

# SUSTAINABILITY.

## YARRA ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY 2013-17

### SUMMARY

# WHAT IS THE YARRA ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY 2013-17?



## YARRA ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY 2013-17: A BLUEPRINT TO GUIDE THE NEXT STAGE OF YARRA'S SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

YOU CAN READ THE FULL YARRA ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY AT [WWW.YARRACITY.VIC.GOV.AU/ENVIRONMENT-STRATEGY](http://WWW.YARRACITY.VIC.GOV.AU/ENVIRONMENT-STRATEGY)

The four-year **Yarra Environment Strategy 2013-2017 (YES)** provides direction and actions required to integrate sustainable practices into Council's operations, as well as its community programs and services. It builds on the three previous iterations of the Yarra Environment Strategy with the first dating back to collaboration between the former Fitzroy and Collingwood Councils before the formation of Yarra City Council in 1994.

Built with strong input from the community, this Yarra Environment Strategy provides a shared vision to further enhance Yarra's credentials as a sustainable municipality.

The proportional ecological footprint of the Yarra municipality is currently four times greater than that which would enable all humans to live sustainably on the planet. The YES is structured to provide the framework to enable the change necessary to address Yarra's environmental impact.

Through this strategy, Council's vision is to ensure:

'Yarra is a resilient and sustainable city where current and future populations enjoy a high quality of life within our fair share of the earth's resources, whilst ensuring we co-exist harmoniously with the natural environment'.

Realising the strategy's vision will require Council to work closely with the Yarra community, empowering residents and businesses to act locally and share knowledge and resources to reduce their ecological footprint.

A review of the strategy's progress every four years will also allow us to check in on the direction we are taking, to ensure Council's goals for promoting sustainable living and managing the local environment meet our community's expectations.

It is our aim to be a leader in sustainability amongst local governments in Australia.

Through leadership, collaboration, action, advocacy, and education, the YES aims to make further gains on Yarra's already award-winning sustainability record.

### Yarra's Environmental Context

Extensive community consultation and research was undertaken to develop this strategy in 2013. The key environmental challenges and themes that emerged from this consultation were:

#### Population growth

Yarra's population is expected to increase from 80,000 to 100,000 over the next 15 years. This will make sustainability gains harder to achieve, with increased demand for services and open space, increased resource consumption, and pressure on biodiversity and natural resources.

#### Resilience in a changing climate

The impacts of human induced climate change are being felt strongly now in rising temperatures, heatwaves, drought, and increased storm activity, and are predicted to worsen in coming years. Urgent action is required to reduce emissions, adapt Council services, and enhance community resilience.

#### Over consumption

Increased consumption patterns from our lifestyles and the way we run our economy are placing strain on the Earth's resources (water, food, fuel, energy, minerals, materials) with demand often outstripping supply. There is a need help our community live within its means while also maintaining or increasing quality of life.

#### The need for more effective partnerships, capacity building and collaborative action:

Council cannot effectively implement its environmental vision alone. Community engagement, understanding, ownership, and skills development regarding both the problems and solutions are essential in transforming our municipality. For best results, we also need to look beyond our boundary and work with other agencies and networks to support the change we seek.

#### Advocacy for broader change:

Our community expects Council to take action within its ability, and to advocate for legislative change to influence key actions beyond its jurisdiction.

#### Council's leadership role:

Council should lead by example to reduce its own impact, share lessons learned about its own journey, and support others to respond similarly.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Welcome to the City of Yarra. Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri as the first owners of this country. Today, they are still the custodians of the cultural heritage of this land. Further to this, Council acknowledges there are other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have lived, worked and contributed to the cultural heritage of Yarra.

## EDINBURGH GARDENS RAINGARDEN

The raingarden harvests rainwater to provide a natural irrigation source for Edinburgh Gardens, providing up to 50% of the water needed to protect the park's historic trees.

Cover and this photo: David Russell

### How is Council planning to meet its vision?

Through this Strategy, Council has set out a range of strong targets that it still strives for as a sustainable organisation and for the community, including.

Key community targets to be reached by 2020 include:

- The Yarra municipality produces net zero greenhouse gas emissions
- 60% of workers in Yarra commute via sustainable transport
- Six new parks established in Yarra
- 20% reduction in household waste going to landfill
- 30% reduction in potable water consumption across Yarra.

