



Ararat Rural City Council Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2010 – 2020



Mission Statement

We recognise that climate change will have a significant impact on our people, our culture, our economy and our environment.

We strive to promote the opportunities which will be created and embrace a new age of green economics and truly sustainable development.

Council will lead the way.





Ararat Rural City

**Victorian Local
Sustainability Accord**

**Sustainability
Fund**



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Message from the Chief Executive Officer



As residents of Ararat Rural City and environmental custodians, we each share the challenge of protecting and enhancing our environment.

This is not a new challenge. It is one to which Ararat Rural City Council has been deeply committed over many years.

In 2009, our abiding commitment to the environment was enshrined in our Council Plan which sets out our strategic objectives for the coming four years.

We have set ourselves a clear agenda for a future in which we will work together with our community to repair the health of our environment and protect it for future generations.

As a Council, we have an important role to play in striking a balance between the current and future needs of our community and those of our natural environment. A sensitive and responsible approach to development is required to ensure we meet our existing needs and cater for

larger populations in the future while fulfilling our obligation to maintain a clean, healthy environment and adapt to climate change.

We also have a role to play in fostering environmentally sustainable practices. Council is an active participant in the Cities for Climate Protection Program and a member of the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance. With the assistance of these initiatives, we have strived to reduce Council's greenhouse gas emissions to 20 per cent below our 2001-02 levels and community emissions to 10 per cent below the 1996 emissions levels by 2010.

Council is also working in partnership with the community to reduce landfill and increase recycling. Ararat is positioned to become Victoria's green energy hub, with a rapidly expanding renewable energy sector investing in our region.

This Environmental Sustainability Strategy, developed by the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group with staff, council and community input, provides an overview of the way forward, particularly how we might respond to the effects of climate change. It identifies priority actions that council and the community will implement to ensure a more sustainable future.

Although the task before us may at times appear monumental, we firmly believe that together, we can achieve remarkable results.

Stephen Chapple
Chief Executive Officer



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i) Executive Summary

The Ararat Rural City Council is committed to working towards environmental sustainability to secure the economic, environmental and social health of the municipality for current and future generations. There is an urgent need for all levels of government and our communities to take action in order to protect the unique environment within the municipality and the natural and human world that depends so much on restoring the ecological balance.

The key environmental challenges faced in our municipality are related to dealing with the impacts of Climate Change. Other environmental issues are managing our waste and water resources effectively, protecting biodiversity by addressing pest plant and animal control and ensuring our local businesses are equipped to respond to predicted market and climate changes.

Local governments have legislative responsibilities and resource capabilities to deliver environmental sustainability outcomes and play an important role in leading and educating the community. Funding from the Victorian Local Sustainability Accord has enabled increased resources for local government initiatives. As a part of the Accord process, in September 2008 Ararat Rural City completed a Local Environment Sustainability Priority Statement (LESPP) which outlines and commits Council to key Accord Principles and forms the basis of future programs. This Environmental Sustainability Strategy forms the action component of this body of work. The Strategy explores environmental themes, prioritises a plan of action and will guide Council's long term environmental management and sustainability commitments over the next 10 years.

Community consultation and involvement was a key strength of the strategy development process. An Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group was established in early 2009 involving 12 committed community members whose role is to provide local input into the development of the strategy, review the strategy on a yearly basis, and provide Council with ongoing advice on environmental issues. The key sustainability themes that were identified as a part of the strategy development process are listed in the Table 1 below together with visions and goals. The priority actions determined by ESAG are listed in Table 2.

TABLE 1: ENVIRONMENTAL THEMES, VISIONS AND GOALS

Theme and Vision	Sub Theme	Goals
Responding to the Challenge of Climate Change Over 50 % of the energy needs of council and communities met by renewable energy sources.	1.1 Clean green energy	a) To reduce the use of energy sourced from Greenhouse Gas producing technologies b) To increase the take up of green energy technologies by council and the community
	1.2 Improving energy efficiency	a) To reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions from council operations b) To reduce household and business Greenhouse Gas emissions
	1.3 Adapting to the impacts of Climate Change	To develop a comprehensive strategy to prepare the council and the community for the projected impacts of climate change
Enhancing and Restoring our Natural Assets The degradation of natural ecosystems extensively reversed within the municipality and the natural balance stabilising.	2.1 Biodiverse and healthy ecosystems	To improve the health and quality of vegetation communities to ensure that biodiversity values are maintained
	2.2 Healthy and productive land	To develop agricultural systems addressing existing land management problems and provide support for sustainable production
	2.3 Healthy and productive water systems	To improve and enhance our river systems and catchments
	2.4 Clean air	To reduce pollutants from wood fires and car emissions which affect air quality
Using our Resources Wisely Our community recognising the finite availability of resources, the effects of consumption on our planet and changing behaviours accordingly.	3.1 Reduced waste	To reduce the consumption of finite resources by making informed purchasing decisions
	3.2 Reduced water consumption	a) To work with agencies and shire residents to reduce community water use b) To implement the water savings strategies identified by council in the draft Sustainable Water Use Plan 2006
	3.3 Sustainable and efficient transport systems	To promote and facilitate sustainable transport options for our council and communities
	3.4 Communities with a sustainable living ethic	To significantly reduce the environmental impact of each household and business from its present 2009 level
Ararat Rural City Council Leading by Example	4.1 All areas of council operations exemplifying environmental sustainability	

TABLE 2: PRIORITY ACTIONS

Sub Theme	Priority Action
1.1 Promote community solar and wind farms and alternative energies	1.1.5 Work with Ararat Greenhouse Action Group or private enterprise to set up the organisational structure to facilitate the establishment of community energy farms.
1.1 Promote community solar and wind farms and alternative energies	1.1.10 Promote and conduct workshops to inform the community on current technologies and renewable energy schemes.
1.2 Promote household energy savings	1.2.2 Hold an annual Sustainable Living Expo which promotes energy savings and sustainable behaviour.
1.2 Promote sustainable house design	1.2.8 Supply information for builders, householders and developers on addressing site conditions, orientation, dwelling size, sustainable building materials, water treatments and alternative energy supply. Promote the monetary and environmental advantages of sustainability measures.
1.3 Address effects of climate change and extreme weather on community health, wellbeing, income and lifestyle	1.3.1 Assist communities to develop plans to “climate proof” their communities.
1.3 Start discussions with the community on what is projected for communities in our region	1.3.9 Have discussions about long term visions of what our community might look like in 2030.
1.3 Plan for the effects of climate variability on agricultural industries in our region	1.3.12 Support initiatives and other agencies to help farmers and farming communities adapt through sustainable farming events and activities.
2.1 Reverse the decline in biodiversity by mapping and assessing areas with biodiversity values	2.1.3 Apply for funding or support partner organisations to enable the identification, protection and management of remnants with high biodiversity values on private land.
2.1 Actively promote and facilitate feral animal and weed control across the municipality	2.1.20 Work with agencies, local Landcare groups and landowners to assist the delivery of pest plant and animal control both on private and council managed land.
2.2 Increase the health of our soils	2.2.2 Promote clean, green agriculture as a marketing tool for our region and our produce.
2.3 Discourage inappropriate uses in water catchments	2.3.3 With other agencies, encourage linkages and the protection and revegetation of riparian vegetation through community education activities.
3.1 Promote and support initiatives and products with low waste and or energy profiles	3.1.1 Encourage and support - Improved/reduced packaging - Bulk buying/packaging - Community markets - Zero waste week - Biodegradable bags - Plastic water bottle and plastic bag free townships
3.4 Work with individuals and communities to understand sustainability issues	3.4.2 Encourage discussion on sustainability issues and support Ararat Greenhouse Action Group and other partners to host events and activities.
3.4 Work with individuals and communities to understand sustainability issues	3.4.3 Promote stories of individuals and groups undertaking sustainability actions.

The Ararat Rural City Council Environmental Sustainability Strategy in the long term will drive the implementation of actions across all departments and lead the way in educating the community and generating behaviour change. In the short term Council is committed to and will be responsible for completing the 14 identified priority actions listed above for the first period of implementation.

What we do as individuals, communities, councils, as a nation and across the world over the next 10 years will determine what our world will look like in 50 years time and what kind of a world our children will inherit. The implementation of this strategy is a positive and constructive way we can prepare our municipality for the kind of future we would want for our children. Council, the community and each and every person in our municipality has a role to play in that future.

We recognise that climate change will have a significant impact on our people, our culture, our economy and our environment. We strive to promote the opportunities which will be created and embrace a new age of green economics and truly sustainable development.

Council will lead the way.

ii) Introduction

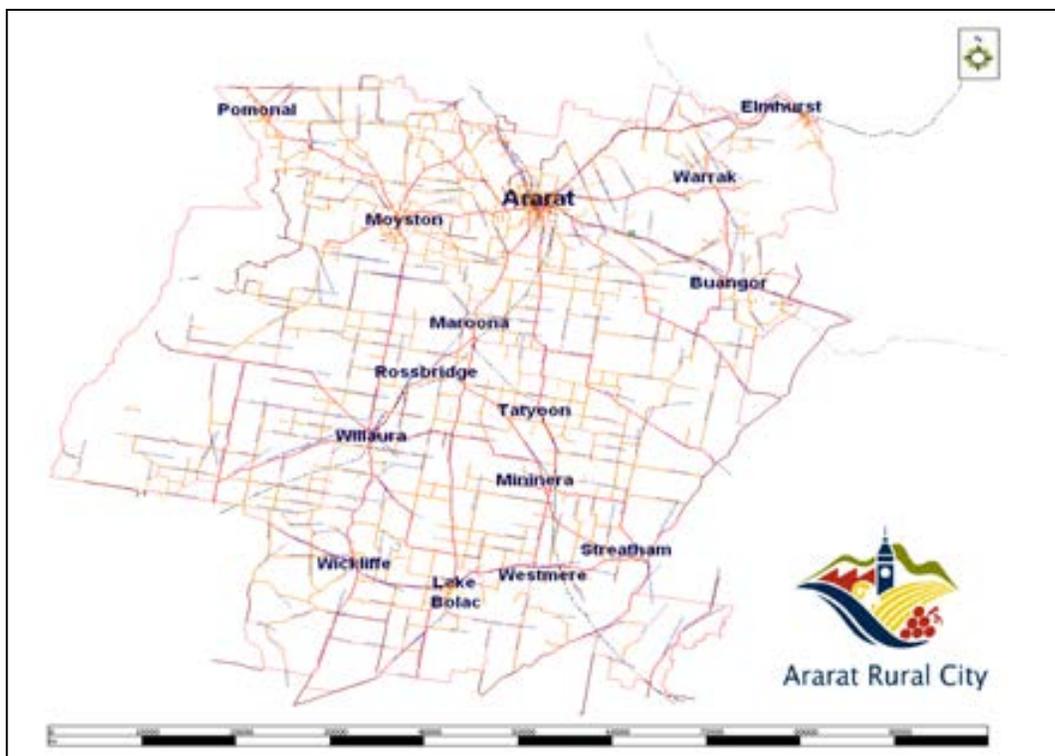
“Life creates conditions conducive to life. It cleans air, builds soil, cleans water, creates the complex mix of gases that we need to live. Like the rest of life on earth, we must find a way to do the amazing things that we do, while taking care of the place that will look after our offspring. To meet our needs while making of this place an Eden.” - Janine Benyus, natural science writer.

Society today faces the extraordinary challenge of maintaining or improving our living standards without destroying the natural systems that support life on this planet. The Ararat Rural City Council is committed to implementing environmental sustainability measures to ensure the economic, environmental and social health of the municipality and for current and future generations. There is an urgent need for a greater commitment to protect the unique environment within our municipality and the natural and human world that depends so much on restoring the environmental balance. Council has been progressing along its sustainability journey for some time formalising this commitment in 2002 by adopting a Council Plan which includes a strategy on the environment. The key statement in Council’s 2002 plan was “To manage, in partnership with the community and government the sustainable development and conservation of the natural and built environment”.

Funding from the Victorian Local Sustainability Accord has increased the resources for tackling environmental challenges within the municipality. As a part of this initiative, in September 2008 Ararat Rural City completed a Local Environment Sustainability Priority Statement (LESPP) which outlines and commits Council to the Accord Principles and identifies key priorities which form the basis of future Council sustainability programs. This Environment Sustainability Strategy (ESS) further builds on the LESPP by exploring a broad range of environmental themes and identifying actions required to tackle local issues. The ESS will guide Council’s environmental management and sustainability commitments up to 2020.

iii) Ararat Rural City Council: Municipality Profile

Ararat Rural City is a rural municipality in western Victoria, covering an area of 4,230 square kilometres, with the city of Ararat situated on the Western Highway approximately 2 hours west of Melbourne. As shown on the map below the municipality is comprised of a series of rural townships including Pomonal, Mininera, Tatyoon, Elmhurst, Moyston, Warrak, Buangor, Maroona, Willaura, Wickliffe, Lake Bolac, Westmere and Streatham. Each of these townships is surrounded by agricultural enterprises and all predominantly relying on the major service centre of Ararat. Willaura and Lake Bolac are among the larger settlements, whilst Moyston and Pomonal are the rural growth centres of the municipality.



