

Annual Environment Report 2016–2017



**Macedon
Ranges**
Shire Council

Annual Environment Report 2016–2017

Council is pleased to present its first annual environment report.

The preparation and publication of an annual environment report implements a commitment from Council's *Environment Strategy 2016*. It provides a summary of outcomes from Council's environmental works and activities according to four overarching themes:

- climate change
- biodiversity
- land and water management
- resource efficiency.

Further details are provided in the report presented to Council on 20 December 2017, which can be viewed on Council's website at: mrsc.vic.gov.au/minutes

Council acknowledges that its work is only part of collective efforts across the community to improve the state of our natural and built environment and reduce the environmental impact of everyday living. Council applauds the work undertaken by people across the shire and looks forward to working with everyone to create a brighter environmental future in addressing a priority of the current Council Plan.

Council Plan 2017-2027. Priority 2: Protect the natural environment.

- Address climate change mitigation, resilience and adaptation
- Protect biodiversity
- Enhance waterways and water catchment quality
- Manage waste as a resource
- Proactive environmental planning and policy
- Embed environmental sustainability principles across all Council operations.



Climate Change

Emissions from Council's operations

In June 2017, Council adopted its first Climate Change Action Plan, outlining works to meet its adopted target:

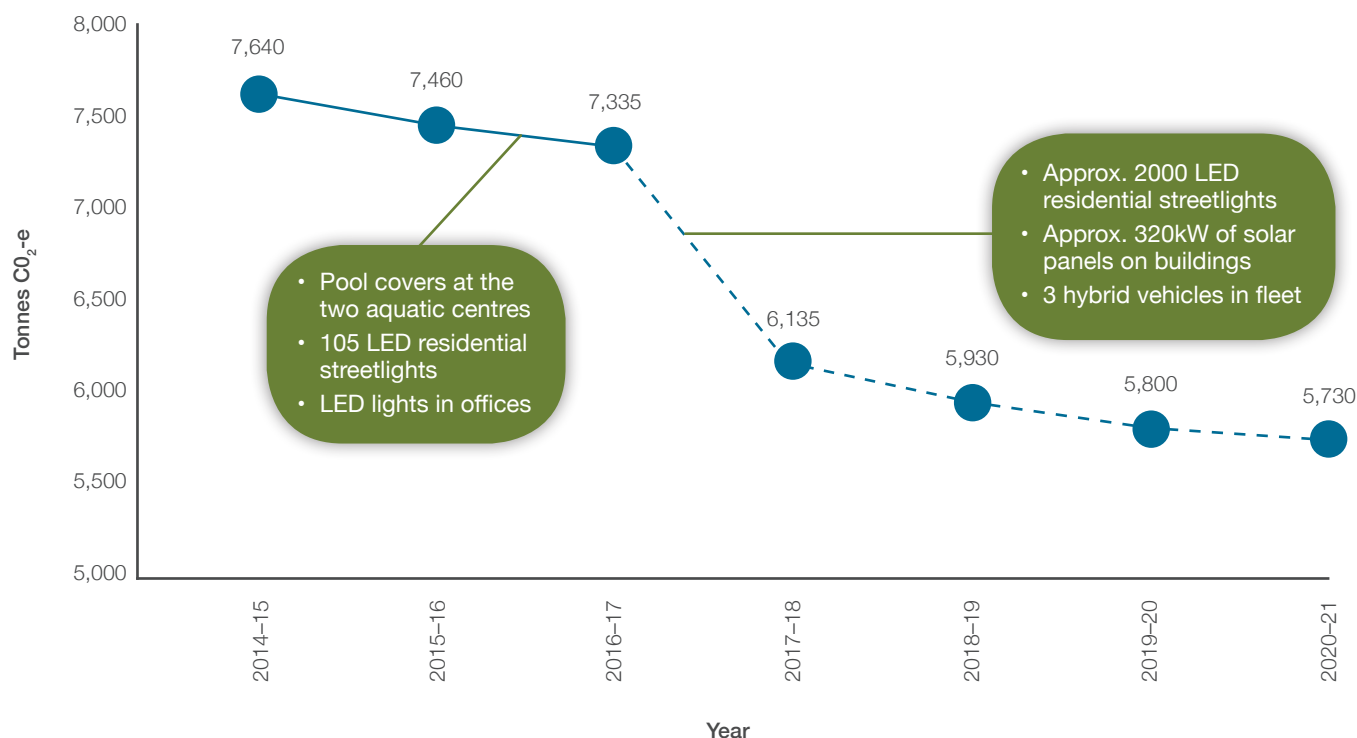
To reduce greenhouse emissions from Council's operations by 25% by 2020-2021 from the baseline year of 2014-2015.

