



Environmental Sustainability Strategy

2022-2030





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Acknowledgement of Country

Baw Baw Shire Council (Council) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their ongoing connection to the land and waters that make up Baw Baw Shire. We pay our respects to their Elders; past, present, and emerging.

We thank the Traditional Custodians for caring for Country and continuing the customs that maintain the longest practised culture in the world.

Message from the Environmental Voice Advisory Committee

As passionate community members, seeking positive environmental sustainability outcomes within the Baw Baw Shire, we feel privileged to provide support and knowledge to Council on environmental topics.

The Environmental Voice Advisory Committee works collectively with Councillors and Council staff on a regular basis. This generates healthy discussions on current and arising environmental issues and seeks to identify opportunities to overcome barriers and create a more environmentally sustainable Shire.

We have enjoyed the opportunity to assist Council in reviewing the previous Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2018–2022 and the opportunity to provide input into the new Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2022–2030 (Strategy). The Shire continues to face the significant challenge of accommodating ongoing urban growth while protecting the rural environment in which we all enjoy. We believe the new longer-term Strategy and associated action plans will provide a strong basis for tackling the Shire's key environmental challenges now and into the future.

We look forward to supporting Council to implement the new Strategy and playing our role within the community to advocate for stronger environmental sustainability within the Shire.

Sincerely,
The Environmental Voice Advisory Committee.





Executive Summary

Baw Baw Shire Council's (Council) Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2022–2030 (Strategy) is the key strategic document that details Council's environmental management and sustainability goals, aspirations, and commitments for the next eight years.

There are many environmental facets within the municipality that can be impacted by increased development and growth, climate change and new legislation. However, with these challenges comes opportunities. This Strategy seeks to take advantage of these opportunities and work towards improving environmental management throughout the municipality and support Council and the community to reduce its impacts on the environment.

The Strategy is a key enabling mechanism that works towards achieving the aspirations outlined in the Council Plan 2021–2025 and Community Vision and details how the Strategy can contribute to achieving the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Through this Strategy, Council aims to achieve the following goals:

GOAL 1:
Reduce Energy Use and Emissions.

GOAL 2:
Create Sustainable and Resilient Communities.

GOAL 3:
Protect the Natural Environment.

GOAL 4:
Shift Towards a more Circular Economy.

These four strategic goals have been developed to guide Council's efforts in achieving its vision. It is intended that these goals remain in place for the life of the strategy.

Under each goal, strategic initiatives have been identified. These strategic initiatives are the key deliverables that will guide Council to achieve each goal and have been developed with a four-year timeframe in mind. A review of the strategic initiatives will therefore be conducted after four years to ensure that they remain relevant to achieve the goals of the strategy. To achieve the goals and the four-year strategic initiatives outlined within this Strategy, a biennial operational action plan will be developed and implemented.



Introduction

Baw Baw Shire's environment has positive affects for every resident and visitor with the Shire's rich forests, bushland reserves, waterways, rolling hills and mountains. It supports biodiversity, water provision, the local climate, species, habitats, ecosystems, food production, farming and tourism. Studies have shown that a healthy environment boosts community health and wellbeing as well as the local economy¹.

The 2021 Community Vision describes the community's aspiration for the future of the Shire to be:

- 1. Sustainable; the future for Baw Baw Shire is sustainable towns and villages that continue to benefit from our beautiful rural and natural environment.**
- 2. Healthy; the future for Baw Baw Shire is healthy and well people, living in safe, connected communities and healthy environments.**
- 3. Thriving; the future for Baw Baw Shire is thriving, diverse and resilient communities.**

The Council Plan (2021-2025) represents a four-year road map for Council and describes key services and priorities². The three strategic objectives of the Council Plan also align with the Community Vision:

- 1. A Sustainable Shire.**
- 2. A Healthy Community.**
- 3. A Thriving Community.**

The aspirations of the Community Vision and three pillars of the Council Plan clearly identify the importance of Baw Baw's environment and that it is actively managed and protected for the benefit of current and future generations. This Strategy is an overarching plan for how Council will deliver on the Council Plan and work towards the Community Vision.

Environmental Sustainability Vision

Council will improve the way it operates for the benefit of the environment and future generations and is active in encouraging the community to do the same.