The economy of the municipality is largely based around traditional rural industries such as cropping, wool and beef production. However, residential growth, retail and service industries, light manufacturing, construction and tourism are increasing in importance. The municipality has a population of 11,255 (ABS Census 2006) with the Ararat Rural City forming a “gateway” to important tourism destinations such as the Grampians Ranges, Pyrenees Ranges, Ararat Hills, Mt Langi Ghiran, Mt Cole and Lake Bolac.

Ararat Rural City is an environmentally diverse municipality with topography ranging from the rugged Grampians National Park to the west, Mt Cole State Forest and Mt Langi Ghiran State Park to the east, granite hill country to the north and fertile basalt plains to the south. Significant wetlands, endangered native grasslands and significant areas of Box Ironbark Forest are natural assets unique to the region.

Some of the key environmental challenges faced in our municipality are related to our capacity to deal with the ramifications of climate change which will affect every individual, community and business and of course council. Other environmental issues include managing our waste cost effectively, protecting biodiversity by addressing pest plant and animal control and ensuring our agricultural base is equipped to respond to predicted future changes - not the least of which is producing increased amounts of food in a more extreme climate.

Government departments, agencies and other organisations play a key role in managing and promoting our natural resources on a federal, state and regional level. On a local level, the Ararat Rural City Council together with many community groups such as Landcare groups, Field Naturalists, the Ararat Greenhouse Action Group, schools and the Ararat Regional Biolinks Network all contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural environment. A range of council and community activities such as education, weed control, tree planting, soil conservation works and waterways protection have enhanced the biodiversity and natural assets of our region. Landcare and farming organisations also promote sustainable farming practices and pest and weed control in the rural districts of the municipality.



iv) **The Sustainability Challenge**

"If we all grew our own vegetables I reckon we would not have our major environmental problems, as we would all have our hands in the soil and be connected to the seasons and the natural rhythms of life."- Peter Cundall, Gardening Australia

Like other local councils throughout the nation, the Ararat Rural City has an important role to play in the sustainability challenge. Our region plays an integral part in maintaining and enhancing the State's biodiverse ecosystems which are among the most highly stressed in Australia. Evidence suggests that the challenges of improving environmental management, reducing green house gases and reducing our levels of consumption and waste are urgent. Excerpts below from the the Victorian Local Sustainability Accord (2005) attest to this:

- Our water resources remain stretched. Only one quarter of Victoria's rivers are healthy and 35% of our wetlands have been totally lost.

- Victoria's land is becoming less productive. An estimated 670,000 hectares of land in Victoria are currently at risk of becoming saline and this could increase to over three million hectares by 2050.
- Our climate is changing. Greenhouse gas emissions are accelerating climate change, making Victoria warmer and drier. Energy production in Victoria is more greenhouse gas intensive than in any other state in Australia.
- Many plants and animals are at risk of extinction. Victoria's ecosystems are the most highly stressed in Australia with over 44% of our native plants and 30% of native animals now extinct or threatened.
- The impact of our towns and cities is growing. Urban areas have expanded rapidly and the average population density of Melbourne is low by international standards.
- We are generating more waste than ever before. Per capita, Australia is one of the highest waste generating countries in the world. Although Victorians are recycling more waste than ever before, total waste rose by 40% between 1992 and 2002.

There are important roles and responsibilities for each level of government which by working in unison, ensure environmental challenges are met, and the needs and interests of local communities are represented alongside those of the Ararat Rural City municipality, the state, the nation and our planet as a whole.

v) Policy Background and Government Frameworks

Federal and State Governments have core responsibilities under a multitude of relevant Acts pertaining to the environment. Council is the local or grass roots component of the governing system and works in partnership with all levels of government, associated agencies, regional authorities and the community to play its part in addressing environmental sustainability in the municipality.

Federal Context

The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts develops and implements national policy, programs and legislation at the federal level with its key focus protecting and conserving Australia's natural environment and heritage. Programs such as 'Caring for our Country' assess projects and distribute funds to organisations and community groups to complete local environmental projects.

The Department of Climate Change was established in 2007 to drive climate change programs and adaptation, greenhouse action, renewable energy targets and develop the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. The White Paper, Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme: Australia's Low Pollution Future, was released on 15 December 2008. The paper outlines the final design of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and decisions on other significant climate change programs. A number of important federal government plans and strategies set the scene for state and local action.

State Direction and Frameworks

A number of state departments and regional authorities have environmental frameworks, roles and responsibilities. The Ararat Rural City Council works closely with the following partners to seek advise, plan for and deliver local sustainability outcomes.

- The Department of Sustainability and Environment
- The Department of Primary Industries
- The Environmental Protection Authority
- Parks Victoria
- Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority
- Wimmera Catchment Management Authority
- Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water
- Neighbouring Councils

The table below lists key partners together with their corresponding frameworks, strategies and schemes which govern and influence environmental activities and responsibilities within the municipality.

TABLE 3: KEY PARTNERS AND CORRESPONDING FRAMEWORKS, STRATEGIES AND SCHEMES.

Partner	Strategy
The Federal Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring for our Country (2008 commencement) integrates delivery of the Australian Government's natural resource management programs. • National Renewable Energy Target • Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (in development) • National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Framework
The Victorian Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Water Our Future (2004) • Our Environment Our Future – Environmental Sustainability Framework (2005) • Our Environment Our Future – Environmental Sustainability Action Statement (2006) • Towards Zero Waste Strategy (2005) • Future Farming Strategy – Productive, Competitive, Sustainable (2008) • Victorian Climate Change Green Paper 2009 (White paper in development) • Land and Biodiversity at a time of climate change White Paper (2009)
Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glenelg Hopkins Regional Catchment Strategy
Wimmera Catchment Management Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy

In 2007, Ararat Rural City Council became a signatory to the Victorian Local Sustainability Accord (the Accord) which is a partnership initiative designed to strengthen collaborative efforts by the Victorian State Government and local governments to create better environmental sustainability outcomes at the local level. The Accord sets out a process for local governments to follow and provides a funding process to resource environmental plans and projects, such as the implementation of this strategy.

Local Responsibilities and Roles

Local governments have legislative responsibilities and resource capabilities to achieve environmental sustainability targets and play an important role in managing, protecting and enhancing our natural systems together with educating the community and leading the way by setting an example.

As articulated in the Council Plan 2009 – 2013 “We value our natural and built environment and want to manage, enhance and protect it for future generations”. “Our Environment” forms one of the four central pillars of the council plan, along with people, culture and the economy, and a number of values and major priority actions in the plan exemplify Council’s commitment to the environment.

As a part of the Accord process the Ararat Rural City completed a Local Environment Sustainability Priority Statement (LESPPS) in September 2008 which outlines and commits Council to the key Accord Principles and forms the basis of future Council sustainability programs. The Statement also outlines other key council strategies related to environmental matters, lists the council’s major achievements in these areas and identifies important themes.

This Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS) further explores environmental themes, identifies goals and lists priority actions required to tackle local issues. The ESS will guide Council’s environmental management and sustainability commitments up to 2020.

In recent years a number of environmental/sustainability strategies have been developed by the Ararat Rural City Council each relating to different areas of operation and responsibility. These strategies are listed later in this document together with details of achievements to date.

A number of important regional memberships also enable the Ararat Rural City Council to join forces with other Shires, organisations and businesses to achieve large scale and co-ordinated regional projects and are detailed below.

Membership of Cities for Climate Protection (CCP): Funded by the Federal Government, CCP is driven by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). This program concluded in 2009 however provided valuable advice on funding opportunities and other initiatives. As a part of membership obligations, Council staff completed reports detailing actions Council has taken to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

Membership of the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance (CVGA): Council joined CVGA in 2004. CVGA is a group of 13 councils and a number of other businesses spanning central Victoria. The Alliance has undertaken a number of projects including a successful Solar Cities bid, currently being rolled out across the region. The Ararat Energy Savers project referred to later in this strategy was obtained through the Alliance.

Membership of the Wimmera Mallee Sustainability Alliance (WMSA): WMSA was formed under the DSE Sustainability Accord Program and currently involves eight local governments, the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority, Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water, Desert Fringe and Grampians Waste Management Groups, Wimmera Development Association and the University of Ballarat. The purpose of the Alliance is to coordinate and implement environmental sustainability programs and projects with a regional focus.

Membership of the Grampians Regional Waste Management Group (GRWMG): Membership of GRWMG is mandatory under the Local Government Act. As a member of the Grampians Regional Waste Management Group, Ararat Rural City Council works with the Northern Grampians Shire, Horsham Rural City and Yarriambiack Shire to manage waste across the region. The group has been very successful in managing the municipality's waste issues



vi) Development of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy

Strategy Objectives

Council received funding under the State Governments Accord process and committed resources to develop the Environmental Sustainability Strategy for the municipality. The strategy builds on the priorities identified in the LESPS and identifies priority actions for implementation.

The strategy:

- Provides an overview of Council's role in environmental sustainability.
- Reviews and incorporates existing policies and plans related to environmental sustainability.
- Identifies the major environmental sustainability themes for our municipality.
- Incorporates community consultations on future sustainability directions and priorities.
- Determines a comprehensive and wide ranging set of actions for council to achieve between 2010 and 2020.
- Identifies 14 priority actions for the first period of implementation.
- Determines a process for implementing and monitoring the 14 priorities identified.

- Will be reviewed annually from December 2010 to determine the progress of actions and identify a new set of priorities for the following period. The Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group (ESAG) will be charged with overseeing its implementation and its periodic review.

Community Consultation and Involvement: The Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group

“If you want one year of prosperity, plant corn. If you want ten years of prosperity plant trees. If you want one hundred years of prosperity educate people” Chinese proverb

Community consultation and involvement is highly valued by the Ararat Rural City Council and is a key strength of the strategy development and review process. An Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group (ESAG) with 12 local community members, 2 council staff and a councillor was formed to develop the Environmental Sustainability Strategy. This meaningful involvement of community members has ensured that the strategy addresses issues broader than those for which Council is directly responsible. Many of the actions involve working with partners - communities, agencies, groups and individuals to deliver outcomes.

The formation of ESAG, established at the start of the project, has been crucial to strategy development and provided valuable local input from a group of well informed and passionate individuals from across the municipality with their knowledge and experience of environmental issues in their communities. Issues raised during the development of the strategy were evaluated by the group and actions to address the issues were discussed and incorporated into the strategy.

It is envisaged that the continuing role of ESAG in the implementation and ongoing development of the strategy will ensure the strategy will continue to evolve and progress. As a Section 86 Committee, ESAG will also provide ongoing advice to Council on a range of environmental and sustainability issues.

ESAG was also involved in the circulation of the draft strategy to individuals and groups in their communities and will have a continuing role promoting environmental sustainability actions in their communities.



Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group members are pictured working on the strategy: From left Sandra Hawkins, Rod Marshall, Christine Forster, Russell Pearse, Una Allender, Don Rowe, Ken Readwin, Joan Pitaro, Adam Merrick, Debbie Shea, Cr Andrea Marian. Absent: Sven O Flynn, Bill Jones. Council staff: Jane Marriott, Ian Mitchell, Daryl Scherger.