Council is on track to meet this target:

- 2014-2015: 7,640 tonnes CO₂-e
- 2015-2016: 7,460 tonnes CO₂-e
- 2016-2017: 7,335 tonnes CO₂-e

Works being undertaken in 2017-2018 are expected to reduce emissions from Council operations by a further 1,200 tonnes CO₂-e, as indicated in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Greenhouse gas emissions from Council operations (actual and projected): tonnes CO₂-e (carbon dioxide equivalent)

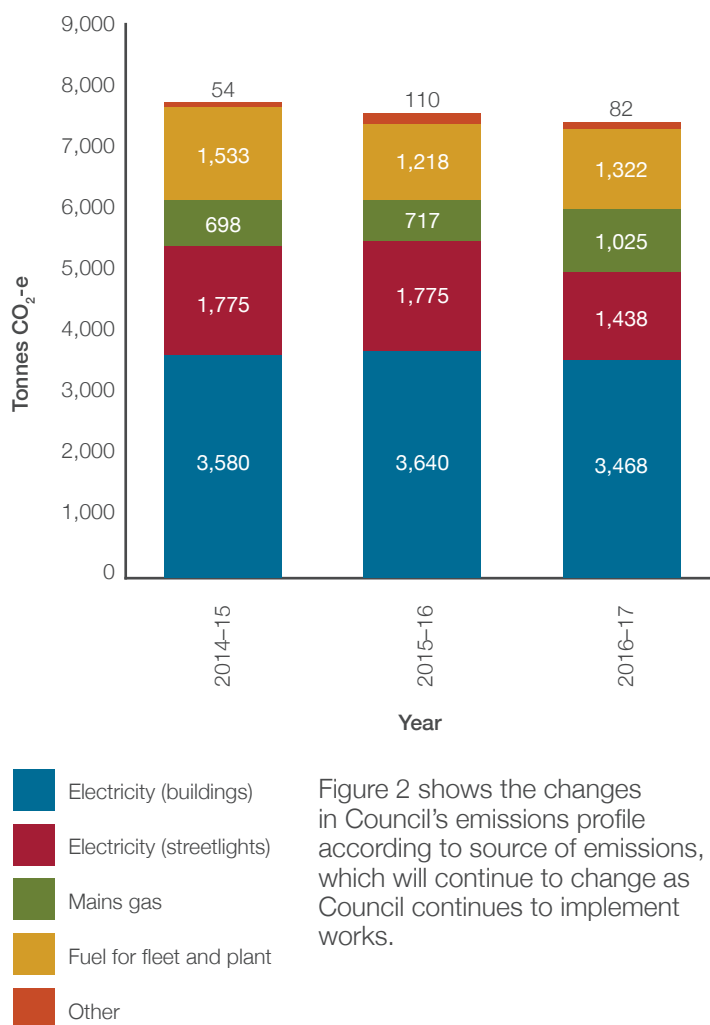


In adopting the Climate Change Action Plan Council also stated its commitment to working towards zero net emissions by 2030-2031.



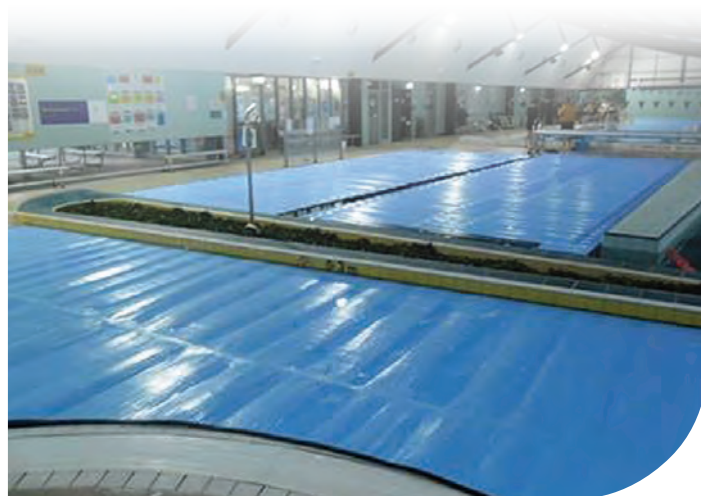
Climate Change

Figure 2: Sources of greenhouse emissions over time



Case study – Pool Covers

Reductions in emissions will mostly be achieved through reducing the consumption of electricity but also by reducing consumption of gas. For example, the installation of pool covers at both the Gisborne and Kyneton aquatic centres in early 2017 has seen a reduction in the amount of gas required to heat water. For the 66 days from mid May to mid July, the pool covers resulted in a combined reduction of emissions of approximately 380 kg CO₂-e / day.



Working with agency stakeholders

Council became a partner to Victoria's climate change pledge program TAKE2 in August 2016, pledging its adopted emissions reduction target - 25% by 2020-2021.



Supporting solar panel installation on homes

Through its support to MASH, Council can report that 184 households across the shire have had panels installed (equivalent to 644kW). Additionally, Newham Primary School received a 5kW system as the community bonus component of the bulk buy scheme.



Resource Efficiency

Several investigations and initiatives related to resource recovery and reducing our environmental impact commenced in 2016-2017, including:

- A trial of public place recycling at sports grounds, to reduce disposal to landfill. This will be expanded to other public places in the near future.
- Investigations into the feasibility of converting organic waste to energy.
- Inclusion of environmental performance standards in the new cleaning contract.