¹ Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment 2022, State of Environment 2021 Report – <https://soe.dcceew.gov.au/>

² Community Vision and Council Plan – <https://www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/About-Council/Publications-and-Policies/Our-Performance/Council-Plan>

Strategic Context

There are a number of environmental factors and challenges that are occurring at a global, national, state and regional level that have been considered in developing this strategy. These are summarised below.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In 2015, Australia, along with 192 other countries endorsed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development³. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to end poverty, protect the planet, and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is made up of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs can be used as a reference point for Council at a local level to ensure its operations and services contribute to Australia's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Not every SDG is relevant to this strategy. Where one or more of this Strategy's goals or key strategic initiatives are relevant to the SDGs, they are referenced.



³ Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia's Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals – <https://www.dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/development-issues/2030-agenda/australias-report-implementation-sustainable-development-goals>



Climate change

Victoria has recorded changes in its climate that have and will continue to have impacts on the environment, the community, and the economy. Victoria's temperature has increased by just over 1°C between 1910 and 2018, and this is linked to changing climatic conditions. The effects of climate change are impacting on the Shire in many ways, including more frequent and extreme weather events, more days of extreme heat and heat waves, and harsher fire weather that increases bushfire risk. This increase in heat could see the number of hot days and very hot days quadruple by 2070.

Less overall total rainfall, but more frequent and intense heavy downpours, is another key aspect of climate change⁴. However, projections of average and seasonal rainfall are uncertain. Spring and winter will see the biggest change in rainfall patterns. This change can result in a 7% to 30% decrease in rainfall.

Legislation requirements

There are a range of Federal (F) and State (S) legislative requirements that Council must meet to ensure the environment is managed appropriately. The main legislative requirements include:

- **Planning and Environment Act 1987 (S)**
- **Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (S)**
- **Local Government Act 1989 & 2020 (S)**
- **Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (S)**
- **Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (F)**
- **Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 (S)**
- **Climate Change Act 2017 (S)**
- **Environment Protection Act 2017 (S)**
- **Circular Economy (Waste Reductions and Recycling) Act 2021 (S).**

⁴ Climate Change Gippsland - https://www.climatechange.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0035/429875/Gippsland-Climate-Projections-2019_20200219.pdf



The value of Baw Baw's natural environment

Baw Baw Shire Council recognises that the Shire's natural environment is a huge part of municipality's amenity and is a key attraction for new residents and visitors. Baw Baw is rich in forests, bushland reserves, waterways, rolling hills and mountains which are home to a vast array of flora and fauna. Some of this flora and fauna are unique species found nowhere else in the world such as the endangered Warragul Burrowing Crayfish, Baw Baw Frog, Leadbeater's Possum, Giant Gippsland Earthworm, Dwarf Galaxias and Strzelecki Gum. The diverse landscapes for which these species live include alpine areas, mountain ash forests, rainforests, bushland, and low-lying swamps.

Baw Baw Shire is also known for its high fertility agricultural land. With approximately 80,000 tonnes of vegetables being grown in Baw Baw Shire each year, it is essential that the environment is protected, maintained, and enhanced where possible. Nature-based tourism is also a huge drawcard for the Shire. Nature-based tourism can include exploring the Baw Baw National Park, Mt Worth State Park, Mushroom Rocks, Toorongo Falls, Uralla Nature Reserve, Nangara Reserve and many more. This nature-based tourism supports the Shire's local economy through the 1 million visitors that visit the Shire each year⁵. The Shire has a strong network of waterways, including Blue Rock dam, the Moondarra Reservoir and the catchment areas including West Gippsland and Port Phillip and Westernport.

Management and protection of the natural environment is essential to safeguard the health of local ecosystems to support flora and fauna, but also to support the health and wellbeing of people. The natural environment contributes to quality of life, our local biodiversity, the local economy, and tourism. It is important that the natural environment is managed as an asset and protected for the benefit of current and future generations.

Development and growth

Baw Baw Shire is one of the fastest growing peri-urban regions in Victoria⁶. With this comes significant growth in population and development within the municipality. This growth is resulting in more urbanised landscapes and pressure on the natural environment.

Whilst a lot of growth has already occurred in the Shire, Baw Baw's population is projected to climb from 54,888 in 2021 to 80,000 in 2041. Although the Baw Baw Shire Planning Scheme and the Warragul and Drouin Precinct Structure Plans provide a foundation for future development, it is important that Council continue to consider the impacts of population growth and development on the natural environment.

