during peak holiday periods.

The visitor population to our region significantly increases the demand on local infrastructure and resources, and challenges the capacity and delivery of local waste services.



Photo: Working bee at Woodfield, Ross Vaughan

WASTE COLLECTED
4,234t

2%
POPULATION GROWTH per year



TONNES RECYCLED
1,302

8,584
POPULATION

AVERAGE ANNUAL RAINFALL
719mm

8 ENDANGERED ECOLOGICAL VEGETATION CLASSES

1 CRITICALLY ENDANGERED SPECIES

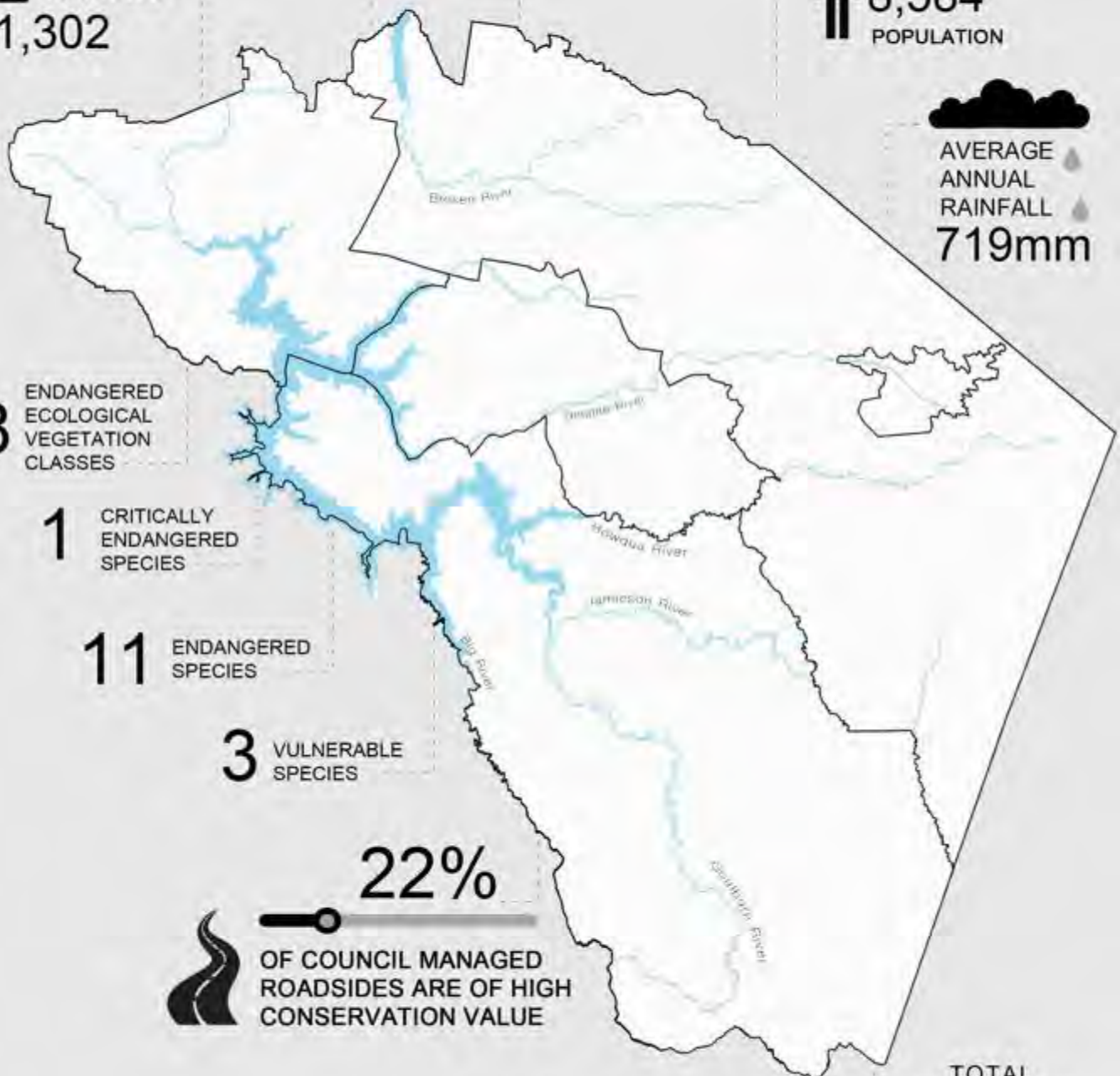
11 ENDANGERED SPECIES

3 VULNERABLE SPECIES

22%
OF COUNCIL MANAGED ROADSIDES ARE OF HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE

958t COUNCILS CORPORATE EMISSIONS
CO₂-e

TOTAL COMMUNITY EMISSIONS
225,154t
CO₂-e



The case for action

The challenges we face today threaten the health of our natural environment and the health of our people and liveability of our communities. Climate change has already started to impact the Hume region where the Mansfield Shire is located. The climate has already become warmer and drier and forecasts indicate that:

- Temperatures will continue to rise year round
- Fewer frosts will occur
- More frequent and more intense downpours
- More hot days and warm spells
- Less rainfall in autumn, winter and spring
- Harsher fire weather and longer fire seasons.

Global surface air temperatures have risen by around 1°C over the last 100 years due to human activity. Atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide (a heat trapping greenhouse gas) are more than 40% higher now compared to before the industrial revolution.

The changing climate has the potential to impact significantly on primary production, infrastructure, tourism, health and community and the environment.