Household Waste

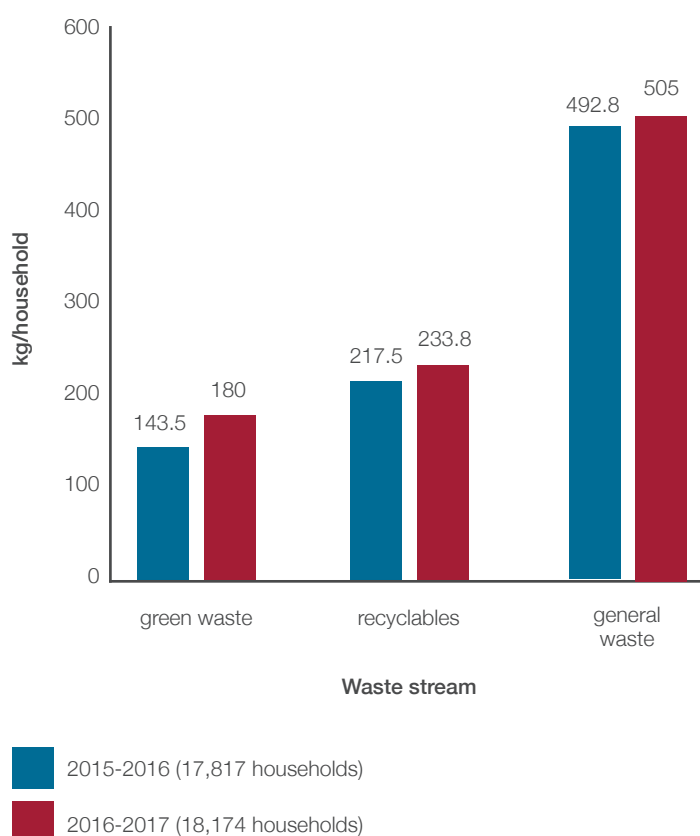
Data from Council's kerbside collection service shows that the amount of general waste, garden waste and recyclables per household increased in 2016-2017 from 2015-2016.

The increase in waste generation, kg / household is shown below:

- General waste - 12.2
- Garden Waste - 36.5
- Recyclables - 16.3

A new kerbside collection contract will commence in late 2018, providing opportunity to consider communication strategies to encourage waste reduction and resource recovery amongst the community.

Figure 3: Kerbside waste collection (kg/household)



Biodiversity

Council plans and processes for biodiversity protection

In planning to protect the biodiversity values of the shire into the future, Council has progressed several initiatives in 2016-2017, including:

- Completion of an Environmental Management Plan for Black Hill Reserve
- Assessment of roadsides for their conservation value to inform the forthcoming Roadside Management Plan
- Audit of Council managed land for conservation values and management responsibilities.

In 2017-2018, Council will progress development of its first Biodiversity Strategy, as a holistic guide for managing biodiversity across the shire into the future.

Engaging the community in biodiversity protection

Council's community engagement program about biodiversity continued in 2016-2017, with some highlights being:

- Hosting 12 spotlight nights with local Landcare and Friends Groups
- Hosting talks on woodland birds and Wombat State Forest
- Conducting a fauna monitoring program in collaboration with DELWP and the community in the Cobaw State Forest, which resulted in five previously unreported native mammal species being identified in the reserve
- Co-hosting an information session for landholders about current schemes for protecting biodiversity on private land "Protecting your patch"
- Providing \$21,575 in administrative support grants to 27 Landcare and Friends Groups across the shire.



Land and Water Management

To complement its work in biodiversity protection, Council also undertakes works to manage the land and waterways that support the vast range of ecosystems and species across the shire.

Some key highlights for 2016-2017 include:

- Weed control along waterways, in some cases in partnership with Melbourne Water
- Treating over 110,000m² of noxious woody weeds along Council managed roads
- Mapping almost three quarters of Council managed roadsides to track the impact and effectiveness of weed control works.

Council's focus in weed control is on woody weeds including Gorse, Blackberry, Cape Broom, English Broom and Sweet Briar.

Council also worked to encourage sustainable land and water management practices amongst landholders, most notably through conducting a three day Land Management Planning workshop in partnership with management agencies and Landcare.



Future Priorities

Council will continue to progress its work for all four environmental themes in 2018 and beyond. Some key priorities include:

- Achieving the emissions reduction target of 25% and continuing to identify opportunities to work towards zero net emissions
- Working with the community in climate change action
- Developing a Biodiversity Strategy
- Completing a Roadside Management Plan
- Extending from the trial public place recycling trial to introduce bins for recyclables in parks and streets
- Ensuring the new contract for kerbside waste collection service can cater for likely amendments required in the future.
- Building on existing partnerships to deliver talks, workshops and citizen science projects related to biodiversity and sustainable land management

Council looks forward to reporting on progress and outcomes in the next annual environment report.