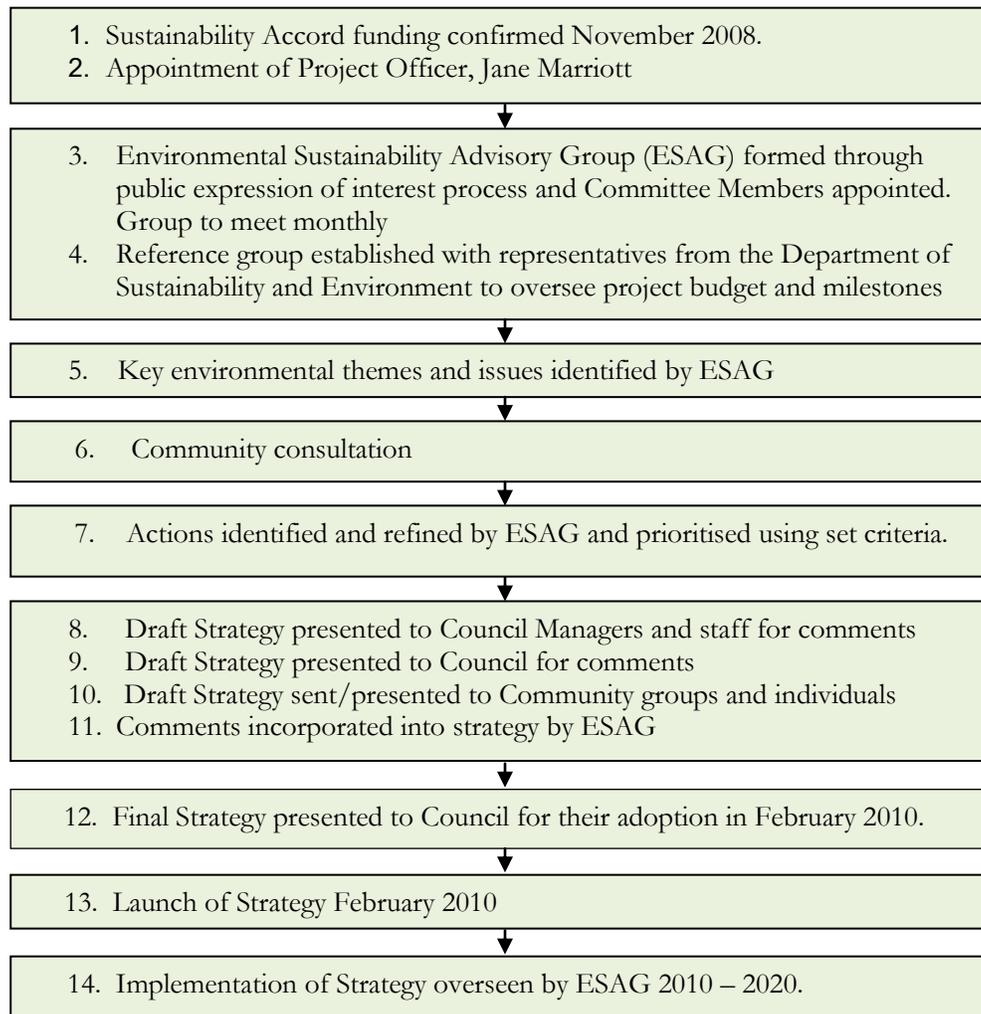
Other community consultation measures include:

- Environmental feedback at ‘Community Listening Posts’ conducted in March, April and May 2009 to seek community input into council plans and operations (See Appendix 4).
- An initial invitation to the community to identify environmental and sustainability issues they felt should be addressed and to comment on proposed themes for the strategy.
- A photo competition based on the identified themes, particularly aimed at schools, with winning photos to be included in the strategy.
- Comments sought at the August 09 Sustainability Expo on “What might a sustainable future look like?”
- Letters sent to key community groups seeking input on the issues important to them.

- Community consultation on the draft strategy which took place over a 4 week period and included public meetings, individual discussions and talks to targeted groups. The strategy was displayed on the council website, at the library and at community hubs and comments and suggestions were sought. ESAG members also assisted with seeking community input.



Strategy Development Steps



Implementation Process

The implementation of the actions identified in the Environmental Sustainability Strategy will take place between 2010 and 2020. However it is recognised that the situations we face today and the responses appropriate today may well be inappropriate in five years time. It is therefore important that the document is regularly reviewed and revised.

Priority Actions

The actions in the strategy are quite extensive, totalling 220 actions covering the four major themes. It is unrealistic to expect council to address all these actions in a given time frame. To guide council's actions for the first period of implementation 14 priority actions have been identified to be first addressed by council.

1. The priority actions were identified by ESAG and were modified following community and council consultation. The criteria for selecting the priority actions were
 - Some actions should achieve quick on ground results
 - At least one major project should be included.
 - There should be a mix of no cost, low cost and higher cost projects.
2. The 14 priority actions will be addressed in the first period of implementation beginning in February 2010. The estimated time period for undertaking and completing the action is listed for each priority, as is the council department responsible for addressing the action in the Table below.
3. The source of funding for the implementation of these 14 priorities varies. Many of the actions form part of the existing role of staff or are ongoing projects and as such do not require additional funding allocations. As part of the State Government's funding through the Sustainability Accord it is likely that Council will receive funding to implement the first round of priority actions. Alternatively external sources of funding or grants may be obtained.
4. Subsequent funding for new priorities will be included in Council's forward budgeting process which was unavailable for the first set of priorities.

Other Actions

There is no specific time period for implementing non-priority actions, however it is envisaged that each year a number of these actions will be addressed. A council work plan will allocate departments relevant to the implementation of each of the non-priority actions.

- Many of the actions represent work of an ongoing nature by staff.
- Many of the actions can be achieved at little or no extra cost and as time permits they can be addressed.
- Many of the actions involve partnering with agencies, groups, businesses which may involve small commitments in terms of staff time or funds.
- It is possible that partners may use the strategy to focus their actions leading to outcomes being achieved independently of council.

Strategy Monitoring and Review

The Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group is responsible for overseeing the implementation and review of the Strategy.

- Progress on the implementation of priority actions will be overseen by the ESAG at its quarterly meetings. Council's Natural Resource Officer will be responsible for providing an update from staff on the progress of priorities to table at each quarterly ESAG meeting. It will also be the role of the Natural Resource Officer to present a brief report on the progress on priority and non-priority actions at the quarterly meetings.

- A review of priorities will be conducted annually by ESAG, when new priorities may be identified and the strategy may be updated or altered. A report on progress and any changes to priorities or alterations to the strategy will be presented annually to council for their approval. It is hoped by having the on-going mentorship of ESAG, the document will be a 'living' document which can respond to the rapid changes and challenges we are likely to experience in this area. A major review may be appropriate by 2015.
- When priority actions have been completed the next new priorities will be identified by ESAG at their annual review. Aligning this procedure with council budget procedures will be the responsibility of the council's Natural Resource Officer.

Priorities Identified for Implementation

The present 14 priority actions identified by the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group are listed in the table below. These actions have been highlighted in red text in each of the following action tables in the preceding section.

TABLE 4: PRIORITY ACTIONS

THEME Key Strategy	Priority Actions	Responsible party	Time line	Estimated Budget
1.1 CLEAN GREEN ENERGY Promote community Solar/Wind Farms & alternative energies	1.1.5 Work with Ararat Greenhouse Action Group or private enterprise to set up an organisational structure to facilitate the establishment of community energy farms.	Natural Resources Officer & Business Development Officer	Jan 2010 – Dec 2011	Existing staff role \$2000
1.1 CLEAN GREEN ENERGY Community consultation and education	1.1.10 Promote/conduct workshops to inform the community on current technologies and renewable energy schemes.	Natural Resources Officer	Ongoing	Existing staff role
1.2 IMPROVING ENERGY EFFICIENCY Promote household Energy savings	1.2.2 Hold an annual Sustainable Living Expo which promotes energy savings and sustainable behaviour.	Natural Resources Officer	Annually	Existing staff role
1.2 IMPROVING ENERGY EFFICIENCY Promote sustainable house design	1.2.8 Supply information for builders, householders and developers on addressing site conditions, orientation, dwelling size, sustainable building materials, water treatments and alternative energy supply. Promote the monetary and environmental advantages of sustainability measures.	Planning & Building Officers	Jan 2010 – Dec 2011	Existing staff role
1.3 ADAPTING TO IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE Address effects of climate change and extreme weather on community health, wellbeing, income and lifestyle	1.3.1 Assist communities to develop plans to "climate proof" their communities.	Natural Resources Officer & Community Services Officers	July 2010 – Dec 2011	External funds - \$20,000
1.3 ADAPTING TO IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE Start discussions with the community on what is projected for communities in our region.	1.3.9 Have discussions about long term visions of what our community might look like in 2030.	Natural Resources Officer & Community Services Officers	Jan 2010 – Dec 2011	External funds - \$2,000
1.3 ADAPTING TO IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE Plan for the effects of climate variability on agricultural industries in our region.	1.3.12 Support other agencies and initiatives to help farmers and farming communities adapt through sustainable farming events and activities	Natural Resources Officer & Rural Business Development Officer	Ongoing	Existing staff role
2.1 ENHANCING AND RESTORING OUR NATURAL ASSETS Reverse the decline in biodiversity by mapping and assessing areas with biodiversity values	2.1.3 Apply for funding or support partner organisations to enable the identification, protection and management of remnants with high biodiversity values on private land.	Natural Resources Officer	Jan 2011 - Ongoing	External funds - \$5,000
2.1 ENHANCING AND RESTORING OUR NATURAL ASSETS	2.1.20 Work with agencies, local Landcare groups and landowners to assist the delivery of pest plant and animal control both on private and council	Natural Resources Officer	Ongoing	Existing staff role

Actively promote and facilitate feral animal and weed control across the municipality	managed land.			
2.2 HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE LAND Increase the health of our soils	2.2.2 Promote clean, green agriculture as a marketing tool for our region and our produce.	Natural Resources & Rural Business Devel. Officer	Jan 2011 - Ongoing	Existing staff role & External funds - \$2,000
2.3 HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE WATER SYSTEMS Discourage inappropriate uses in water catchments	2.3.3 With other agencies, encourage linkages and the protection and revegetation of riparian vegetation, through education activities.	Natural Resources Officer	Jan 2011 - Ongoing	Existing staff role
3.1 USING OUR RESOURCES WISELY Promote and support products with low waste/energy profiles	3.1.1 Encourage and support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved/reduced packaging • Bulk buying/packaging • Community markets • Zero waste week • Biodegradable bags • Plastic water bottle and bag free townships 	Natural Resources Officer	Ongoing	Existing staff role & External funds \$2000
3.4 COMMUNITIES WITH A SUSTAINABLE LIVING ETHIC Work with individuals and communities to understand sustainability issues	3.4.2 Encourage discussion on sustainability issues and support Ararat Greenhouse Action Group and other partners to host events and activities.	Natural Resources Officer	Ongoing	Existing staff role
3.4 COMMUNITIES WITH A SUSTAINABLE LIVING ETHIC Work with individuals and communities to understand sustainability issues	3.4.3 Promote stories of individuals and groups undertaking sustainability actions.	Natural Resources Officer	Ongoing	Existing staff role



vii) Key Sustainability Themes and Actions

The key sustainability themes that were identified as a part of the strategy development process are:

1. Responding to the Challenge of Climate Change
 - 1.1 Clean Green Energy
 - 1.2 Improving Energy Efficiency
 - 1.3 Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change
2. Enhancing and Restoring our Natural Assets
 - 2.1 Biodiverse and Healthy Ecosystems
 - 2.2 Healthy and Productive Land
 - 2.3 Healthy and Productive Water Systems
 - 2.4 Clean Air
3. Using Our Resources Wisely
 - 3.1 Reduced Waste
 - 3.2 Reduced Water Consumption
 - 3.3 Sustainable and Efficient Transport Systems
 - 3.4 Communities with a Sustainable Living Ethic
4. Ararat Rural City Council Leading by Example

The following section expands on these themes, articulating a vision for each major theme and a goal for each sub theme. The scene is set for each theme explaining the background, current status and achievements the Ararat Rural City Council has accomplished to date. Actions for each sub theme are listed in the table together with the status of these actions and potential partners. Current plans and strategies are also listed and explained after each table. The top fourteen priorities determined by ESAG are highlighted in the action tables in red text.

**“The world we have created is a product of our thinking; it cannot be changed without changing our thinking.”
Albert Einstein**





1. RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

VISION: *A majority of the energy needs of council and communities will be met by renewable energy sources.*

1.1 CLEAN GREEN ENERGY

- Goal**
- a. To reduce the use of energy sourced from Greenhouse Gas producing technologies
 - b. To increase the take up of green energy technologies by council and the community

Setting the Scene

Ararat Rural City Council is well placed to respond to the challenges of climate change and the imperative to reduce the consumption of Greenhouse Gas producing technologies to supply our energy requirements.

- The high profile wind farm located on Challicum Hills is seen as a positive presence in the community. More wind farms are proposed in the municipality and council supports their installation, subject to fulfilling set State Government and Planning Scheme requirements.
- Until now most of the dwellings in the municipality with solar panels were in rural locations where grid connection is expensive, however in 2009 a bulk community roll out of solar electricity systems - taking advantage of Federal Government rebates, saw 35 householders installing solar panels to supply a portion of their energy needs. Whilst this is a small proportion of homes this is an important step.
- The Ararat Greenhouse Action Group was formed in 2007 by concerned community members and often works in partnership with Council to undertake projects such as the bulk community roll out of solar panels.
- Council is an active member of several regional Greenhouse Alliances which include renewable energy projects and responding to climate change at a regional level.
- At present Council purchases 25% of its electricity from Greenpower.
- A 2 kw solar panel system was installed on the council offices in September 2009 expecting to supply 5% of Council's offices' power needs.