This may include:

- Changed distribution of pests and diseases
- Increased risk of bush fires
- Changed pasture growth
- Reduced water security
- Increased flood risk
- Reduced or failed regeneration of logged forests
- Increased maintenance costs
- Reduced snow depths and shorter seasons
- Risks to tourists in unfamiliar conditions
- Increased stress on health and emergency services
- Amplification of existing threats to biodiversity
- Changed habitats
- Contraction of alpine ecosystems (DELWP, 2015)

Although Mansfield Shire Council has been preparing for climate change over the last decade, more needs to be done. In 2009, with assistance from the Australian Government, Mansfield Shire Council developed a

Climate Change Risk Assessment and Climate Change Adaptation Report. Council is working across the region in partnership with local groups, other councils and agencies to manage and mitigate the impacts of climate change. It is also a member of the Goulburn Broken Greenhouse Alliance and as a member has participated in projects such as: Watts Working Better – Street lighting upgrade project, Electric Vehicle Feasibility Study – Building the case for electric vehicles in Council fleets and Climate Smart Agriculture Development – Identifying agricultural opportunities under a climate changed future.

Climate change is amplifying threats to biodiversity. The spread and establishment of pest plants and animals across Victoria continues to be an issue. Throughout the Goulburn Broken Catchment, there are over 80 noxious weeds, which are declared under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*. Noxious weeds are classified into four categories: State Prohibited, Regionally Prohibited, Regionally Controlled and Regionally Restricted.

There are several weeds and pest animals that are of particular concern to the Mansfield Shire Council. These include:

Regionally Controlled weeds:

- *Ulex europaeus* – Gorse
- *Rubus fruticosus* (agg.) – Blackberry
- *Genista monspessulana* - Cape Broom
- *Cystisus scoparius* – English Broom
- *Hypericum perforatum* – St John's Wort
- *Echium plataginuem* – Paterson's curse

Established pest animal

- *Oryctolagus cuniculus* – Rabbits
- *Lepus sp.* - Hares
- *Vulpes Vulpes* – Foxes
- Feral deer
- *Canis familiaris* – Wild dogs
- *Cyprinus caprio* – European Carp

Weed of National Significance

- *Nassella neesiana* - Chilean needle grass

Council is responsible for managing weeds on Council owned land and roadsides and continuously work with others to ensure efforts are maximised.

Council currently collaborates with other agencies and community groups at the Regional Weeds Forum and has developed a Roadside Weeds and Pests Control Plan. Council recognises that pest plants and animals are an on-going issue and is committed to on-going control (*Mansfield Shire Council, 2019b*).

The impacts of changing climate are heightened by the pressures of our growing population. Our population has grown steadily since the early 2000s. Our Shire has seen more housing developments occurring across the landscape including small allotments and rural living allotments on larger acreage. This is also putting significant pressure on existing infrastructure, including the waste-water treatment plant and waste disposal mechanisms (transfer station and landfill). The average Victorian disposes of 363kg in waste ever year – almost 99 percent of which became waste within six weeks of purchase (*Sustainability Victoria, 2019*). While recycling has increased in our Shire, our growing population means more waste is still ending in landfill. Greenhouse emissions from waste is increasing and existing landfills are running out of space.



Figure 1: Sustainability Victoria, 2018

Future developments should consider environmental impacts, potential impacts on large scale agricultural land and the natural rural amenity that Mansfield Shire is known for.

Our community must also manage increasing wastewater, where Mansfield's Wastewater Treatment Plant is already at capacity. Declining water security will further strain our ability to sustain growth long-term.

While our environmental challenges are significant, there are also opportunities for action. The need for efficient, sustainable agriculture is increasing, with the industry in Australia aiming to grow by 70% by 2030 (*National Farmers Federation, 2018*).

The Victorian State Government has set ambitious targets to achieve the Paris Climate agreement to keep global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The transition to greater renewable energy future is happening. Local action is being led by groups such as Renewable Energy Mansfield and Mansfield Climate Action Group. Council's role is to support community action and programs that benefit our region.

Our Shire in partnership will leverage grants where they become available to ensure we deliver on actions that will address these environmental challenges. The Council budget will also reflect the actions raised in the strategy in future years.



Figure 2: Hume regional forecast (DELWP - Climate Ready Victoria: Hume (2015)

Pathways for actions

VISION: WORKING TOGETHER TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

We need to work together to overcome the challenges our environment faces and capitalise on the momentum for a low-carbon, sustainable economy. We have identified four key focus areas in this Strategy to continue this work.

 Focus Area 1: Waste

 Focus Area 2: Water

 Focus Area 4: Land

 Focus Area 3: Sustainable Development

These areas will guide Council's actions and how it works as a partner with communities and stakeholders. Mansfield Shire Council has been undertaking a number of environmental works over the years and continues to build partnerships with local community groups such as Up2Us Landcare Alliance and Renewable Energy Mansfield.

Each Focus Area identifies example actions that community members can take to support the vision and long-term goals of the strategy. We should all be encouraged, that with these simple actions, we can all protect and enhance our local environment.

The attainment of our vision will only be achieved when, as a community, we are willing to embark on this pathway together.



Photo: Alpine pathway, Lou Perrin



Focus Area 1: Waste

Ngabedin dhanga-bi ba yumaanda (uneaten and thrown away)

Long-term goal: Reduce waste to landfill

Short-term indicators:

- Reduce per capita waste volume directed to Landfill.
- Waste Management Strategy Developed.
- 100% e-waste diversion from landfill.
- Waste education resources developed to increase waste diversion from landfill.

