

# ARARAT RURAL CITY COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2024 - 2034

## Climate Change

Proactively addressing the current and potential effects of climate change is a central tenet of Council's strategy. We will work to mitigate and ultimately reduce our municipality's environmental impact, and ensure the community is prepared for the emergencies a changing climate may bring. We will cultivate adaptation and resilience across Council operations, infrastructure development, and by working collaboratively with businesses and residents.

## Natural Landscapes and Biodiversity

Council is committed to environmental stewardship exceeding legislative requirements. We will actively monitor and manage our local environment, prioritising the health of native species, waterways, and our unique landscapes. We will encourage and maintain a thriving ecosystem through sustainable and environmentally conscious land-use practices.

## Sustainable Living

A sustainable future for everyone in our community is of core priority for Council. We will promote energy efficiency, renewable resources, water conservation and responsible waste management. Through minimising waste generation and maximizing reuse, we will close the economy loop and bring management of our resource needs back to a local level.

## Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Council acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land where we live, and pays its respects to their Elders, past and present. We recognise the Eastern Maar, Wadawurrung, Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk peoples' continuing, deep, spiritual connection to the land and their rights to their Country.



Ararat Rural City

# ARARAT RURAL CITY COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2024 - 2034

## 1. Climate Change

Climate change poses many risks to our community, including damage to infrastructure, disruption to operational services and processes, reduced or prevented access to vital products and services, and threatening the health and safety of people, domestic animals and wildlife. Vulnerable people are the most impacted by these risks, including people with a disability, who represented 24% of the municipality's population in 2018, and elderly people (75+), whose percentage is expected to increase from 10% to 16% of the municipality by 2036.

*We will inform the community of the local risks of climate change, and we will grow resilience by implementing and supporting adaptation and mitigation strategies.*

### **Objectives:**

- 1.1 We will contribute to climate change mitigation.
- 1.2 We are prepared for the impacts of climate change.
- 1.3 Council infrastructure, businesses and the community are adaptive and resilient to a changing climate.



## 2. Natural Landscapes and Biodiversity

Ararat municipality boasts several unique and diverse natural landscapes that are home to a number of iconic and rare Australian species. Important species include endangered plants and animals such as the Yarra gum, brolga, golden sun-moth and fat-tailed dunnart. Important landscapes include rare and endangered ecological vegetation classes (EVCs) including sandy forest, freshwater lake wetlands, and the western basalt plains grasslands. The municipality also hosts wetlands classed as significant due to use for breeding and habitat by threatened species, high biodiversity value, or their role as a link between other crucial habitat patches. These sites include Lake Buninjon, the Nerrin Nerrin wetland system, and the Woorndoo-Hopkins wetlands.

*We will value, protect, and enhance our natural environment through effective monitoring, community engagement, and the implementation and incentivisation of protection measures.*

### Objectives:

- 2.1. The environment is well monitored and understood, and conditions are maintained above legislatively required standards.
- 2.2. Threats to our environment are identified and controlled.
- 2.3. Native species, populations, and communities are enhanced.

## 3. Sustainable Living

The consumption of resources must be managed to ensure that the health of the environment is protected, and that those resources are safeguarded for future generations. Ineffective use of products, water and electricity can also prevent economic growth, and is costly for Council, individuals, and businesses. The Federal and Victorian governments are encouraging transition to a 'circular economy' framework of waste management and resource use, which is underpinned by the key principles of avoiding waste; designing to last, repair, recycle and reuse; using products to create more value; recycling more resources; and reducing harm from waste. Council aims to continue progressing towards effective circular economy and sustainable resource use with four key objectives.

*We will reduce consumption of our limited resources, and we will develop infrastructure and processes to increase the sustainable and circular use of resources.*

### Objectives:

- 3.1. The municipality is energy efficient, supported largely by renewable sources.
- 3.2. Water is used and reused effectively.
- 3.3. Waste generation is avoided. Reusable, recyclable and compostable products are diverted from landfill.
- 3.4. Our waste and energy needs are managed locally.



# MEASURES OF SUCCESS

## CLIMATE CHANGE

- Municipality at net zero emissions.
- 50-54% reduction in emissions produced (from 2005 level).
- Canopy cover of at least 30% within all townships.
- 50% of municipality's electricity needs collected from renewable sources.
- Increase in native vegetation cover on public and private land, with consideration for bushfire risk.
- Majority of primary production properties maintain 70% of groundcover in paddocks all year, and native vegetation permitted to be removed is offset locally.

## NATURAL LANDSCAPE AND BIODIVERSITY

- Plant diversity at <5% single species, <10% single genera, <20% single family of Recommended Species list) for new plantations and revegetation efforts.
- Increased vegetation, biodiversity and connectivity between habitat patches; more protection measures along riparian areas, waterways, and wetlands.
- Maintenance or increase in significant roadside vegetation, extent and condition of protected grassland EVCs, and populations of threatened species.
- All priority pest animal and weed populations contained or eradicated.
- Landfill sites and quality of stormwater to meet EPA requirements.
- Decrease in number and severity of environmental hazard incidents.
- All new homes to have minimum 7-star building standard under National Construction Code.
- 50% of organic waste from agriculture diverted to biofuel plant.
- 72% of waste diverted from landfill by 2025 and 80% by 2030 (from 2020).
- Waste generation per capita cut to 15%.
- 20% reduction in volume of organic material to landfill by 2025, and halved by 2030 (from 2020).
- All glass and organic material collected, aggregated, sorted and processed within the region/municipality.
- Contaminated recyclable or compostable waste sent to landfill is halved, and litter collected reduced by 40% (from 2020).
- Amount of wastewater recycled for reuse is doubled, with no net increase in potable water consumption (from 2020).
- 10% of all open space irrigation requirements met with non-potable water sources.
- Decrease in potable water consumption in all Council buildings.

## SUSTAINABLE LIVING