Key targets for Yarra City Council as a sustainable organisation by 2020 include:

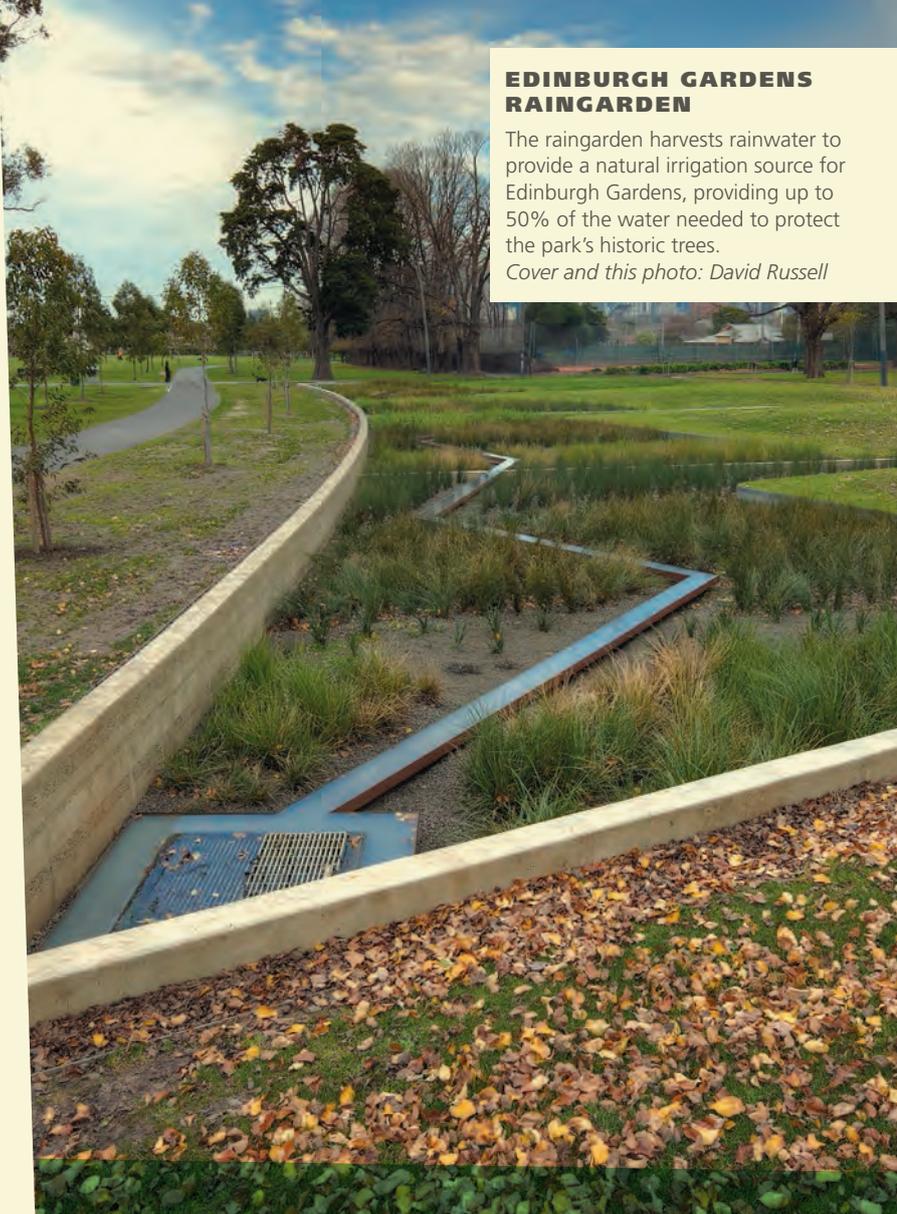
- Staying a carbon neutral organisation, producing 60% less gross carbon emissions
- 70% reduction in waste going to landfill
- 50% reduction in potable water consumption
- All staff believe sustainability is important.

There are four specific pathways to achieving our vision, each with objectives that work together and complement each other to form one integrated plan. Indicators and targets for each pathway provide a means for tracking, measuring and communicating the progress of each objective.

A key activity will be to assess Yarra's Ecological Footprint – a measure of the land and water area the municipality currently requires to produce resources it consumes and to absorb its waste. Mapping out the major impact points will allow greater understanding of the most urgent actions to tackle.