The provision of Council services and infrastructure for a growing community need to be delivered in a way that contributes to conserving the natural environment and creating healthy and sustainable built environments.

Partnering and collaboration

Environmental management and sustainability are extremely varied and diverse areas that are managed by a range of different stakeholders. Council plays a vital role in directly managing the environment within the municipality. It is also responsible for ensuring that the services and operations that it delivers are as sustainable as possible. Matters of environmental sustainability that Council can directly influence, or control are those that sit under its key service and management responsibilities.

Other areas of environmental management and sustainability within the Shire that do not directly sit under Council management and responsibilities are managed by external organisations and government bodies. These can include Sustainability Victoria (SV), the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DEWLP) and Catchment Management Authorities (CMA). To achieve positive environmental outcomes within municipality, Council seeks to partner and collaborate with these external bodies, as well as community members and Traditional Owners.

⁵ Baw Baw Shire Council, Economic Development Strategy <https://www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/Latest-News/Council-endorses-strategy-to-strengthen-local-economy>

⁶ Baw Baw Shire population growth - <https://www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/About-Council/Our-Shire/Population#:~:text=Welcome%20to%20Baw%20Baw%20Shire,east%20of%20the%20Melbourne%20CBD>





Strategy Framework

This Strategy is an overarching planning document for Council's environmental sustainability work until 2030.

This timeframe aligns with the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Strategy sets out long-term goals for achieving positive environmental outcomes. Four strategic goals have been developed to guide Council's efforts in achieving its vision. It is intended that these goals remain in place for the life of the strategy.

Under each goal, strategic initiatives have been identified. These strategic initiatives are the key deliverables that will help Council achieve each goal. The strategic initiatives have been developed with a four-year timeframe in mind, as it is intended that the strategy will be reviewed in approximately four years' time.

To achieve the goals and the four-year initiatives outlined within this Strategy, a biennial operational action plan will be developed and implemented. The action plan will be developed in collaboration with, and in consideration of, advice from Council's Environmental Voice Advisory Committee (the Committee). A number of actions and initiatives (including the strategic initiatives outlined below) will be included in the action plan to help Council deliver on this strategy.

Goal 1: Reduce energy use and emissions

1.1. Reduce overall energy consumption and emissions for Council's operations and facilities.

A significant contributor to climate change are carbon emissions. Local Government can help to slow the rate at which the climate is changing by reducing the carbon emissions produced from its operations and facilities.

Over the past decade Council has implemented several sustainability projects to combat rising energy costs, including the installation of over 70 solar panel systems on Council and community facilities and the changeover of thousands of streetlights to energy efficient LED lights.

It is estimated that Council's energy efficiency initiatives delivered between 2013 and 2020 have resulted in a saving of \$1.3 million.

It is important that Council continue to invest in energy efficiency projects in order to contribute to a lower carbon economy, support 'green' jobs and capture operational savings.

Strategic initiatives 2022–2026:

1. Develop and implement a Carbon Emissions Reduction Plan (inclusive of relevant targets).
2. Continue to deliver the highest priority energy efficiency projects, with funding from Council's Revolving Sustainability Fund.
3. Reduce landfill emissions by introducing a Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) service and encouraging people to sort their household waste effectively.

Relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:



Goal 2: Create sustainable and resilient communities

- 2.1. Pursue better sustainability outcomes in new urban developments.**
- 2.2. Consider the impacts of climate change in Council's core business and decision-making processes.**
- 2.3. Increase community preparedness to adapt and respond to a changing climate.**

There is an opportunity to improve the design and performance of new subdivisions from an environment and sustainability perspective. In 2018, Council participated in a project with seven other regional Victorian Councils to explore the feasibility and costs of integrating Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) principles into planning for green-field subdivisions. After this project was completed, Council participated in a further project in 2020 to develop a framework to assess green-field subdivision planning applications against the ESD principles. This work has been completed and is ready for trial in Baw Baw Shire.

Consideration and planning for the impacts of climate change is another element that

can contribute towards more sustainable and resilient communities. Council plays a vital role in adapting its operations and service delivery to be more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate and more frequent and extreme weather events. Council also plays an important role in supporting the community in adapting to climate change through education and engagement on preparedness.