Policy position:

Council acknowledges:

- Nationally we face a waste problem. Our growing population is producing more solid waste, which is becoming more expensive to collect and dispose.
- We know the consumption of goods and generation of waste have direct and indirect impacts on our environment.
- Reducing consumption and waste production is the most effective way to reduce the need to handle, treat, and dispose of waste.
- Disposing of waste that could be reused or recycled has both an environmental and an economic cost.



Photo: Clean Up Australia Day - Mansfield Secondary College 2018, Kerstie Lee

Council will continue to:	Council will:	Community members can:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manage operations of the Mansfield Recovery Resource Centre, in accordance with the waste hierarchy (EPA Victoria). ▪ Plan, educate and manage sustainable waste management practices as a member of the North East Waste and Resource Recovery Group. ▪ With agency partners, support waste education programs such as 'carry in – carry out'. ▪ Increase recycling and reduce Council waste to landfill. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a Waste Management Strategy in 2019-20. ▪ Eliminate e-waste from landfill through Transfer Station upgrades. ▪ Engage the Mansfield community about options for Green waste/compost collection. ▪ Develop waste education resources to increase waste diversion from landfill. ▪ Improve website to promote the responsible disposal of rubbish, recyclables, garden and hard-waste at the Mansfield Resource Recovery Centre. ▪ Support agency partners and community groups with visitor waste management programs. ▪ Support national community waste events e.g. Clean Up Australia Day. ▪ Support local schools to deliver waste and recycling programs. ▪ Advocate for changes to State and Federal policy to reduce waste associated with food packaging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Buy products with less packaging to influence suppliers. ▪ Volunteer to help sort waste at local events so recycling is not contaminated. ▪ Advocate for schools, hospital, businesses to trial community food and garden organic waste collection. ▪ Support businesses to improve waste management. ▪ Work with community groups and businesses to promote a circular economy with a focus on products utilising recycled material content. ▪ Establish and participate in community groups (such as Climate Action Group Mansfield) that implement innovative waste reduction programs and opportunities e.g. Repair Café, Boomerang Bags, etc.

Focus Area 2: Water

Baan nganjin (our water)

Long-term goal: Healthy waterways, wetlands and lakes and access to safe, secure and affordable water supplies

Short-term indicators:

- Formalise arrangements for Traditional Owner involvement in waterway management.
- Adopt and implement Mansfield Township Integrated Water Management Plan.
- Reduced water usage in Council operations from 2018/19 levels.

Policy position:

Council acknowledges:

- Rivers were, and remain, central to Taungurung Country. They provide food and places to camp, hunt, fish, swim, hold ceremonies and practice culture. Taungurung has an ongoing responsibility to look after rivers and wetlands, they are places that are central to their creation stories, and many of their cultural heritage sites are associated with waterways – burial and birthing.
- The natural water bodies across our Shire are invaluable social, economic and environmental assets.
- The Mansfield Wastewater Treatment Plant is at capacity and requires an upgrade.
- The parts of the Mansfield township that are not sewered (approximately 20%) pose a small environmental and community risk, given the lack of active management.
- Efficient use of water should occur to protect supply for future generations.



Photo: Delatite River - Mirimbah, Gerard McHugh

Council will continue to:	Council will:	Community members can:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support Traditional Owner direct involvement in the management of waterways. ▪ Require Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) implementation as specified by State Planning Policy and Mansfield Planning Scheme ▪ Implement the Domestic Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP) to reduce environmental and health risks from domestic wastewater in un-sewered areas. ▪ Manage drought relief bores available across the Shire. ▪ Maintain public drinking water taps provided along High Street and at Botanic Gardens in Mansfield. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finalise and implement icon projects and key actions from the Mansfield Township Integrated Water Management (IWM) Plan. ▪ Provide training for developers and Council's works staff on operation and maintenance of WSUD assets. ▪ Advocate for the provision of a reticulated sewage schemes in un-sewered townships that utilises connection to existing septic systems. ▪ Support community led action to improve waterway health including water quality, biodiversity and riparian stabilisation of urban waterways. ▪ Provide in-kind support to landholders and Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority to improve biodiversity and water quality outcomes for rural waterways. ▪ Review planning schemes and decisions to protect water resources and assets. ▪ Advocate for ongoing river quality monitoring. ▪ Build partnerships with traditional owners and community groups to improve waterway management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider innovative approaches to maximise water use efficiency in agricultural lands. ▪ Install residential water tanks and adopt water saving behaviours. ▪ Increase the use of recycled water and stormwater for commercial, residential and industrial use. ▪ Establish local river quality monitoring networks and share crowd-sourced data online. ▪ Undertake to understand the cultural significance of our Shire's waterways to Traditional Owners. ▪ Support businesses that use recycled water. ▪ Join Landcare or community based environmental group to protect our Shire's waterways.

Focus Area 3: Land

Biik-nganjin (our land)

Long-term goal: Diverse and self-sustaining landscapes that support healthy ecosystems now and into the future

Short-term indicators:

- Reduced prevalence of roadside weeds from 2018/19 levels.
- Land Use Strategy developed.
- Strong partnerships with biodiversity groups and agencies i.e. Landcare.
- Land management agreements established with Taungurung.

Policy position:

Council acknowledges:

- Our long-term economic sustainability and social wellbeing are intrinsically connected to our land.
- Our unique natural landscapes and biodiversity are under pressure from population growth, subdivision and climate change.
- Traditional Owners, Council, communities, farmers, visitors, and state and federal authorities must all play a role in protecting our physical landscapes and diversity of plant and animals.
- Fire hazard management practices, including traditional burning, can support rather than damage biodiversity.