*Pages 5 and 6 of the Yarra Environment Strategy (full version) provide a snapshot of the key themes and action. The full list of actions, including proposed timelines for their delivery and estimated cost where applicable, are outlined in detail on pages 13–59.*

You can download the full Yarra Environment Strategy at [www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/environment-strategy](http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/environment-strategy)



## THROUGH THIS STRATEGY COUNCIL'S VISION IS TO ENSURE:

Yarra is a resilient and sustainable city where current and future populations enjoy a high quality of life within our fair share of the earth's resources, whilst we co-exist with the natural environment.

It is our aim to be a leader in sustainability amongst local governments in Australia.

# FOUR KEY PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS



**CITY OF YARRA WAS THE 2013 WINNER OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA AWARD “LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXCELLENCE IN OVERALL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT”**

## Pathway 1: Community Empowerment and Local Action

Supporting an empowered community that acts locally to increase the sustainability of consumption and lifestyles to reduce its ecological footprint

The objectives of this pathway are to:

- Empower and educate the community to support sustainable consumption and lifestyles.
- Accelerate collective action for sustainable consumption and lifestyles.
- Support local community organisations and groups.
- Provide tailored support to increase participation in sustainability initiatives by diverse groups.
- Improve sustainability outcomes through information dissemination and community input to Council programs, processes, and services.
- Understand and track community knowledge and action, and celebrate achievements.

Yarra is fortunate to have a passionate and active community that is already reducing its own environmental impact. Over the years, Council has worked with various members of the community to maximise outcomes. However, significantly more action is needed.

As part of implementing the latest iteration of the YES, Council is looking at various ways to build on these partnerships that encourage collaboration, provide support and enhance the excellent work of the many existing local sustainability leaders, and activities to help them reach more people with greater success. It is about exchanging good ideas and acknowledging that Council can learn from and collaborate with experts in our community so that our common goals can be realised efficiently and effectively.



### YARRA'S SUSTAINABILITY AWARDS

We celebrate our community's innovative efforts towards environmental sustainability.

## Pathway 2: Urban Ecology and Natural Environment

Supporting healthy and thriving ecosystems in Yarra

The objectives of this pathway are to:

- Enhance community awareness and engagement with Yarra's local environment.
- Incorporate and improve biodiversity and ecosystem health outcomes through Council operations.
- Support biodiversity and ecosystem health improvements on private land.
- Improve biodiversity and ecosystem health outcomes through partnerships and collaborative action.

As Yarra's population grows, so will the pressure on parks, waterways and open spaces. Council wants to ensure that these precious spaces are respected and nurtured so that the important role they play in making Yarra liveable is recognised and enjoyed by future generations.

In recent years, Council has made great progress in increasing natural habitat of Council managed land, and reducing the impact its operations have on the local environment.

This strategy looks to accelerate this work, and take it a step further, by looking to also support property owners and businesses with actions such as introducing more water sensitive practices on private land, planting more native plants in home gardens, and reducing litter in our waterways.

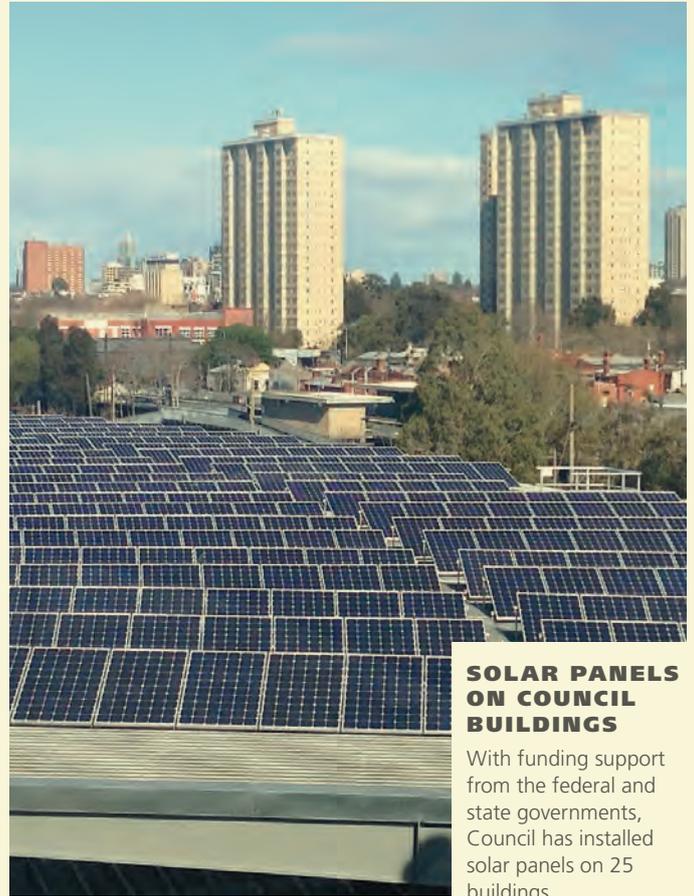
### NATIONAL TREE DAY

Each year Council staff and community members participate in planting trees for National Tree Day.