Strategic initiatives 2022–2026:

1. Investigate the feasibility of a Sustainable Subdivisions Framework for Baw Baw Shire, and look to trial its implementation.
2. Risks associated with climate change are analysed and actively managed to increase the resilience of Council's infrastructure, services and operations.
3. Continue to facilitate preparedness planning for natural disaster and extreme weather events with other key agencies to minimise the impact of significant events on people and the environment.

Relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:



Goal 3: Protect the natural environment

- 3.1. Build a better understanding of the overall health and condition of Council's environmental assets.**
- 3.2. Increase proactive protection of the environment across the Shire.**
- 3.3. Continue to manage Council-owned environmental assets to maintain and enhance (where achievable) the health of local ecosystems, habitats, and biodiversity.**

Council plays an important role in managing, enhancing and protecting environmental assets. Whilst Council is responsible for many environmental assets in the Shire, the role of property owners and other levels of government significantly contribute to the overall health and condition of the natural environment.

Council manages 620 hectares of public open space within 539 reserves. This includes 73 natural reserves or wetlands, urban parks, playgrounds, and sports fields. Council maintains 240 roads that have high or medium conservation assets within their reserves and operates Council's Native Vegetation Offset site scheme to better maintain significant areas of existing native vegetation within the municipality. Council also plants approximately 500 new street trees across the Shire each year and support many new trees planted by developers.

From a planning perspective, Council assesses environmental planning applications, manages 258 environmental assets on the Significant Tree Register and utilises Planning Scheme Overlays to protect the environment.

Strategic initiatives 2022–2026:

1. Increase the protection of significant vegetation throughout the municipality by:
 - a. Strengthen planning mechanisms like the Baw Baw Planning Scheme, Local Law and/or land zoning.
 - b. Rolling out community education and improving knowledge about environmental assets and the relevant regulatory requirements.
 - c. Expanding Council's Native Vegetation Offset Scheme site portfolio when feasible opportunities arise.
 - d. Expanding Council's Significant Tree Register.
2. Develop an asset management plan for Council's key environmental assets.
3. Undertake a trial to see no net loss of trees and significant vegetation as a result of Council's operations.

Relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:



Goal 4: Shift Towards a more circular economy

4.1. Council's operations and services are adjusted to contribute towards a more circular economy.

4.2. Support the community to understand and take steps towards a more circular economy.

In recent years, there has been a reduction globally in the proportion of recycled content going into new products and materials. In 2020, approximately 100 billion tonnes of materials were produced across the world, with only approximately 8.6 billion tonnes being made from recycled product. It is important for Council to work towards a more circular economy to reduce the environmental impacts of production and consumption and to enable economic growth through more productive use of natural resources.

Whilst the concept of an economy based on circular principles is relatively new, Council's waste management services already help to divert resources away from landfill. This includes monthly collections of over 50,000 kerbside recycling bins for commercial and residential properties, as well as over 30,000 green organics bins. The collected materials are recycled into various products and industries. However, other Council services may also be able to contribute towards a circular economy.

In addition, Council can encourage the community to reduce the use of raw materials, support effective resource management and increase

economic profitability through changing consumption and rethinking waste. Increased awareness and understanding of resource recovery and uptake of circular economy practices will shift society towards breaking the mindset of take, make, use, and dispose.

Strategic initiatives 2022–2026:

1. Undertake a study and cost benefit analysis into how Council can contribute toward a circular economy. If feasible, develop a Circular Economy Plan (inclusive of relevant targets).
2. Divert 80% of waste from landfill by 2030 (with an interim target of 72% by 2025) from Council's waste services by:
 - a. Introducing Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO).
 - b. Supporting the upcoming rollout of the Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) in Victoria.
 - c. Introducing a separate glass collection service.
 - d. Encouraging effective waste management behaviour in households.
3. Incorporate the consideration of recycled content in Council's procurement policy.
4. Trial a new product or construction material each year that includes recycled content in delivering Council's Capital Works Program.