Photo: Mountain Pygmy-Possum, Vincent Antony

Council will continue to:	Council will:	Community members can:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement the annual roadside weed control program, consistent with the Roadside Weeds and Pest Control Plan. ▪ Support Mansfield Weeds Forum to ensure agency coordination of annual weed control activities. ▪ Protect and enhance roadside biodiversity (understorey plants). ▪ Participate on Goulburn Broken Local Government Biodiversity Reference Group to share knowledge and coordinate programs with other regional local governments. ▪ Implement Mansfield Shire Roadside Conservation Management Plan. ▪ Provide training for Council's operational staff on roadside conservation. ▪ Ensure that native vegetation protections in the Mansfield Planning Scheme continue to be implemented. ▪ Offer rates discounts to properties with a Trust for Nature Covenant. ▪ Assess a Timber Harvest Plan in accordance with Mansfield Planning Scheme and Code of Practice for Timber Production as amended. ▪ Encourage the use of local indigenous plants and recommended planting lists of the Revegetation Guide for the Goulburn Broken Catchment in new development. ▪ Implement roadside fuel reduction activities in accordance with Municipal Fire Management Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a Land Use Strategy. ▪ Identify mechanisms to protect large old River Red Gum, Yellow Box and other species of remnant indigenous trees, via a Tree Protection overlay, or policy statement in the Mansfield Planning Scheme. ▪ Advocate for State and Federal Government funding and support for pest weed and animal control programs, and legislative change to reduce pest animals (i.e. deer). ▪ Advocate for roadside weed control funding to be based on weed density and impacts (need) and not roadway length. ▪ Work in partnership with Taungurung, Landcare, Country Fire Authority, and public and private land managers to support the implementation of indigenous land management techniques (such as burning) to enhance biodiversity. ▪ Develop guidance on 'green-gardening' and soil health for residential allotments. ▪ Support citizen science projects for the protection of biodiversity and threatened species. ▪ Work with local environmental groups and Taungurung to develop information for new landholders on topics such as land management plans, protection of biodiversity and threatened species and cultural heritage. ▪ Work in partnership with community-based groups (Landcare, Friends of Rail Trail etc.) to improve biodiversity on Council managed land. ▪ Advocate for the establishment of native vegetation off-set sites within the Mansfield Shire region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and encourage community-based environment groups, such as Landcare to continue their contributions to restoring the natural environment. ▪ Investigate Carbon Farming initiatives to improve land management. ▪ Plan and develop a network of landscape scale biodiversity corridors. ▪ Protect and promote native vegetation on private property – particularly large old River Red Gum, Yellow Box and other species of remnant indigenous trees. ▪ Plant native trees and grasses. ▪ Encourage local schools to celebrate the environment. ▪ Participate in cultural heritage workshops. ▪ Apply soil health management practice, such as compost, conservation tillage, cover crops, crop-livestock integration and crop rotation. ▪ Organise regenerative agriculture workshops and forums. ▪ Implement practices to reduce pest plants and animals.

Focus Area 4: Sustainable Development

Maal-ngi-agat (let's build)

Long-term goal: Our natural resources and environmental values are not compromised by ongoing economic development.

Short-term indicators:

- Increased use of renewable energy in Council and community from 2018/19 levels.
- Climate Action Plan developed and implemented.
- Reduced Council utility costs.

Policy position:

Council acknowledges:

- Climate change is impacting us now. We will see increased temperatures, less predictable rainfall and longer fire seasons in the coming decades. Water resources will be increasingly stretched, meaning more restrictions and pressure on vegetation.
- Economic and population growth in our Shire will also put added pressure on the environment. Growth requires more resources, produces more waste and uses more land.
- Our economy must reduce waste and use resources more efficiently to be sustainable in the long-term.



Photo: Boomerang Bag workshop, Up2Us Landcare Alliance

Council will continue to:	Council will:	Community members can:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participate in regional projects such as those coordinated by Goulburn Broken Greenhouse Alliance. ▪ Support community led environmental action (by groups such as Renewable Energy Mansfield and Up2Us Landcare Alliance) with advice, in-kind support and letters of support for grant applications. ▪ Explore opportunities to reduce its operating cost by implementing energy efficiency projects. ▪ Protect farm land to limit urban spread. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a Climate Change Action Plan. ▪ Consult to establish a Mansfield Shire Council Greenhouse Emissions Reduction target and plan for implementation. ▪ Ensure Mansfield Station Precinct Activation Project meets Green Star design and construction standards. ▪ Encourage urban tree cover by supporting the planting of suitable trees within the urban landscape. ▪ Support the implementation of an Asset Management Plan for Council managed buildings and structures that considers opportunities for renewable energy projects. ▪ Advocate for investment in public infrastructure that facilitates a future low carbon economy, such as electric vehicle charging stations, bicycle and walking paths and provision for better public transport. ▪ Work in partnership and support Taungurung Lands and Water Council with the management of public lands. ▪ Support community led renewable energy and efficiency programs for greater energy independence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support community renewable initiatives. ▪ Install solar panels or switch to a renewable energy provider. ▪ Support businesses that use green energy. ▪ Car pool on school runs and encourage riding and walking to school. ▪ Shop locally and support local farmers and food producers. ▪ Consume less, waste less. ▪ Work with community groups and businesses promote a circular economy with a focus on products utilising recycled material content. ▪ Engage local builders and build new homes to a 7-star standard in the National Construction Code to reduce heating and cooling needs and ongoing energy bills.