Although Council is poised to respond to increasing its use of clean green energy, the challenges are immense and will require the support of the State and Federal Governments as well as the involvement of all sectors of the community.

Action Table 1.1 - Clean Green Energy

Key Issues	Strategies	Actions	Partner	Status *
Encouraging Wind Farms	Promote community Solar/Wind Farms & alternative energies	1. Make available an information sheet summarising the process for the development of Wind Farms. Include answers to common community concerns and issues and ensure the community consultation process is timely.	State Govt.	N

		2. Encourage small scale wind generation developments which satisfy planning and amenity issues.	AGAG Business	O
Promoting Photo Voltaic's (PV) for householders	Counter the perception that PV installation is seen as too hard and too expensive.	3. Promote community roll out offers of PV's across municipality in conjunction with Ararat Greenhouse Action Group and other community groups	AGAG Business	O
		4. Inform the community of rebates available for PV's.	AGAG	N
Promoting community Solar and Wind Farms and alternative energies	Establish a central organisation to facilitate the establishment of community solar/wind farms.	5. Work with Ararat Greenhouse Action Group or private enterprise to set up an organisational structure to facilitate the establishment of community energy farms.	AGAG Business	N
		6. Assess public buildings which could support PV panels for community or private enterprise investment.	Business	N
		7. Encourage a community organisation to be involved as a sponsor for community energy farms.	Business	N
		8. Promote the Renewable Energy Park to renewable energy manufacturers.		O
		9. Consider broadening the criteria for access to the renewable energy park to include low environmental impact and sustainable enterprises.		N
Community Consultation & Education	Assist the community to understand information and concepts in relation to renewable energies, carbon trading and emerging schemes and technologies.	10. Promote and conduct workshops to inform the community on current technologies and renewable energy schemes.	AGAG Business	O
		11. Update the community on the urgency of undertaking actions to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions	AGAG	N
Council Leading By Example	Councils energy needs to be supplied increasingly with renewable, clean green energy	12. Any new council owned buildings or upgrades should include solar power and/ or incorporate energy minimisation technologies.		P
		13. Undertake audits and energy saving measures on council buildings		P
		14. Source an increasing percentage of energy from Greenpower		O
		15. Investigate the creation of local carbon sinks to offset council and community emissions	Landcare CMA	N
		16. Decouple the concept of economic growth from activities which contribute to Greenhouse Gas Emissions		N

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Note: Red text indicates priority actions.

Existing ARCC Strategies

Greenhouse Action Plan 2005: The Greenhouse Action plan sets out greenhouse gas reduction targets of 20% for Council on its 2001- 2002 base year and 10% for the Ararat Community on 1996 figures by 2010. This plan contains a number of measures to achieve targets including completing an energy audit of Council buildings and purchasing green power. In 2006 a review of the plan was conducted as part of the CCP Milestone Program. The review found that even after purchasing 25% green power for street lighting and implementing a number of the energy audit recommendations only a 1% reduction in emissions was achieved. Total Council emissions for 2005 were 3,945 compared to the revised base year total of 3,980.tonnes. Community emissions over the same period reduced by 25%, mainly due to changes in agricultural practices.

Staff reviewed Council's emissions for 2007-08 as part of the MAV program to support councils in meeting their commitments under the Federal Government's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. The results were emissions of 3,841 tonnes or a reduction of 10%. This was mainly achieved by reviewing waste management.

In 2008 Council adopted a new electricity supply contract with AGL that included 25% green power for all Council buildings, excluding the YMCA and street lighting. The contract also included offsetting the balance of electricity use. This action is projected to reduce Council emissions to 3,374.4 tonnes, which is equivalent to a 15% reduction.

Recently Council trialed biodiesel in some of its plant and investigated the installation of a gasifier for heating the YMCA indoor pool. The proposed gasifier would burn waste wood from the Ararat Transfer station to produce both electricity and heat for the YMCA.

A recommendation will be included in the 2009-10 budget to purchase B20 biodiesel for all diesel plant and vehicles as well as installing a gasifier unit at the YMCA. If both actions are endorsed by Council the projected corporate greenhouse gas emissions for 2009-10 are 2,388 tonnes or a reduction of 40% on 2001-02 levels.

Small Scale Waste to Energy Study: Ararat Rural City Council has received \$60,000 in funding under the Accord process to undertake a study into using municipal waste to generate energy. Council has committed an additional \$25,000 to the project. The project will produce recommendations and a business plan for developing a plant in the vicinity of Ararat.

1.2 IMPROVING ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- Goal**
- a. To reduce Greenhouse Gas emissions from council operations
 - b. To reduce householder and business Greenhouse Gas emissions

Setting the Scene

For the last 50 years our use of energy globally has known no limits. We now face the need for drastic reductions in our use of “dirty energy” to reduce the effects of our Greenhouse Gas emissions on future climate. Changing the high levels of consumption and wasteful habits which are entrenched in our way of living is a challenge and will rely on governments, communities and individuals setting an example. Incentives for making changes and community education initiatives will also play an important role.

Council has:

- In 2008 hosted the Ararat Energy Savers Project in partnership with the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance which encouraged householders to reduce their energy use through a series of workshops and events.
- Secured funding from Sustainability Victoria to undertake energy audits of larger businesses. Fourteen businesses were involved and many have implemented the recommended measures which save both energy use and money. In 2009/10 Council will partner with VECCI to offer businesses sustainability advice in the “Grow Me the Money” project.
- Installed energy efficient lights in council offices and continues to lobby for energy efficient street lighting.
- Continually looked at improving energy efficiencies; an example being installing power boards at desk height to encourage staff to turn computers off overnight.

Action Table 1.2 – Improving Energy Efficiency

Key Issues	Strategies	Actions	Partner	Status *
Promote household energy savings	Engage the community and other organisations to get communities involved in energy savings.	1. Promote sustainable house tours and open days in conjunction with community groups.	AGAG	N
		2. Hold an annual Sustainable Living Expo which promotes energy savings and sustainable behaviour.	AGAG Business	O
		3. Work with Ararat Greenhouse Action Group in joint energy saving projects.	AGAG	O
		4. Encourage and promote energy saving programs. Place an energy calculator on the council website.	AGAG Business	O
		5. Arrange an energy meter to be available for borrowing from council and at the library.		O

Promote sustainable house design	Encourage householders to achieve the maximum energy star rating at the design and building stage.	6. Organise information nights for new home owners, designers and builders showcasing the range of sustainable materials, design and appliance options available.	Business	N
		7. Investigate the funding and benefits of a “Green Display House” in Ararat.	Business AGAG Sponsors	N
		8. Supply information for builders, householders and developers on addressing site conditions, orientation, dwelling size, sustainable building materials, water treatments and alternative energy supply. Promote the monetary and environmental advantages of sustainability measures	Business	P
Promote sustainable retrofitting of houses	Promote retrofitting of houses for householders to make energy and dollar savings.	9. Compile a directory of trades people and companies in our area who can offer retrofitting and encourage businesses to fill gaps in services available.	AGAG	N
		10. Organise a feature on house retrofitting at the Sustainable Living Expo	Business	O
		11. Have fact sheets available and on the ARCC website on retrofitting options, services and rebates.		N
Promote sustainable business operations	Work with business associations to implement energy saving programs in local businesses.	12. Work with ARBA to promote sustainable business principles, develop checklists and self audits.	ARBA	O
		13. Offer energy or environmental audits to businesses via a checklist, on line audit or by an auditing expert.	VECCI Business	N
		14. Promote businesses with low emission operations.		N
Council increasing energy efficiency of buildings and operations	Measure and compare the energy use of various departments, actions and activities.	15. Establish a green team at council to investigate and oversee the implementation of identified energy efficiencies (see 4.2)		N

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Existing ARCC Strategies

Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) Program: As a part of the program since 2002 Council has progressed through 5 milestones which included establishing an emissions inventory, developing and adopting a Greenhouse Action Plan and implementing plan actions. This plan is outlined below.

Greenhouse Action Plan 2005: The plan contains 45 actions for both Council and the community and includes ;

- Seek out pilot project opportunities for energy saving projects to be trialed in the municipality. The YMCA gasifier is the major current project addressing this action.
- Use electronic energy management systems to record billing data. This was trialed in the ARCC Finance Department and found too cumbersome, instead finance staff now incorporate billing data in the existing finance system. To date this system is tracking billing effectively.
- Conduct energy audits for major emitting buildings. Energy audits for council buildings were completed by the ‘Energy Doctor’ in August 05.

Sustainable Public Lighting Plan 2006: Adopted by Council in August 2006. The main recommendations include:

- To achieve a 30% reduction in energy use from public lighting by 2010 from 2000 levels.
- To install energy efficient lights where costs are equivalent to or better than current costs.

Electricity usage for public lighting has been included with the figures on total Council consumption. Changing existing 80 watt mercury vapour lamps to 28 watt T5 compact fluorescent lights is the principle action proposed to achieve the energy reduction.

This however can only effectively occur at lamp batch replacement times. The last batch replacement occurred on March 2008 and at the time Powercor had not approved the T5 lights. The additional cost to Council for using T5s at that time was approximately \$200,000. The next batch replacement is due in 2012 when it is expected the T5 unit will be standard and there will be no additional cost to Council.

1.3 ADAPTING TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Goal To develop comprehensive strategies to prepare council and the community for the projected impacts of climate change

Setting the Scene

Whether our prolonged dry conditions are part of our “normal” drought cycle or a result of climate change is not relevant to the need for us all to prepare for the projected climate extremes scientists assure us we will experience. The predictions for our region are that we will experience more extreme weather conditions and increases in temperature. Some of the challenges we will face include:

- How we will deal with threats to health and property from bushfires, floods, extreme heat, fuel loads, lack of water and more frequent storms, who will co-ordinate the threats and how will we communicate the threats.
- Assisting the most vulnerable sectors of the community to adapt, often those with the least resources or capacity to respond to threats.
- Increasing our preparedness to deal with the effects of more frequent and intense bushfires in the region.
- Climate proofing our agricultural sector, which may include the adoption of alternative crops, farming of carbon in soils, using crop residues to generate energy etc.
- Adapting to the impacts of climate change and the considerable costs on councils and communities, particularly in the development and implementation of plans.
- Considering the health impacts of more extreme temperatures and weather events on community health and well being.

Council has had experience in dealing with drought and bushfires which are forerunners of the likely effects of climate change. Council and partner organisations will build on this knowledge and work with other levels of government and agencies to address the projected impacts of climate change in our municipality.

Action Table 1.3 – Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change

Key Issues	Strategies	Actions	Partner	Status *
Effects of climate change and extreme weather on community health, wellbeing, income and lifestyle	Build the capacity of communities to prepare for impacts of climate change	1. Assist communities to develop plans to “climate proof” their communities.	Community Agencies etc MAV	N
		2. Ascertain potential effects on mental and physical health and ensure the appropriate council departments assist communities to develop strategies to deal with these effects and incorporate into Council’s Municipal Emergency Management Plan.		N
	Plan developments in the light of increased climate variability	3. In the light of climate change effects re-examine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning controls, eg Bushfire overlays ▪ Local Laws ▪ Building regulations 		N
	Plan for “climate refugees” both from within and beyond our municipality	4. There may be a migration towards centres which can provide refuge from bushfire, extreme temperatures – cool houses, temporary accommodation.		N

	Plan to reduce the effects of increasing costs of energy and climate change impacts on those least able to afford the changes needed.	5. Partner with agencies to undertake plans for householders and communities which address issues such as energy reduction, retrofitting in rental homes, and public transport access.	GCHC, EGPCP	N
Development of alerts and responses to extreme weather emergencies	Plan for public welfare in weather extremes	6. Establish protocols for assisting at risk people and communities in response to weather extremes.	GCHC, EGPCP	O
		7. Review the effectiveness, location, maintenance of Strategic Fire Breaks and the Municipal Fire Prevention Plan.	CFA, Municipal Fire Prevention Committee	N
		8. Encourage and assist landholders to implement Bushfire Plans.	CFA, MFPC	P
Prepare for a low carbon economy/Peak Oil	Start discussions with the community on what is projected for communities in our region.	9. Have discussions about long term visions of what our community might look like in 2030.		N
		10. Foster community driven transitioning movements such as Transition Towns with an emphasis on the positive outcomes and opportunities arising from reducing our energy and fuel use. Become a member of the Municipal Association of Victoria's (MAV) Transition Towns working group.		N
Impacts on Agriculture and Rural Communities	Plan for the effects of climate variability on agricultural industries in our region	11. Encourage reduced input farming methods.	Landcare, CMA's, DPI Farm Grps	O
		12. Support other agencies and initiatives which help farmers and farming communities adapt to changes through sustainable farming events and activities.	Landcare, CMA's, DPI, Farm Grps, Councils	O
		13. Ensure agricultural areas are protected from inappropriate developments	Farm Grps	N
		14. Support value adding of local rural produce and maintain sustainable rural productivity to increase resilience.	Business Farm Grps	N
		15. Encourage householders to access locally grown and low food miles food and other products.	AGAG	
		16. Assist agencies and farmers to develop "win win" alternative crops such as Blue Mallee which will grow in drier climates, poor soils and provide biofuels, biomass and stock shelter.	Farm Grps DPI, CMA's	N
		17. Support communities in adapting to the effects of Climate Change eg addressing loss of populations in small towns through planning workshops.		N
		18. Better interpret Land Capability studies and incorporate practical results of land capability studies into the Planning scheme		N
	19. Investigate short and or long term incentives for protecting biodiversity.	CMA's, TfN Landcare	N	
	Ensure that changes in agriculture incorporate biodiversity values.			