### 24 HOUR RECYCLING

Council's Clifton Hill depot provides a point for residents and businesses to drop off items for recycling, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



### SOLAR PANELS ON COUNCIL BUILDINGS

With funding support from the federal and state governments, Council has installed solar panels on 25 buildings.

### Pathway 3: Sustainable City Infrastructure and Lifestyles

Developing a secure, affordable and liveable City infrastructure and lifestyles for the Yarra Community

The objectives of this pathway are:

- Sustainable Transport
- Increased business Sustainability
- Sustainable Built Environment
- Carbon Neutral Yarra
- Waste Wise Yarra
- Conserving Water in Yarra
- Climate Change Resilient Communities

Many of the actions are a continuation of Council's previous work in this space, such as advocacy to promote greater use of public transport and initiatives to convert under-utilised urban areas into parks or new open space.

Under this pathway, Council will also engage with 'green' businesses in Yarra to identify issues, barriers and opportunities for increasing the number of these businesses locally, as well as increasing community awareness about them.

As Yarra's landscape changes through more intense residential development, actions will also look at how Council can encourage more sustainable planning and building practices to make infrastructure more resilient.

### Pathway 4: Sustainable Council Operations

Operating Council as a model of environmental sustainability

The objectives of this pathway are:

- Lead by example, with Integration of sustainability across Council
- Best Practice Carbon Management
- Best Practice Waste Management
- Best Practice Water Management

Yarra City Council has been recognised as one of Australia's local government leaders in environmental management and sustainability. This recognition is something we are proud of, and we intend to keep building on that recognition and the reputation that comes with it through pioneering best practice across our operations.

Council will do this by embedding sustainability into decision-making so that it is at the core of everything we do. This is a commitment to integrate strategic thinking into the design and delivery of all of our programs and services so that our sustainable actions are assured, effective and accountable.

The greatest environmental challenges require collaboration with our community and other tiers of government, but when it comes to the things we can control in terms of Council's own operational footprint, Yarra residents should expect nothing less than best practice.



# YOUR ROLE IN SUPPORTING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR YARRA

Whether you are an individual, household, community group or local business, the success of achieving a sustainable Yarra requires your help. Here's a snapshot of how you can support a sustainable future for Yarra.

## Learn:

Develop a deeper understanding of your own environmental impact and where there are opportunities to reduce your impact.

## Act:

Focus on the areas that resonate with you the most and begin to make positive change. Many organisations, community groups and Council programs may also be available to help you with this process.

## Share:

Your sustainability journey will more than likely be relevant to others. Discover how your lessons could be shared with others. From talking to your neighbours over the fence through to accepting a Yarra Sustainability Award, you're only limited by your imagination!

## Join up:

There are many groups and projects underway in Yarra that you could get involved with.

- Sign up to Yarra Environment E-news  
[www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/environment](http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/environment) to be kept up to date on local groups, projects, news and events
- Go to council's Environment page to connect with existing work:  
[www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/environment/community-participation/](http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/environment/community-participation/)
- Visit the Yarra Energy Foundation  
<http://yef.org.au/>

## Contact Council:

During the rollout of this strategy, Council would love to hear your feedback about what you are doing and your ideas for actions in your local area.

Email [info@yarracity.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@yarracity.vic.gov.au) or phone 9205 5555.

## For more information

To learn more about the Yarra Environment Strategy, or how you can be involved in making your life or business more sustainable, visit

[www.yarracity.vic.gov.au](http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au)



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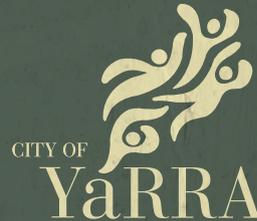
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[YARRACITY.VIC.GOV.AU](http://YARRACITY.VIC.GOV.AU)



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