Monitoring and evaluation

Council recognises the importance of monitoring and evaluating the strategy for continuous improvement. The Environment Officer will consult with the Environment Advisory Committee, local environmental organisations and Taungurung Lands and Water Council to develop a report for Council on the annual implementation of the Environment Strategy.

The Environment Officer will consult with the Environment Advisory Committee, local environmental organisations and Taungurung Lands and Water Council on annual priorities for implementation. These annual priorities will be recommended to Council for consideration via the regular budget process.

Council will report back to the community on the implementation of the environment strategy with respect to the focus areas and the progress towards to the following goals:

- Reduce waste to landfill
- Healthy waterways, wetlands and lakes and access to safe, secure and affordable water supplies
- Diverse and self-sustaining landscapes that support healthy ecosystems now and into the future
- Our natural resources and environmental values are not compromised by on-going economic development.

The review may include answering some fundamental evaluation questions such as those outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Environment Strategy evaluation questions

Evaluation theme	Key evaluation questions
Effectiveness	To what extent is the strategy making progress towards achieving the goals?
Impact	What has the impact of been of the work done to date? Have there been any unintended outcomes?
Efficiency	What resources have been used to achieve the goals?
Appropriateness	Are the strategic actions appropriate for achieving the goals?

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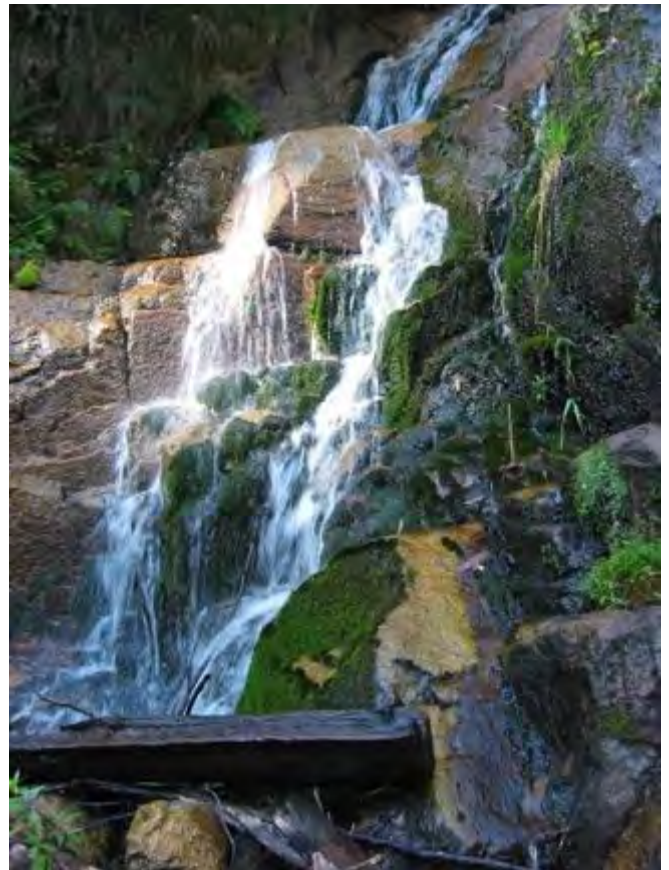


Photo: Blind Creek Falls, Lou Perrin

Appendix 1: Overview of consultation

RM Consulting Group was engaged by the Mansfield Shire Council to consult with the local community, Councillors and stakeholders to develop the Mansfield Shire Council Environment strategy.

A community survey was run for two weeks from 28 May to 11 June 2019. The survey results were analysed and provided to Councillors.

In addition to the survey, a series of workshops were held from the 25 to the 26 of June:

- Councillor workshop
- Community workshop
- Stakeholder workshop

The findings from the survey are summarised below.

Community Survey

A total of 168 responses were collected, representing 2% of Mansfield's total population. Council's "Have Your Say" webpage hosted the survey online from 28 May to 11 June 2019. Hard copies of the survey were also developed and distributed to community groups.

Results were aggregated for each of the three questions to identify the biggest environmental issues in the Shire, themes Council should focus on and respondents' best ideas for environmental action.

Question one was structured to enable respondents to elect the top five environmental issues applicable to the Mansfield Shire. This data was aggregated and is provided in Figure 3.

For question two, RMCG identified priority areas by weighting responses to the question, "What are the themes you think Council should focus on?". Respondents were asked to list up to five themes in order of priority. For first priority themes, a value of 5 was assigned, second priorities were assigned 4, and so on until fifth priorities were assigned 1.

Question three was an open response field, comments were summarised and are grouped into themes.

Respondents were also invited to provide their email address for further consultation follow-up, which occurred at the end of June.