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Existing ARCC Strategies

Municipal Emergency Management Plan: Responses for climate related threats, particularly heat related are currently being developed for inclusion in the Emergency Plan.

This however can only effectively occur at lamp batch replacement times. The last batch replacement occurred on March 2008 and at the time Powercor had not approved the T5 lights. The additional cost to Council for using T5s at that time was approximately \$200,000. The next batch replacement is due in 2012 when it is expected the T5 unit will be standard and there will be no additional cost to Council.

1.4 ADAPTING TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Goal To develop comprehensive strategies to prepare council and the community for the projected impacts of climate change

Setting the Scene

Whether our prolonged dry conditions are part of our “normal” drought cycle or a result of climate change is not relevant to the need for us all to prepare for the projected climate extremes scientists assure us we will experience. The predictions for our region are that we will experience more extreme weather conditions and increases in temperature. Some of the challenges we will face include:

- How we will deal with threats to health and property from bushfires, floods, extreme heat, fuel loads, lack of water and more frequent storms, who will co-ordinate the threats and how will we communicate the threats.
- Assisting the most vulnerable sectors of the community to adapt, often those with the least resources or capacity to respond to threats.
- Increasing our preparedness to deal with the effects of more frequent and intense bushfires in the region.
- Climate proofing our agricultural sector, which may include the adoption of alternative crops, farming of carbon in soils, using crop residues to generate energy etc.
- Adapting to the impacts of climate change and the considerable costs on councils and communities, particularly in the development and implementation of plans.
- Considering the health impacts of more extreme temperatures and weather events on community health and well being.

Council has had experience in dealing with drought and bushfires which are forerunners of the likely effects of climate change. Council and partner organisations will build on this knowledge and work with other levels of government and agencies to address the projected impacts of climate change in our municipality.

Action Table 1.3 – Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change

Key Issues	Strategies	Actions	Partner	Status *
Effects of climate change and extreme weather on community health, wellbeing, income and lifestyle	Build the capacity of communities to prepare for impacts of climate change	20. Assist communities to develop plans to “climate proof” their communities.	Community Agencies etc MAV	N
		21. Ascertain potential effects on mental and physical health and ensure the appropriate council departments assist communities to develop strategies to deal with these effects and incorporate into Council’s Municipal Emergency Management Plan.		N
	Plan developments in the light of increased climate variability	22. In the light of climate change effects re-examine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning controls, eg Bushfire overlays ▪ Local Laws ▪ Building regulations 		N
	Plan for “climate refugees” both from within and beyond our municipality	23. There may be a migration towards centres which can provide refuge from bushfire, extreme temperatures – cool houses, temporary accommodation.		N

	Plan to reduce the effects of increasing costs of energy and climate change impacts on those least able to afford the changes needed.	24. Partner with agencies to undertake plans for householders and communities which address issues such as energy reduction, retrofitting in rental homes, and public transport access.	GCHC, EGPCP	N
Development of alerts and responses to extreme weather emergencies	Plan for public welfare in weather extremes	25. Establish protocols for assisting at risk people and communities in response to weather extremes.	GCHC, EGPCP	O
		26. Review the effectiveness, location, maintenance of Strategic Fire Breaks and the Municipal Fire Prevention Plan.	CFA, Municipal Fire Prevention Committee	N
		27. Encourage and assist landholders to implement Bushfire Plans.	CFA, MFPC	P
Prepare for a low carbon economy/Peak Oil	Start discussions with the community on what is projected for communities in our region.	28. Have discussions about long term visions of what our community might look like in 2030.		N
		29. Foster community driven transitioning movements such as Transition Towns with an emphasis on the positive outcomes and opportunities arising from reducing our energy and fuel use. Become a member of the Municipal Association of Victoria's (MAV) Transition Towns working group.		N
Impacts on Agriculture and Rural Communities	Plan for the effects of climate variability on agricultural industries in our region	30. Encourage reduced input farming methods.	Landcare, CMA's, DPI Farm Grps	O
		31. Support other agencies and initiatives which help farmers and farming communities adapt to changes through sustainable farming events and activities.	Landcare, CMA's, DPI, Farm Grps, Councils	O
		32. Ensure agricultural areas are protected from inappropriate developments	Farm Grps	N
		33. Support value adding of local rural produce and maintain sustainable rural productivity to increase resilience.	Business Farm Grps	N
		34. Encourage householders to access locally grown and low food miles food and other products.	AGAG	
		35. Assist agencies and farmers to develop "win win" alternative crops such as Blue Mallee which will grow in drier climates, poor soils and provide biofuels, biomass and stock shelter.	Farm Grps DPI, CMA's	N
		36. Support communities in adapting to the effects of Climate Change eg addressing loss of populations in small towns through planning workshops.		N
	Ensure that changes in agriculture incorporate biodiversity values.	37. Better interpret Land Capability studies and incorporate practical results of land capability studies into the Planning scheme		N
	38. Investigate short and or long term incentives for protecting biodiversity.	CMA's, TfN Landcare	N	

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Existing ARCC Strategies

Municipal Emergency Management Plan: Responses for climate related threats, particularly heat related are currently being developed for inclusion in the Emergency Plan.

Emergency Water Supply Points: During the 2006 – 07 drought the State Government made available funding to upgrade and install a network of Emergency Water Supply Points. The aim of this network is to provide emergency water for stock and domestic use during times of drought. There are currently 10 operational sites available to the community.

Ararat Rural City Land Capability Pilot Project – Volume 1: Soil-Landform Units, Land Capability Analysis and Land Hazards – This is an academic report which requires some interpretive work to provide information in a more practical form.

Ararat Planning Scheme – Municipal Strategic Statement Review – The Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS), along with the Council Plan is Council’s highest level strategic planning document. The current Council Plan has provided for a review of the MSS. The existing MSS has been the basis for many of the good environmental outcomes in relation to bio-diversity, however input into the reviewed plan in relation to impacts and mitigation of Climate Change and Peak Oil could provide valuable strategic direction.

Community Action Plans – Community Action Plans provide local input into the future direction of Council’s small townships. The existing Community Action Plans are reviewed on a rolling basis. The current Council Plan has provided for the development of a Community Action Plan for Ararat and enables residents to direct their future.





2 ENHANCING AND RESTORING OUR NATURAL ASSETS

VISION: *The natural balance of ecosystems is stabilising and the widespread degradation of natural ecosystems is extensively restored within the municipality.*

2.1 BIODIVERSE AND HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS

Goal To improve the health and quality of remnant vegetation communities to ensure that biodiversity values are maintained.

Setting the Scene

The environmental landscape in the municipality is much altered from its pre-European settlement condition, with agriculture now being the primary land use in the municipality. On the fertile volcanic plains which cover the southern section of our municipality, there are less than 1% of the original grassy plains and woodland vegetation communities remaining. Grasslands are protected from further clearing by state and national legislation. In the north of the municipality are the Goldfields vegetation communities which experienced wide scale clearing for gold mining in the 1800's but are now represented in a number of parks and reserves such as Dunneworthy Forest, Ararat Hills Regional Park and Jallukar Forest. Taller wetter forest communities are protected in Mt Cole and the Grampians National Parks and Reserves.

There are over 50 threatened flora and fauna species in our region, many of which rely on the much depleted grassland communities. Due to the importance of Volcanic Plains Grasslands and Grassy Woodland remnants, works such as road widening requiring vegetation removal must be thoroughly assessed and any unavoidable losses accounted for by protecting similar vegetation as an offset. It will become increasingly costly and hard to source these offsets. Council's Hadland St bushland will be protected for its biodiversity values and will also be available for council to offset any unavoidable removal of the goldfields type of vegetation community.

The current threats to our natural assets are many, with weed invasions the most threatening. Converting native grass pastures and swamps to cropping paddocks is also an increasing threat. In the city of Ararat the spread of housing developments and the threat of fire across the municipality may lead to losses of native vegetation. Foxes and cats continue to multiply and take their toll on vulnerable native fauna. Inappropriate land management of river (riparian) environments is a threat to biodiversity. The extensive fragmentation of remnants inhibits their value as habitat.

There are opportunities for landholders with remnant vegetation areas to covenant their property to ensure its long term protection and potentially receive financial incentives for managing it as an offset. The opportunities for rural landowners to plant trees to gain credits for sequestering carbon may be an attractive option particularly for less fertile areas.

Council is fortunate to have active groups in the community such as Landcare, Biolinks and Field Naturalists and agencies such as the DPI and CMA as partners in managing and restoring our precious natural assets

Action Table 2.1 – Biodiverse and Healthy Ecosystems

Key Issues	Strategies	Actions	Partner	Status *	
Identify and map areas of high biodiversity and endangered species	Map and assess areas with biodiversity values	1. Expand the extent and detail of roadside vegetation mapping.	DSE CMA's Ballarat Uni	N	
		2. Undertake vegetation/habitat surveys of all council owned land to enable appropriate management.	CMA's Ball. Uni	N	
		3. Apply for funding or support partner organisations to enable the identification, protection and management of remnants with high biodiversity values on private land.	Trust for Nature CMA's DSE	N	
		4. Promote incentives for the appropriate management of remnants including grasslands and wetlands on private properties by liasing with agencies eg Trust for Nature covenants, Carbon Smart and Bush Broker.	Trust for Nature, DSE		
		5. Develop strategic offset sites for council and private landholders which maximise the biodiversity outcomes from revegetation offset requirements.	DSE, Landcare	N	
Protect and manage biodiverse areas appropriately	Implement the priority strategies identified in the Roadside Management Plan	6. Apply for funding to implement the priority actions in the Roadside Management Plan.		N	
		7. Develop partnerships with Landcare, CFA, adjoining landholders and agencies to manage roadsides.	Landcare CFA, DSE	O	
		8. Train council staff and others in management and identification of roadside vegetation, particularly grasslands.	DSE VicRoads	O	
		9. Apply penalties for inappropriate activities which destroy remnant vegetation, particularly grasslands.		O	
	Ensure developments minimise impacts on biodiversity.	10. Emphasise the 'avoid' principle in the earliest stage of developments on private land to ensure appropriate siting and planning.		O	
		11. Develop a clear template of steps landholders should undertake for sites that involve native vegetation removal as part of a planning permit.		N	
	Regenerate and enhance remnants	12. Encourage revegetation and regeneration with indigenous plants by supplying landholders with information and species lists.		O	
	Identify and enhance areas of connectivity to increase ecosystem resilience	13. Support applications for funding the identification and enhancement of strategic wildlife corridors.	DPI, CMA Landcare	N	
		14. Council to develop a list of indigenous plants using their characteristics, growing requirements etc to guide Council plantings when heritage plantings are not an issue.	Aust Plants Society - Pomonal		
		15. Assess all council owned land within Ararat City boundary and implement plans for their use and development with improving their biodiversity and passive recreation values a priority.	Communit y groups	N	
	Community educational activities	Conduct and support activities which promote and protect biodiversity	16. Develop interpretive signage of local places showcasing biodiversity values.	DSE VicRoads Landcare	N
			17. Encourage activities that identify and promote biodiversity.		O
			18. Encourage the planting of indigenous plants in home gardens through workshops, garden visits and by council setting an example.	AGAG Aust Plants Society	O

		19. Trial a free tree scheme which also distributes information on indigenous plants.	Business	N
Feral animal and weed control	Actively promote and facilitate feral animal and weed control across the municipality	20. Work with local Landcare groups and landowners to assist the delivery of pest plant and animal control both on private and council managed land.	Landcare DSE, DPI, VicRoads	O
		21. Apply stricter cat controls across the municipality and promote responsible pet ownership		O
Impact of climate change and fire on biodiversity	Anticipate and ameliorate the effects of climate change on flora and fauna	22. Work with NRM agencies to develop strategies to build resilience into our natural systems.	DSE, CMA's, Landcare	N
		23. Support the concentration of revegetation works to enhance existing nodes and link vegetation remnants at a landscape level.	DSE, CMA's, Landcare	N
	Re-assess the nature, timing and frequency of prescribed burns	24. Assess the timing and frequency of controlled burns on roadsides and the potential impacts of fire spreading, impacts on native vegetation etc. Undertake burns on council owned and managed land according to the biodiversity needs of ecosystems where possible.	CFA, DSE	N
	Re-assess the objectives of revegetation works and priorities in terms of altered climate and the urgent need to sequester carbon (by tree planting).	25. Commence discussions on whether future revegetation works aim to restore original communities and structure or establish vegetation which will survive altered climatic conditions.	Landcare CFA DPI	N

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Existing ARCC Strategies

Roadside Management Plan November 2005: The plan contains 28 actions aimed at improving the management of roadsides within the municipality. The primary objectives of the strategy include to:

- Protect and enhance biodiversity values and minimise clearance or disturbance of native vegetation, especially of threatened species.
- Protect and enhance cultural heritage, amenity values and community assets.
- Enhance community awareness of roadside issues and the plan.
- Build partnerships and enhance the skills and knowledge of key stakeholders and the community.
- Improve roadside works practices, promoting minimum disturbance techniques.