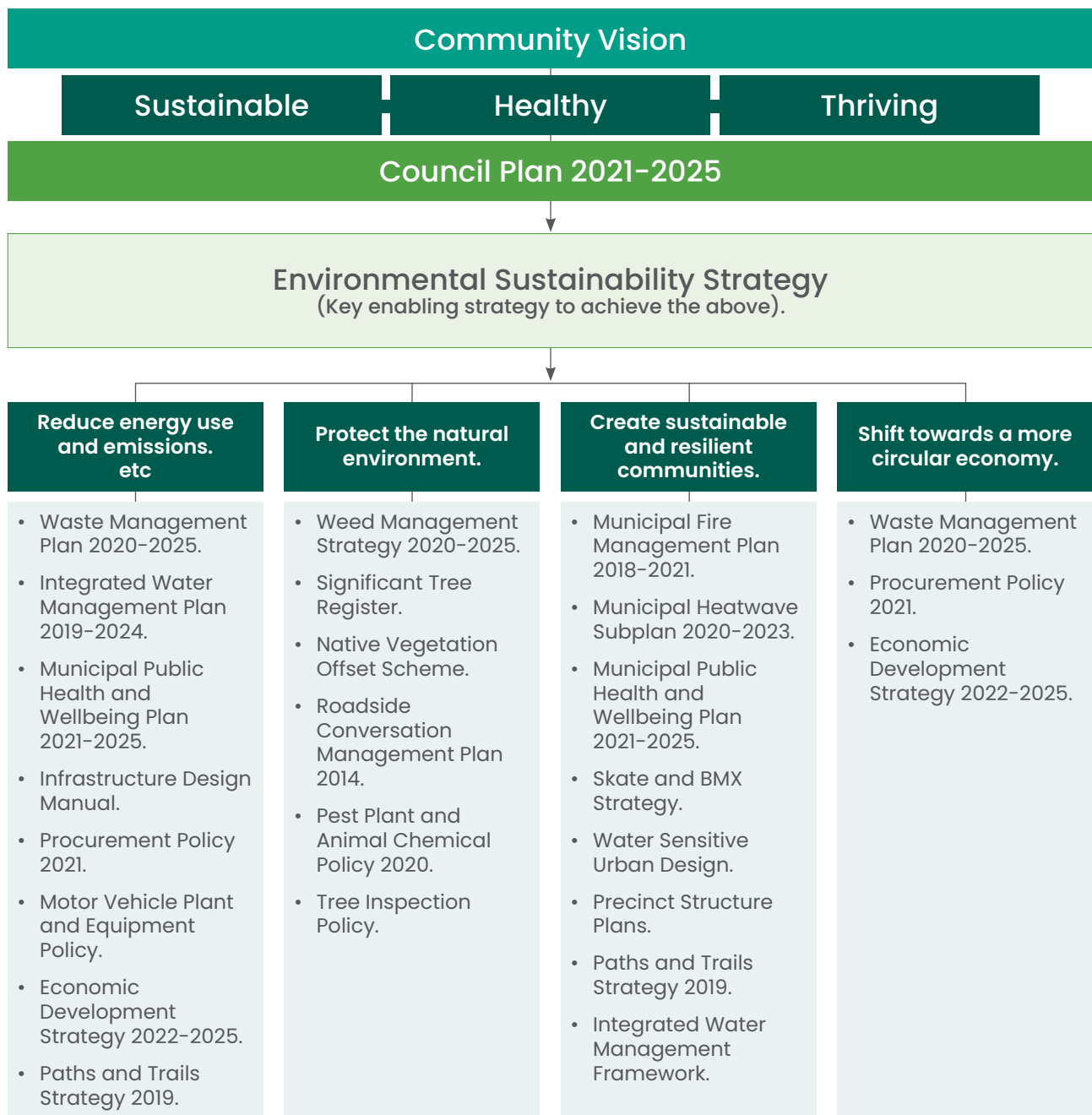
Relevant United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:



Co-contribution from other Council strategies and plans

Council has a number of existing adopted strategies and plans that contribute towards achieving the strategic goals outlined within this Strategy. Many of these plans and strategies are currently implemented across the Shire. A summary of these can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Framework of the Strategy:



Monitoring and Evaluation

Council has a number of existing adopted strategies and plans that contribute towards achieving the strategic goal Implementation of the strategic initiatives and biennial action plans will be monitored regularly through Council's Environmental Voice Advisory Committee. Publicly available Council reports will be presented periodically to provide updates on the strategy's progress. s outlined within this Strategy. Many of these plans and strategies are already being implemented across the Shire. A summary of these can be seen in Figure 1.

References

Australian Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment 2022, State of Environment 2021 report
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