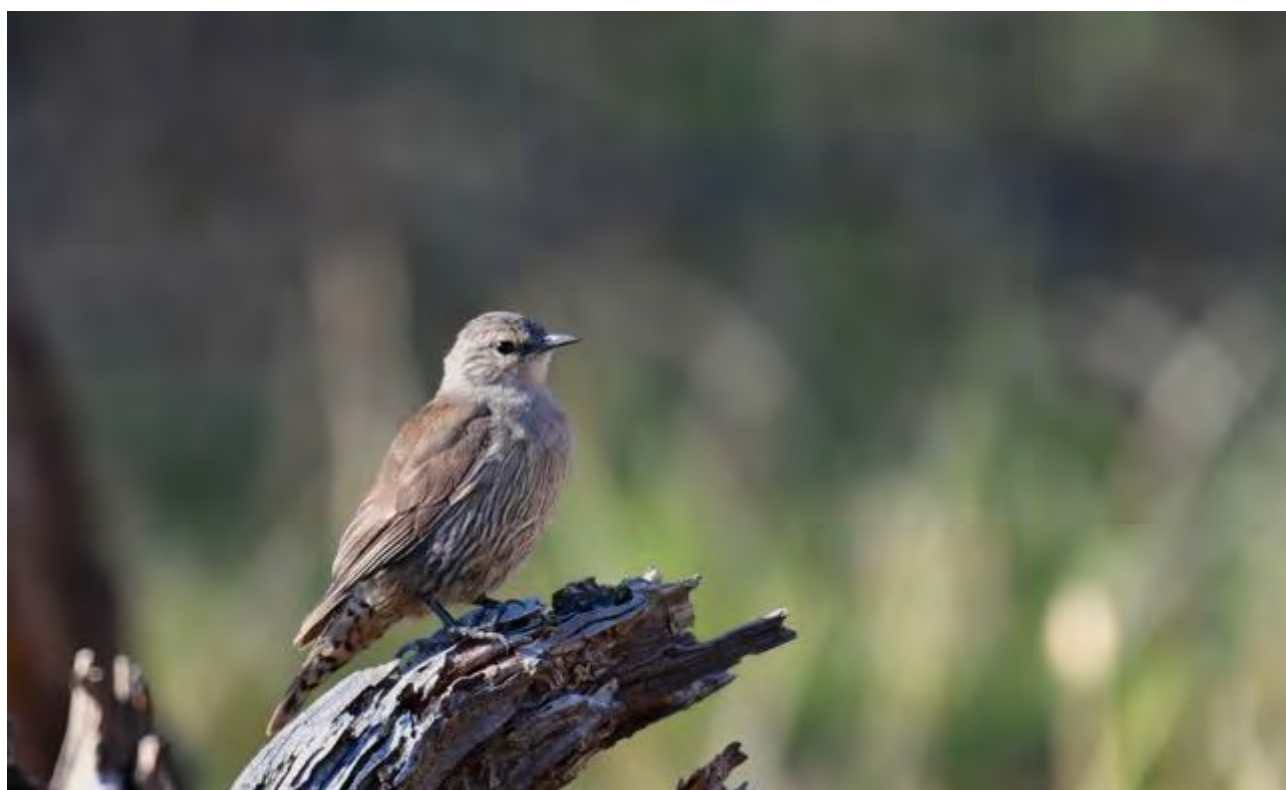


Photo: Striated Thornbill at Rifle Butts Road Mansfield, Lachlan Read

Findings

Biggest environmental issues

Overall, waste management was the highest ranked environmental issue for respondents. This was followed by pest plants (weeds) and pest animals, climate change, decreased rainfall and decreased reliability of water supply for human consumption and single use plastics as shown in Figure 3.