Recommendations have been included in Council's Fire Prevention Plan, Road Management Plan and standard work procedures: A recent review of the Conservation and Land Protection Act (CaLP Act) would see Council becoming liable for pest plants and animals on local roadsides, however the Municipal Association of Victoria, on behalf of Councils, is in discussion with the State Government on this issue. Council management of native vegetation as part of road construction and maintenance programs requires inspections, permits, monitoring and offsets to protect native vegetation that can add significant costs to individual projects. Native vegetation removal is managed under Council's Planning Scheme with referral to DSE above certain thresholds. The Flora & Fauna Guarantee Act (state) and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (federal) also apply in certain circumstances.

Planning Study to consider the application of Rural Activity and Rural Conservation Zones and Boundaries with adjoining Councils: Council has been funded to undertake a study relating to Rural Activity and Rural Conservation Zones and Boundaries with adjoining Councils. This may provide an expansion of the use of rural land for Conservation purposes.

Ararat Rural Zone Review: This review provides a framework for development on Rural Zoned land and the potential expansion of Rural Living Zones in proximity to Ararat, Pomonal, Moyston, Lake Bolac and Willaura. It will be incorporated into the Planning Scheme if the Amendment C16 is successful.

2.2 HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE LAND

Goal Provide support for agricultural systems that address existing land management issues and adapt to the challenges of climate change.

Setting the Scene

Farming is the most extensive land use in the municipality and forms an important part of our economy and environment. The face of agriculture is constantly changing as farmers adapt to markets, weather and climate, economic and environmental conditions. An increase in farm size together with decreased farmer numbers, increased use of contractors, an increasing use of technology and more corporate farms in the fertile cropping country in the south are significant changes. Contractors often complete the tasks previously done by farmers. Although farming methods have led to improvements in water use efficiency, reduced run-off, salinity, acidification and erosion remain important issues. Some other emerging issues include the cropping of wetland remnants, the removal of volcanic plains rock (habitat) to increase cropping areas and the potential for contamination by Genetically Modified (GM) Canola and other crops. The effects of the prolonged drought and the projected climate variability are also big issues which are being addressed by farmer groups, agencies and council.

The social impacts of shifts in agriculture on our rural towns and communities are being experienced across the municipality with young people leaving farms and others moving away from farm work. This often creates gaps in the social infrastructure of rural districts and small towns.

To address some of these challenges Council has developed close partnerships with the Ararat Landcare Group and the Regional Biolinks Network to address land management issues in the Ararat area. Council also works with local Landcare Groups and co-ordinators, farming groups and agencies and contributes to events such as the “Farming in the 21st Century Series” series. Council’s investigations into the production of Biochar from waste, producing energy from stubbles and from harvesting Blue Mallee plantations have real possibilities of financial returns for rural communities.

To facilitate the control of pest plants and animals on the 5200 km of roadsides in the municipality, council has to date mapped approximately 50% of roadsides for weed and rabbit infestations and has prioritised infestations according to their threat. Council is incrementally undertaking control works as funds become available.

Action Table 2.2 – Healthy and Productive Land

Key Issues	Strategies	Actions	Partner	Status *
Soil Health	Increase the health of our agricultural soils	1. Encourage farming methods that build up and sequester carbon in soils and programs that measure and reward this sequestering.	DPI, Landcare Farm Grps	O
		2. Promote clean, green agriculture as a marketing tool for our region and our produce.	DPI, Landcare Farm Grps	O
Availability of Water	Investigate the implications various land uses and climate change will have on water availability	3. Promote the use of green waste as mulch for horticultural or agricultural applications.	Business	
		4. Encourage the most efficient uses of recycled water.	GWMWater	
Erosion and sedimentation	Reduce the impacts of erosion and sedimentation on council owned land and as a result of council activities	5. Ensure road construction and maintenance works do not contribute to sedimentation or erosion.		O
		6. Prioritise and implement erosion works on council controlled land.	CMA	O
Sustainable Farming	Promote and encourage farm management practices and enterprises which are sustainable	7. Promote sustainable farm planning and information sessions.	DPI, CMA’s Landcare Farm Grps	O
		8. Support sustainable farm management practices such as no till cropping, biological farming, stock containment areas and integrated pest management.	DPI, Landcare Farm Grps	O

		9. Support farmers and farmer organisations to reduce any negative impacts of GM crops.	DPI, Landcare Farm Grps	N
		10. Promote incentives and rebates for farmers who implement an accredited Environmental Best Management Practice or Farm Plan.	DPI, Landcare Farm Grps	N
		11. Support the introduction of sustainable alternative agricultural products eg biochar, Blue Mallee, agroforestry in areas identified as suitable for that use. Identify a set of criteria for suitability.	DSE Landcare DPI Farm Grps	O
Pest Plants and Animals	Control feral plants and animals on Council Controlled land	12. Continue to map weed infestations and prioritise and eradicate pest plants and animals on council controlled land.		O
		13. Lobby for funding for adequate and appropriate pest plant and animal control on roadsides.		O
		14. Apply for funding to undertake pest plant and animal control on council owned and managed land.		O
		15. Support Landcare works to control pest plants and animals and develop other partnerships.	Landcare, Project Platypus	O
	Encourage the community to address weed control on private land	16. Conduct community education programs which encourage the identification and eradication of pest plants and animals on private land.	DPI, Landcare	N
Sustainable Land Use/Capability	Use planning controls to maintain healthy and productive land	17. Incorporate land condition assessment into planning documents to identify degraded land which requires particular restrictions.		N
		18. Ensure future developments respond to land capability and condition.		N
		19. Ensure council owned lands are good neighbours in terms of fire hazard and pest plants and animals.		O
		20. Ensure that any land degradation be repaired as a condition of a planning permit.		N
		21. Continue to apply the avoid, minimise and offset native vegetation removal principles with emphasis on the avoid by inviting early discussions with Council.		O
		22. Require land management plans be submitted with all rural and rural living planning applications.		N
		23. Encourage the retention of productive farming land for farming purposes and review/extend zoning or overlays.		N
		24. Review the needs and benefits of a bushfire risk overlay.	CFA MFPC	N
Management of Council Reserves		25. Assess council owned rural blocks for their values and implement actions to enhance, protect or sell.		N
		26. Develop partnerships with Landcare and other organisations to provide land management services for council and the community.	Landcare, Project Platypus	O

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2.3 HEALTHY AND PRODUCTIVE WATER SYSTEMS

Goal To improve and enhance our river systems and catchments

Setting the Scene

Approximately 70% of the waterways in our municipality are in the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment, with the remaining areas north of Ararat flowing into the Wimmera Catchment. Our waterways are highly degraded due to detrimental impacts such as grazing,

vegetation clearance, inappropriate uses and weed and pest infestations across our catchments. Salinity is also a problem in the lower areas where water tables have been raised as a result of runoff from cleared hills in the upper catchments.

Positive partnerships and community actions have seen projects such as the Cemetery Creek Walking Track coming to fruition and a number of Biolinks being developed across the region. Community action groups for the Fiery Creek and Lake Bolac catchments together with contributions from Landcare networks and Glenelg Hopkins and Wimmera CMA's are also making positive improvements to waterways by funding fencing to protect banks and water from stock and revegetating with indigenous species.

Action Table 2.3 – Healthy and Productive Water Systems

Key Issues	Strategies	Actions	Partner	Status *
Highly degraded river systems	Discourage inappropriate uses in water catchments	1. Control bike tracks presently along Cemetery Creek. and address wood removal and rubbish dumping.	DPI Landcare	P
		2. Apply the planning scheme and by laws enforcement to restrict inappropriate uses in catchments. Identify degrading activities in sub catchments not covered in the Planning Scheme and amend.	CMA's	O
		3. In partnership with other agencies, encourage linkages and the protection and revegetation of riparian vegetation, through education activities.	DPI, Landcare CMA	O
		4. Facilitate meetings with landholders adjoining creeks to implement management plans. Advocate for the fencing of riparian zones on private land and crown lands under lease or licence.	DPI, Landcare CMA	N
		5. Promote and educate people about the values of our waterways. Highlight the value of our waterways as habitat for platypus and other aquatic flora and fauna.	DPI, CMA's	N
		6. Adopt the platypus as Council's fauna icon. Have a poll for a flora icon.		N
Floodplain Management	Protect the environmental and floodwater storage functions of floodplains	7. Contribute to floodplain mapping to identify whether development activities are appropriate.	CMA	N
Depletion of groundwater reserves.	Maximise water available to recharge groundwater.	8. Assess the impact of council drainage schemes and proposed works on recharging the groundwater system.		N
Reduced in flows to dams and non reticulated household water tanks	Recognise that the pressure to fill existing and future dams from ground water reserves may be unsustainable.	9. Encourage alternatives to dams such as underground tanks and methods to reduce evaporation.	GWM Water CMA's,	N
Harvesting and use of Stormwater	Revise the Stormwater Management Plan 2003	10. Review priority actions in the councils Stormwater Management Plan.		O
	Manage the flow of water to maximise environmental flows to the Hopkins River	11. Direct storm water flows into Cemetery Creek and other waterways feeding the Hopkins River.		O
	Improve the quality of stormwater	12. Continue to install and maintain litter and silt traps to filter storm water entering our waterways.		O
		13. Revegetate drainage lines and waterways with appropriate indigenous grass, sedge, shrub or tree species.		O
		14. Review plans to develop Black Lead Common as a bio retention wetland.		N

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Existing ARCC Strategies

Stormwater Management Plan June 2003: The key outcomes of the plan are generally of an education, information and awareness nature. Capital works identified include the installation of additional litter traps and sediment traps. Major works were limited to the investigation of a wetland in the Black Lead Common area in 1999. The estimated cost of implementing the plan at the time was \$321,000 and has not been identified as a priority. To date drainage works in Lake Bolac and on the south storm water drain in Ararat have been undertaken. Available funding has limited further implementation of the plan.

Sustainable Water Use Plan April 2007: The principal objectives of this plan are to reduce Council water use by 20% by 2010 and assist the community to reduce its water use. Actions to achieve this goal include installing water efficient fittings in Council buildings and maximising the use of recycled water in parks and reserves. Since the plan was adopted GWM Water has introduced restrictions on both Council and the community, resulting in Council's water consumption being reduced by over 50%. The Infrastructure and Engineering departments are constantly seeking to reduce water use in Council buildings and operations.

2.4 CLEAN AIR

Goal To reduce pollutants which affect our air quality

Setting the Scene

Although Ararat has a high level of manufacturing employment these industries do not have a significant impact on air quality. The majority of air quality issues are a result of wood heaters and stoves in Ararat and other rural townships and is particularly evident in winter.

Smoke pollution from controlled burns, stubble burning and wildfires is a potential health threat. Vehicle emissions contribute to toxic emissions but are unlikely to cause a direct health risk unless in a confined area.