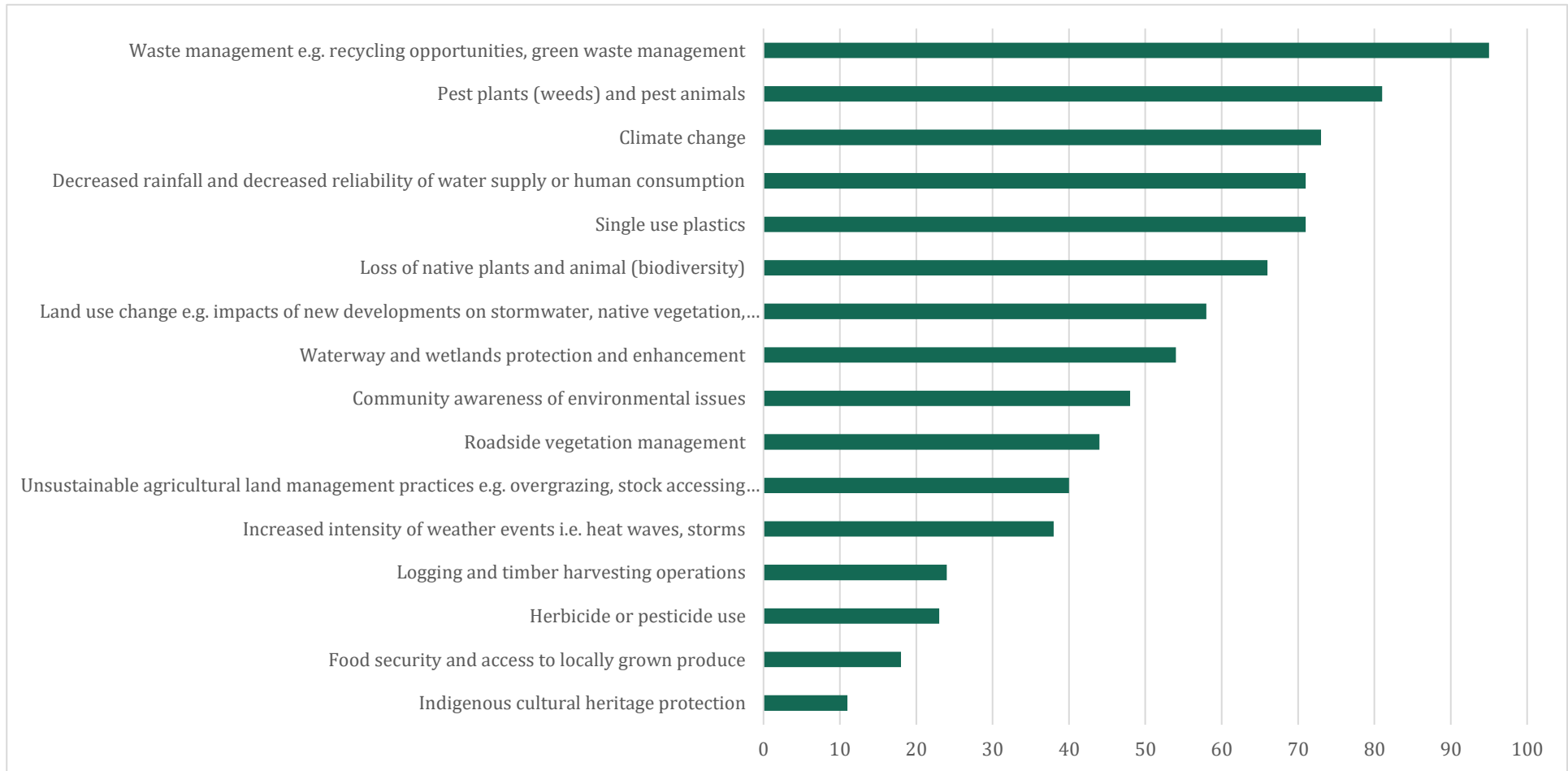


Figure 3: Survey participants' biggest environment issues

Key areas of focus

Waste management was elected as the priority areas of focus for Council's Environment Strategy. This was closely followed by sustainable water management, sustainable economic development, conservation of biodiversity and land management, as shown in Figure 4.

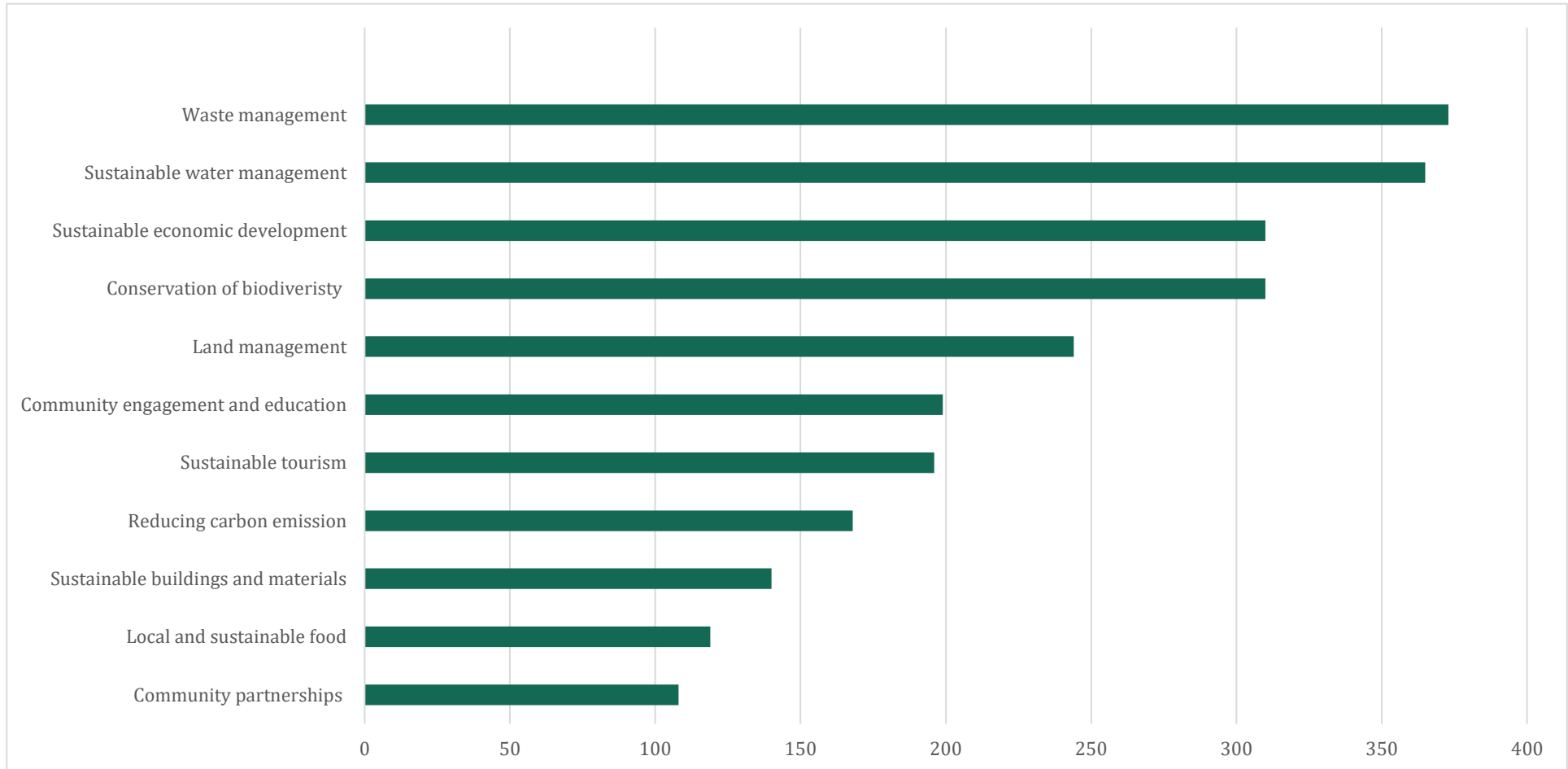


Figure 4: Key areas of focus for Council's Environment Strategy

Community ideas for improving the environment

Survey respondents put forward many ideas for consideration in the Environment Strategy. The ideas have been summarised and listed below (note this list is not in order of priority):

- Renewable energy.
- Support and encourage the development of renewable energy farms that feed into a renewable energy network i.e. solar and wind. Potential location for development could be Council land in Lakins Road/Benalla Road area.
- Put solar panels on Council buildings.
- Sign up to Red Energy's 100% renewable power plan.
- Investigate whether Yackandandah's model for renewable energy could be replicated in Mansfield.

Waste management

- Recycling collection on a weekly basis.
- Increase access to or provide more recycling stations.
- Recycling bins for cans and glass.
- Access to soft plastic recycling.
- Compost and green waste bins / collection.
- Set a waste reduction benchmark.
- Free green waste drop-off prior to summer and free mulch collection.
- More community waste bins including at camp sites.
- Waste to energy plant that feeds into the electricity grid.
- Annual hard rubbish collection.
- Community and school-based education on waste reduction and management.
- Encourage a "circular economy".

Pest plant and animal control

- Focus on feral deer management.
- Weed management on roadsides and public land.
- Coordinate pest plant and animal management working bees including deer culling with departments and interested community members.
- Manage weeds with native plantings.
- Pest plant and animal management in water ways, particularly focus on carp, willows and blackberry.

Roadside vegetation

- Allow farmers and community to manage roadside vegetation.
- Pest animal and plant management on roadsides.
- Manage Rifle Butts Road to preserve the unique flora and fauna.

Biodiversity conservation

- Funding for works in riparian zones to minimise erosion and plant indigenous species.
- Work with landholders to undertake revegetation works.
- Research into loss of species (animal and plant) and the impact on the ecosystem.
- Support landholders to maintain their land for biodiversity conservation.
- Develop an information package for landholders that contains information on drought tolerant plant species, plant species for native fauna, species under threat and how landholders can contribute to conserving them, plants for bees and birds.
- Native vegetation offset should be in the Shire.
- Re-engineer culverts off roads to prevent erosion gullies on neighbours' properties.

Urban development controls

- Ensure urban development consider sustainability, living standards, energy efficiency, water storage and minimise tree removal.
- Limit urban development.
- Preserve good agricultural land.

Compliance

- Enforce environmental laws and regulations.

Partnerships and community education

- Organise working party days with schools, conservation groups, government departments and farming groups to focus on riparian repair, good farming practices, revegetation.
- Collaborate with Taungurung people regarding traditional burnings to help with the regeneration of plants.
- Enable to community to deliver environmental outcomes.

Benchmarking and education

- Develop or use sustainability metrics as performance indicators for Council.
- Encourage schools to have an environmental program.
- Educate the community on sustainable energy and recycling.
- Carbon emission targets and benchmarks for the Shire with the aim of reducing carbon footprint.
- Council to advocate for climate change action.

Other

- Support e-bikes
- Improve green space
- Be carbon neutral by 2025
- Camping fees and permits
- Reduce dust on roads.



Photo: Superb Fairy-wren at Mullum Wetlands, Lachlan Read

Review of draft strategy

Once drafted the Environment Strategy was open for a four-week public comments period. A community drop-in session was held in Council Chambers to enable community members to ask questions about the strategy.

35 written responses were received, including 10 responses from students at the Mansfield Rudolph Steiner School. There was positive support for the Draft Environment Strategy with many respondents seeking further information or wanting stronger action from Council. Following the public comments phase a number of minor changes to the Strategy were recommended. These included:

- An action to develop waste education resources to increase waste diversion from Landfill.
- Support citizen science projects for the protection of biodiversity and threatened species.
- Work with local environmental groups and Taungurung to develop information for new landholders on topics such as land management plans, protection of biodiversity, threatened species and cultural heritage.

Mansfield Shire Council acknowledges the contribution of the community for their comments and suggestions to improve the Environment Strategy.

Support from Taungurung Land and Waters Council

Throughout the development of the Environment Strategy Taungurung Land and Waters Council have been an active contributor and partner. The Mansfield Shire Council Environment Officer met with representatives of Taungurung at a workshop on 18 July 2019 to develop actions in the Environment Strategy. Taungurung also contributed a welcome statement, reviewed of language and provided artwork for inclusion in the Strategy.

Mansfield Shire Council gratefully acknowledges the contribution of the members of Taungurung Land and Waters Council for their contribution to the development of the Environment Strategy.

Appendix 2: Summary of endangered and vulnerable species

A summary of key endangered fauna in the Mansfield Shire is included below. More information can be found by visiting the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas.

Critically endangered

- *Synemon plana* – Golden Sun Moth
- *Gymnobelideus leadbeateri* – Leadbeater's possum

Endangered

- *Anthochaera phrygia* – Regent Honeyeater
- *Burramys parvus* – Mountain Pygmy-Possum
- *Dasyurus maculatus* – Spot-tailed Quoll
- *Galaxias fuscus* – Barred Galaxias
- *Lathamus discolor* - Swift Parrot
- *Litoria raniformis* – Growling Grass Frog
- *Litoria spenceri* – Spotted Tree Frog
- *Macquaria australasica* – Macquarie Perch
- *Pseudomys fumeus* – Smoky Mouse
- *Maccullochella macquariensis* – Bluenose Cod (Trout Cod)

Vulnerable

- *Delma impar* – Striped legless lizard
- *Litoria verreauxii alpine* – Alpine tree frog
- *Maccullochella peelii* – Murray cod