Action Table 2.4 – Clean Air

Key Issues	Strategies	Actions	Partner	Status *
Pollution caused by wood fires	Make wood burning more efficient	1. Have an information pack for residents with wood fires on how to operate their heating appliances more efficiently, using plantation or renewable wood supplies.		N
Pollution caused by controlled burns and wildfires	Reduce burning when possible	2. Factor in emissions from burns when determining fire management options.		N
		3. Encourage taking piles of leaves and branches to the Ararat Transfer station green waste facility for composting.		O
		4. Strongly discourage the burning of stubbles.		
		5. Plan for the adverse health impacts of smoke from fires		N
Pollution from vehicle exhaust emissions	Reduce vehicle emissions	6. Encourage the purchase of low emission council and community vehicles		N
		7. Reduce the use of council and community vehicles by promoting alternative methods of travel.		O
Emissions from Industries	Identify industries discharging air pollutants	8. Work with industries to reduce air pollution	EPA	N

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3. USING OUR RESOURCES WISELY

VISION: *Our community recognises the finite availability of resources, the effects of consumption on our planet and makes purchases accordingly.*

3.1 REDUCED WASTE

Goal To reduce the consumption of finite resources by making informed purchasing decisions.

Setting the Scene

We have grown accustomed to constantly upgrading our appliances, cars, clothes and satisfying our urge to shop. Cheap throw away goods and wasteful packaging represents energy and resources we cannot afford to throw away. Using our resources wisely begins with making purchasing decisions that reflect the resources that have been used to produce or manufacture the product or service we intend to purchase. Choosing long lasting appliances, products with low or no packaging and low environmental impacts are some principles guiding sustainable consumption. Re-using and recycling will eventually result in no “waste” as we know it. The refuse and reduce message is a very difficult message to sell, but one which will become increasingly important.

Council has a green purchasing policy and considers environmental sustainability when making purchasing decisions. All copy paper is made from recycled material and council endeavours to source products made from recycled materials where possible.

Rubbish and recycling collections are delivered by council with some private operators offering recycling and rubbish collection in rural areas. Transfer stations operated by council are available for rural rubbish and recycling and green waste collection for composting and mulching. The lack of a recycling collection service for smaller townships was mentioned frequently in the council Listening Post meetings held in early 2009. At its various Transfer Stations, Council provides for the receipt of a wide range of products including plastics, glass, paper and cardboard, aluminium, steel, waste oil, lead acid batteries and agricultural drums together with electronic waste, timber, concrete and bricks at Ararat only. Annual costs relating to waste collection, operations and disposal are \$896,000, with recycling collection, operations and disposal costs adding a further \$294,000. In association with the Ararat Rotary Club and Grampians Regional Waste Management Group, a system has been set up for the recycling of fluorescent tubes and bulbs.

The establishment of a waste to energy gasifier project using waste untreated timber at the Ararat YMCA to heat water and provide energy is an innovative way to utilise waste materials.

Action Table 3.1 – Reduced Waste

Key Issues	Strategies	Actions	Partner	Status *
Reducing waste	Promote and support products with low waste profiles	1. Encourage and support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved/reduced packaging - Bulk buying - Community markets - Zero waste week - Biodegradable bags - Plastic water bottle and plastic bag free towns 	GRWMG	N
		2. Promote education activities which draw attention to the issues of waste.	GRWMG	O

		3. Support actions which address the excessive packaging from fast food outlets and the associated littering.		N
		4. Educate the community about the costs of rubbish and recycling collection.	GRWMG	O
		5. Conduct waste audits at all levels of council, the community and businesses and communicate the results.	GRWMG	O
		6. Develop and promote cost effective and convenient facilities in townships for collecting recyclables.	GRWMG	N
		7. Act on a regional scale to make recycling more cost effective.	GRWMG	O
		8. Review the effectiveness of council's green purchasing policy.		N
Cradle to Grave energy product analysis and environmental impacts	Promote purchases which reflect cradle to grave considerations	9. Design and construct all new council facilities on Cradle to Grave/Waste Wise analysis eg minimise material use and use durable and recycled products.		O
		10. Have information sheets available to prospective house builders and renovators on sustainable building material choices.		N
Recycling	Increase the uptake of recycling and reduce the waste going to landfill.	11. Promote and encourage green waste composting at Ararat transfer station.		O
		12. Provide and encourage the use of facilities for recycling building and construction waste.		N
		13. Provide public place recycling bins.		O
		14. Promote reduced waste events, particularly at Council controlled venues.	GRWMG	O
		15. Support sporting groups to reduce waste at their sporting events.	GRWMG	N
		16. Support container deposit legislation and/or closed loop product legislation.		O
		17. Conduct education campaigns to reduce recycling contamination	GRWMG	O
		18. Establish a "Re -Sale Centre" at the Ararat Transfer Station to reduce landfill and encourage re-use of waste.		N
		19. Promote and encourage the purchase of recycled products by council and in the community.	GRWMG	O
		20. Investigate and facilitate the use of farm wastes (eg methane capture) from intensive farms.		N
		21. Ensure all council facilities have easy to access to recycling facilities.		N
		22. Sponsor an E waste annual collection day	GRWMG	N
Re-using Waste	Investigate new ways to re-use waste	23. Continue plans to implement combustion/pyrolysis to provide energy from the processing of waste and timber.		O
Litter	Reducing litter	24. Liase with landholders and public land managers to reduce illegal dumping of rubbish and pursue prosecution.	GRWMG	O
		25. Make transfer stations more accessible.		O
		26. Participate in regular community education campaigns on recycling, reducing waste and litter.	GRWMG	O

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Existing ARCC Strategies

Waste Management Strategy – April 2004. The Waste Management Strategy has largely been superseded by the 2009 Grampians Regional Waste Management Plan. As a member of the Grampians Regional Waste Management Group, Ararat Rural City Council works with the Northern Grampians Shire, Horsham Rural City and Yarriambiack Shire, to manage waste across the region. The group endeavours to minimise the cost of waste management for all its members as well as maximising reuse and recycling. The group obtains funding from Sustainability Victoria on behalf of member councils for various programs across the

region. It employs a Regional Education Officer to deliver its Community Engagement Program which includes liaising with council and implementing waste and litter education strategies.

3.2 REDUCING WATER CONSUMPTION

- Goal**
- a. To work with agencies and residents to reduce community water use
 - b. To implement the water savings strategies identified by council in the draft Sustainable Water Use Plan 2006

Setting the Scene

As the effects of the prolonged drought have been far reaching and the impacts starkly visible, the community's understanding of the crisis and the need for us all to conserve water has been successfully communicated. Some of the effects of the water crisis are:

- Reservoirs and dams are at a very low capacity.
- Gardens, trees, native vegetation, and agricultural production are all suffering.
- Federal and State government rebates have been made available for purchasing water reduction devices and tank installations.
- Parks and Gardens staff are adapting their planting, mulching and watering regimes to reflect the reduced access to water. Council uses recycled water for Alexandra Gardens, Alexandra Oval and the Gordon Street Oval.
- Increased support for the Willaura Recreation Reserve Stormwater Re-Use Project
- Climate Change is expected to lead to less rainfall, greater evaporation and changed rainfall patterns which will affect how we manage harvest and use water.

Action Table 3.2 – Reducing Water Consumption

Key Issues	Strategies	Actions	Partner	Status *
Reducing community water use	Partner with GWM, other agencies and community groups to reduce water use	1. Include water savings as part of the Sustainable Living Expo.	GWMW	O
		2. Promote indigenous and low water use plantings and gardens by supporting Sustainable Garden Tours.	Business, AGAG	N
		3. Publish a list of suitable waterwise plants and gardening options on the Council website.		N
		4. Promote rainwater tank rebates and investigate rebate possibilities for non reticulated households.	GWMW	N
		5. Educate local tradespeople regarding water reduction & use on building sites.		N
		6. Increase water literacy in the community.	GWMW	N
		7. Clarify EPA restrictions on the use of greywater and deliver clear messages to the community on its use. Promote safe alternative treatments for greywater.		N
		8. Encourage underground water storage tanks and other innovative water storing devices.		N
		9. Investigate harvesting of water from large privately owned buildings and all council properties. Continue to install rainwater tanks at council owned facilities, especially for works emanating from the depot which is the biggest user.		N
		10. Support GWM Water to find ways to reduce evaporation in their storages.	GWMW	N
		11. Encourage a review of the collection and commercial use of recycled water.	GWMW	N
Reduce Council Water Use	Implement the recommendations of the Sustainable Water Use Strategy	12. Incorporate sustainable water use into building and planning permit guidelines.		N
		13. Ensure all new council appliances and fittings purchased are water efficient.		O

		14. Ensure Council's Parks and Gardens continue to incorporate low water use plants, garden design and management into their planting and maintenance operations to reduce the need for reticulated water.		O
		15. Publish and promote Council's water saving measures.		N
		16. Review the capacity for storm water retention in residential 1 zones and incorporate requirements for water sensitive urban design for subdivisions and new road works.	GWM Water	N

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Existing ARCC Strategies

Sustainable Water Use Plan April 2007: This plan is detailed in section 2.3 above.

3.3 SUSTAINABLE AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORT SYSTEMS

Goal To promote and facilitate sustainable transport options for council and our communities

Setting the Scene

With emissions from transport vehicles comprising approximately 16% of Australia's Greenhouse Gas emissions, there is an imperative to reduce transport and associated fuel use. For each litre of fuel 2.5kg of greenhouse gas is emitted. In addition the prospect of dwindling oil supplies are predicted to lead to dramatic increases in fuel prices. We need to wean ourselves off our reliance on cars and trucks for our transport needs.

These scenarios lead to a number of challenges and possibilities for our municipality. Long distances between rural townships and the city of Ararat and to larger regional centres such as Ballarat and to Melbourne are an issue when combined with the small population base which doesn't warrant the expense of regular public transport options.

Some of the positive transport opportunities available and in development include:

- A system of footpaths which are provided and maintained. These however could be further developed and signed and linked with public transport bus or train stops.
- A partly completed recreational walk/bike path encircling the town.
- An excellent rail system which provides regular and quick services to Melbourne.
- A Transport Connections Program presently underway looking at satisfying the public transport needs of rural communities such as the expansion of the local bus network and trialed bus routes to Elmhurst and St Arnaud.

Action Table 3.3 – Sustainable and Efficient Transport Systems

Key Issues	Strategies	Actions	Partner	Status *
Reduce private vehicle use	Encourage walking	1. Examine street lighting adequacy on main walking routes.	Powercor	N
		2. Encourage recreational walking by providing and promoting walking paths around the city, linking them and supporting walking groups.		O
		3. Encourage the walking school bus program	Schools	O
	Encourage cycling	4. Encourage businesses to promote cycling to work and to provide a bike for town errands. Have workplace shower facilities for cyclists.	Business	N
		5. Promote a bike hire facility possibly based at the Ararat Railway Station.		N

		6. Encourage recreational cycling by extending paths around the city and linking them.		O
		7. Have the main routes from town edges incorporate designated a bike lane or path.		N
		8. Investigate the safety of pedestrians and cyclists as these modes of transport increase.		N
	Encourage use of public transport	9. Link and co-ordinate public transport services, including in townships.	Business GPRDB	O
		10. Lobby for the extension of a rail service to Stawell.	GPRDB	
		11. Provide more bus stops in Ararat.	Business GPRDB	O
		12. Provide incentives for tourists to visit using public transport eg subsidised bike hire.	Business	N
		13. Encourage private enterprise and community buses that are smaller, fuel efficient, run on alternative fuels and don't require a heavy vehicle licence.	Business GPRDB	N
		14. Encourage rail freight.		O
	Reduce car use	15. Provide free and accessible bike parking racks.		O
		16. Promote car pooling and sharing in the community.	Community groups	N
		17. Have an annual cycling event which may involve bikes and pedestrians 'taking over' Barkly St.		N
		18. Have community plans for dealing with the consequences of Peak Oil to reduce the impacts of high petrol prices.		N
		19. Alter road design in residential areas, main thoroughfares and new subdivisions to slow traffic and to promote walking and cycling.		N
Council Leading by Example	Encouraging and promoting sustainable transport solutions for Council and the community	20. Ensure that new subdivisions plan and provide for cycling, walking and public transport.		N
		21. Plan for and facilitate electric car recharging stations. Promote the use of electric vehicles with solar recharge stations.	Business	N
		22. Purchase fuel efficient fleet vehicles and investigate use of alternative fuels.		O
		23. Seek funding to support alternative transport options.		O
		24. Promote car pooling/mini bus use by council staff in daily commutes.		N
		25. Encourage council staff to use public transport for work travel when possible.		N
		26. Encourage and promote the growing and processing of alternative fuels to fuel council vehicles.		O
		27. Link walking and cycling with positive health and environmental benefits.		O
		28. Promote renewable transport options.		O
		29. Initiate a planting program to offset the emissions from Councils vehicle fleet.	Landcare, DPI, CMA	N

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Existing ARCC Strategies

- Council has developed a Bicycle Path Strategy to create a network of paths.
- Council has developed plans and is seeking support funding for a pedestrian and cyclist hub in High Street, Ararat.
- Council has advocated via the Grampians Pyrenees Development Board for a bus service to Warrnambool via Halls Gap.

3.4 COMMUNITIES WITH A SUSTAINABLE LIVING ETHIC

Goal To significantly reduce the environmental impact of each household and business from its present 2009 level.

Setting the Scene

We have all become accustomed to our more affluent society and income levels which enable us to make purchases virtually at will. Growing our own, repairing and saving for expensive items is a thing of the past however we need to reduce our levels of consumption of energy and water and of products which consume large amounts of natural resources.

Our communities have been responsive to messages about water savings but energy savings are to a large extent seen as too hard, the threat too distant and the solutions unclear. There is a need to find a balance between motivating people to take positive actions and frightening people or spreading doom and gloom messages.

Some of the positive steps towards sustainability our community has made include:

- A good uptake of PV and Solar Hot Water systems in 2009.
- Good attendance at the Ararat Sustainable Living Expo.
- The formation of the local Ararat Greenhouse Action Group.
- Over 400 people participating in the Ararat Energy Savers project in 2008.
- Business participation in the “Energise Business” program.

Some of the ways we can move forward include:

- Council and individuals in the community leading by example.
- Increased promotion of rebates for undertaking sustainability measures.
- Council increasing its capacity to deliver community education.
- Council establishing partnerships with a range of community groups to promote sustainability and the consequences of poor consumption choices.

Action Table 3.4 – Communities with a Sustainable Living Ethic

Key Issues	Strategies	Actions	Partner	Status*
Communicating the concepts of Sustainability	Work with individuals and communities to understand sustainability issues	1. Provide information on the council website and through media.		N
		2. Encourage discussion and information dissemination on sustainability issues and support the Ararat Greenhouse Action Group and other partners to host events and activities.	AGAG	O
		3. Promote stories of individuals and groups undertaking sustainability actions.	AGAG	N
Supporting changes in the community	Involve and support the community to determine future directions	4. Involve the community in positive changes using the Councils Community Action Plans as a venue for sustainability discussions.		N
		5. Learn from other community models such as the Transition Towns movement in motivating behaviour changes.		N
		6. Support Community and School Garden initiatives.		O
		7. Support community roll outs of sustainable products.	Business	O
		8. Support the business community in reducing their environmental impacts		O
		9. Encourage sustainable businesses to our region.		O

		10. Support sustainable transport options	GPRDB	O
		11. Support moves to share the use of low use, high cost items such as trailers and electric cars.	Business, Community groups	N
	Form strong local, regional and national partnerships with sustainability groups.	12. Continue membership of Wimmera Mallee Sustainability Alliance and Central Victoria Greenhouse Alliance	WMSA CVGA	O
		13. Support Ararat Greenhouse Action Group activities.	AGAG	O
		14. Continue and extend partnerships and links with Landcare and farming groups in the municipality.	Landcare, DPI, CMA	O
		15. Support sustainable initiatives by the Ararat Retail Business Association	ARBA	O
Providing services to the community to facilitate sustainable behaviour	Provide the educational resources needed to inform change	16. Have a comprehensive and readily accessible suite of information on sustainability.		N
		17. Promote the farmers market and the purchasing of local food and other products.		O
		18. Use the maternal health staff to promote sustainable choices for families, eg environmentally friendly nappy choices.		N
	Improve the extent and quality of recycling facilities	19. Improve the delivery of recycling collections for businesses and rural townships.	Business	O
Promote events and businesses with green credentials	20. Develop a green marketing campaign highlighting key events and businesses.	Business Community groups	O	

* In the status column, O is for an ongoing action, N is for a newly identified action and P stands for an unimplemented action listed in an existing Council plan. Note: Red text indicates priority actions.

Existing ARCC Strategies

Sustainable Living Expo: This successful and popular expo is an annual event funded and coordinated by Council and community group partners to demonstrate and promote how residents can live more sustainably.





4 ARARAT RURAL CITY COUNCIL LEADING BY EXAMPLE

VISION: *All areas of council operations exemplifying environmental sustainability.*

4.1 ARARAT RURAL CITY COUNCIL LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Setting the Scene

The Ararat Rural City Council has a good record of addressing environmental sustainability issues, particularly in comparison to other smaller rural councils. There is an overarching sustainability ethic across the organisation and sustainability is incorporated into many plans and policies. These are listed elsewhere in this strategy.

There is however room for improvements in the day to day activities and operations across all council departments. Re-activating the Green Team to help motivate, research and implement sustainable actions, particularly on the small scale, would help co-ordinate and motivate changes. The group may look at a number of initiatives such as ways to reduce vehicle use which emit 2.5kg Greenhouse Gases for every kilometre travelled or address energy consumed by the over 100 Council computers. As a part of this strategy staff in the various departments will be asked to identify ways they could make their area of operation more sustainable. A system of staff rewards and promotions will help keep up the momentum of changes across the organisation.

Action Table 4.1 – Ararat Rural City Leading by Example

Key Issues	Strategies	Actions	Partner	Status *
Having the appropriate information for managers and staff to motivate and inform changes.	Have an officer with a dedicated (part- time) role for managing or overseeing sustainability issues	1. Keep up to date and learn from other councils and communities on sustainability issues.	Other councils	O
		2. Establish a council Green Team to drive changes.		N
		3. Establish a small annual state of the environment report for council operations and departments which lists amount of electricity, fuel used etc.		N
Budgeting for implementing sustainable projects and actions	Raise the profile of sustainability	4. Communicate the success of council projects which address sustainability.		O
	Apply for funding for implementing sustainable projects and actions	5. Ensure sustainability is a non negotiable component of council projects.		O
Council improving the sustainability of operations across all departments	Develop a template for departments to list, implement and monitor sustainability actions.	6. Create a list of sustainable actions and projects ready to respond to funding opportunities.		N
		7. Use current information and staff knowledge and enthusiasm to list ways the various areas of council operations can improve their sustainability and incrementally add to and implement them.		N

* In the status column, O is for an ongoing action, N is for a newly identified action and P stands for an unimplemented action listed in an existing Council plan. Note: Red text indicates priority actions.

Existing ARCC Strategies

Council's Vehicle Purchase Policy places a reasonable degree of emphasis on environmental issues in the purchase of vehicles.

viii) Leading the way to a Sustainable Future

The Ararat Rural City Council is now charged with implementing the 14 identified priority actions in this strategy and addressing other actions from the strategy as opportunities arise. The Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group will provide community consultation and input and ensure actions progress and will review strategy effectiveness and relevance annually. Because the task of addressing climate change is so daunting, it is tempting to bury our collective heads in the sand. This is not an option and what we do as individuals, communities, councils, as a nation and across the world over the next 10 years will determine what our world will look like in 50 years time and the kind of world our children will inherit.

With the impacts of Climate Change being more advanced than previously thought, there is no time for this strategy to sit on the shelf, it must be implemented and council is committed to ensuring this takes place.

The implementation of this strategy is a positive and constructive way we can prepare our municipality to create the kind of future we would want for our children. Council, the community and each and every person in our municipality has a role to play in ensuring that future.

“What a great time to be alive, because this generation gets to completely change the world” Paul Hawken



APPENDIX 1

References

Australian Government Department of Climate Change (2009) *Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme Regulations*

Ararat Rural City Council (2008) *Local Environmental Sustainability Action Statement*.

Ararat Rural City Council (2002) *Council Plan 2002-2008*

Ararat Rural City Council (2009) *Council Plan 2002-2013*

Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority (2003) *2003-2007 Regional Catchment Strategy*

Victorian Government Department of Environment and Sustainability (2006) *Environment Sustainability Action Statement*

Victorian Government Department of Environment and Sustainability (2005) *Victorian Local Sustainability Accord*

Victorian Government Department of Primary Industries (2008) *Future Farming Strategy*

Victorian Government (2004) *Our Water Our Future*

Victorian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet (2009) *Victorian Climate Change Green Paper*

Victorian Government Department of Environment and Sustainability (2009) *Securing our Natural Future, a white paper for land and biodiversity at a time of climate change*

Wimmera Catchment Management Authority (2003) *2003-2008 Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy*.

Internal Ararat Rural City Council Plans and Strategies as detailed in this Strategy can be found at Ararat Rural City Council Municipal Offices or on the council website www.ararat.vic.gov.au.

APPENDIX 2

Membership of the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group

Member	Role
Bill Jones	ESAG Member
Sandra Hawkins	ESAG Member
Sven O Flynn	ESAG Member
Adam Merrick	ESAG Member
Rod Marshall	ESAG Member
Debbie Shea	ESAG Member
Russell Pearse	ESAG Member
Ken Readwin	ESAG Member
Una Allender	ESAG Member of Working Group
Christine Forster	ESAG Member of Working Group
Joan Pitaro	ESAG Member of Working Group
Don Rowe	ESAG Member of Working Group
Cr Andrea Marian	ARCC Councillor
Ian Mitchell	ARCC Manager Major Projects, Sustainability & Arts
Jane Marriott	ARCC Natural Resource/Sustainability Officer
Daryl Scherger	ARCC Natural Resource Officer

APPENDIX 3

List of acronyms used

Acronym	Organisation
APS	Australian Plants Society - Pomonal
ARCC	Ararat Rural City Council
CAP	Community Action Plan
CCP	Cities for Climate Protection
CVGA	Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance
DPI	Department of Primary Industries
DSE	Department of Sustainability and Environment
ESAG	Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group
ESS	Environmental Sustainability Strategy
GHCMA	Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority
GPRDB	Grampians Pyrenees Regional Development Board
GRWMG	Grampians Regional Waste Management Group
GWM Water	Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environment Initiatives
LESPP	Local Environmental Sustainability Priority Statement
MAV	Municipal Association of Victoria
MFPC	Municipal Fire Prevention Committee
TFN	Trust for Nature
VECCI	Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce & Industry
WCMA	Wimmera Catchment Management Authority
WMSA	Wimmera Mallee Sustainability Alliance

APPENDIX 4

List of environmental issues raised during council listening posts

Issues/comment raised in Council Listening Posts	Addressed in strategy	* 2 or more entries for issue
Control of pest animals	√	
Control of pest plants	√	
Need for community bus	√	
Need for community garden	√	
Unite Landcare	√	
Dog controls needed	√	
Climate change and fire refuges	√	
Litter/rubbish in towns	√	
Unsuitable trees in urban blocks	√	
Our environment is important for tourism	√	
Not enough garbage/recycling services	√	*
Need more harvesting of water	√	
Need more responsible pet ownership	√	*
Complaint about enforcement of native Veg Removal	√	
Trees on roadsides should be removed	√	*
Assets are Hopkins R, Black Lead Common, potential for biofilter	√	
There are opportunities for more nature based tourism	√	
Walking/bike tracks are a positive, more needed	√	*
Fast train is excellent	√	
Access in emergencies, overhanging trees	√	*
Respect and value of our environment	√	*
Parking at the Ararat Station an issue	√	
Farmers Markets good	√	
Re-green or revegetation plan needed	√	
Erosion on bald hills an issue	√	
Poor entrances to Ararat	√	*
Hard waste collection needed	√	
Greenhouse Gas emissions a concern	√	
Effect of climate change on agriculture	√	
More than 5 star houses needed	√	
Loans for sustainable actions available	√	
Viability of farming communities	√	
Cat free Pomonal needed	√	*
Look after our bushland	√	
Biofuels	√	
Waste to energy and agricultural waste	√	
Bluegums are bad neighbours	√	
Sustainable power, fuel, water in small communities	√	

APPENDIX 5

Council Action Template for Improving Sustainability

COUNCIL IMPROVING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OPERATIONS ACROSS ALL DEPARTMENTS

Area of Council Operation	Actions Proposed (examples)	Priority H,M,L	Time frame for completion	Measure of success	Staff responsible
EVENTS	<p>1. Promote waste minimisation for all events</p> <p>Develop a pro forma for event organisers that describes waste minimisation activities appropriate for an event and how to go about planning and executing the activities.</p>				
	<p>2. Ensure that at a minimum clearly labelled recycling bins are available at all events</p> <p>Have a pool of recycling bins available at depot and rural townships for event use. Develop a system for their collection</p>				
	<p>3.</p>				
TOURISM					
HAAC					
MATERNAL HEALTH					
PLANNING					
RECREATION					
PAC					
BUILDING DEPT.					
DEPOT WORKS					
PARKS AND GARDENS					
ENGINEERING					
CORPORATE SERVICES					
IT					
VEHICLES					
OFFICE					
CLEANING					
CATERING					



Enhancing and Restoring our Natural Assets



Responding to the Challenge of Climate Change



Ararat Rural City Council Leading by Example



Using our Resources Wisely

