Mount Alexander Shire

DRAFT Biodiversity Strategy Year 1 - Implementation Plan



Working together for a healthy, connected shire

1 Introduction

This Year 1 Implementation Plan turns the Biodiversity Strategy into a practical program of work for the first year of implementation. It identifies the priority actions needed to start delivering the Strategy and establish the foundations for long-term success. This includes improving internal processes, strengthening partnerships and developing the information and systems needed to support decision-making.

Council cannot deliver the whole Strategy with existing resources alone, additional investment in some positions would significantly increase the scale, pace and impact of implementation. Additional capacity would support more on-ground works across the municipality, strengthen work with private landholders and partners, improve monitoring and reporting, and accelerate the integration of biodiversity into Council planning, projects and day-to-day operations.

2 Implementation Plan

Goal		Strategy action areas	Year 1 actions	Lead team/s
Goal 1: Protect and enhance biodiversity on Council managed land				
Increased native vegetation extent and condition in priority investment locations on Council-managed land	1	Council teams deliver on ground works in priority investment locations, such as: revegetation according to Ecological Vegetation Class, weed management, actions guided by the conservation management plans for relevant reserves and roadsides and/or, the needs of specific sites	Develop and coordinate contractors to deliver an annual Natural Environments works program using the prioritisation framework for Council managed land	Natural Environment Officer
	2	Where appropriate, Council teams deliver on-ground works that improve water retention in the landscape and increase aquatic and riparian ecosystem function	Identify priority sites for intervention and complete a project proposal to advocate for funding to deliver in a future year	Natural Environment Officer
	3	Council teams undertake strategic planning for large old tree and habitat tree succession on Council managed land	Update tree register as any on-ground maintenance works are completed	Tree Management Officer
	4	Support Traditional Owners to practice cultural land management, including djandak wi (cultural fire), reintroduction of culturally important species and threatened species, and other biodiversity focussed actions as per Dhelkunja Dja, Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Country Plan, Galk-Galk Dhelkunya Strategy 2022-2034 and Taungurung Buk Dadbagi, Taungurung Country Plan	Complete a project nomination form to identify potential projects and areas for djandak wi, in partnership with DJANDAK	Natural Environment Team Emergency Management Team
	5	Support community volunteering on Council managed land (e.g., environmental volunteering days, joint projects)	*Year 2 or beyond*	
	6	Where practical, align on-ground works with existing community and private stewardship activities and partner investment to build on established volunteer effort	Attend the Connecting Country Landcare Steering Group meeting once per year to identify opportunities for alignment	Natural Environment Team
Habitat for threatened species is protected and improved on Council managed land in priority investment locations	7	Deliver targeted habitat improvement works for priority threatened species informed by conservation management plans for relevant reserves and roadsides and / or the needs of the specific site	*Include as part of action 1*	Natural Environment Team
Goal 2: Embed biodiversity into Council operations and decision making				

Goal		Strategy action areas	Year 1 actions	Lead team/s
Staff across the natural environment, parks and open space, planning, engineering and works/operations teams actively integrate biodiversity protection and enhancement into their day-to-day work	8	Provide training and guidance for staff and civil/earthmoving contractors on local biodiversity values within the Mount Alexander Shire and how to protect and enhance them through project design, works and maintenance operations	Undertake a site induction/toolbox meeting at the start of contractor engagement to complete a walk over and identify risks to environmental values, and complete a compliance assessment	Natural Environment Team
			Fund professional development for Managers and Coordinators across all leading teams listed in this Strategy to learn about the region's biodiversity, its importance, and their role in protecting it	Engineering Team, Emergency Management Team, Strategic Planning Team, Works/Operations Team People and Culture Statutory Planning
	9	Establish an internal Council working group for biodiversity to support the delivery of this Strategy	Establish a Terms of Reference for the internal Biodiversity Working Group and include representatives who have lead roles in the delivery of this Strategy	Natural Environment Team
Biodiversity is consistently embedded in the design, approval and delivery of Council projects, capital works and maintenance activities	10	Include biodiversity screening in project scoping and apply a proportionate level of biodiversity assessment and controls to projects with the potential to affect biodiversity values	Investigate options for incorporating biodiversiry considerations into project scopes	Corporate reporting team Natural Environment Team
	11	Improve collection, management and sharing of ecological data to support evidence-based decision-making	Commence a review of existing council managed land data to ensure dataset is correct and up to date	Information Technology Team (GIS) with support from Natural Environment Team
			Investigate a suitable comprehensive ecological monitoring and evaluation framework for council managed land	Natural Evironment Team
			Promote NatureKit via internal newsletters or information channels so people can learn about locally significant species and populations to support local conservation planning, and to ensure effective compliance with legislation	Natural Environment Officer Community Engagement Team
			Continue to undertake rapid habitat assessments on Council managed land (e.g. roadsides) where works are due to be completed	Natural Environment Team
			Undertake detailed flora monitoring at one major project site and ensure it is captured in Council's GIS database and submitted to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas to inform state-wide modelling (if resources allow, include fauna). Use the Arthur Rylah Institute's Plant Monitoring Manual to guide the methodology selection	Natural Environment Team

Goal		Strategy action areas	Year 1 actions	Lead team/s
Planning tools are used to strengthen protection of native vegetation and biodiversity values across the shire	12	Work collaboratively across Council's natural environment and planning teams to identify and, where supported by evidence, progress the use of planning scheme tools, including appropriate planning zones and vegetation and environmental overlays, to strengthen the protection of native vegetation and biodiversity values on public and private land	Hold a scoping meeting between Natural Environment Team and Strategic Planning Team to explore opportunities to protect existing remnant vegetation on private land using planning scheme tools, including appropriate planning zones and environmental overlays, and identify the evidence required to support a future planning scheme amendment	Natural Environment Team and Strategic Planning Team
Loss of native vegetation from avoidable or unauthorized clearing is reduced through consistent education, monitoring and compliance	13	Review Council's policies (e.g. contractor management), local laws, community education and enforcement processes to ensure they support effective protection of native vegetation and appropriately respond to unauthorised vegetation clearing	Hold a meeting with Council's Local Laws team and procurement team to review approach to compliance monitoring and the feasibility of including environmental green card qualifications for contractors undertaking an on ground environmental works	Natural Environment Team
	14	Monitor and enforce civil development/earthmoving contractor compliance with planning conditions and contract specifications for biodiversity protection	Undertake site toolbox meetings upon commencement of work Check whether works have been completed as agreed	Natural Environment Team
Goal 3: Support biodiversity stewardship				
Improved access to biodiversity information and stewardship opportunities	15	Build and publicly share biodiversity knowledge including: ▪ Biodiversity values and threats ▪ Reporting on the delivery of this Strategy ▪ Gardens for wildlife ▪ Establish demonstration sites on Council managed land that showcase biodiversity values and best practice land management to support community learning and stewardship ▪ Explore opportunities for biodiversity and cultural interpretative signage in bushland reserves	*Year 2 or beyond*	
	16	Promote the use of citizen science and community monitoring programs to contribute to local knowledge and inform future decision-making	Set up a page on Council's website promoting citizen science tools such as iNaturalist, FeralScan, WeedScan, BirdLife Australia, WaterWatch, eDNA. Include information on the progression of projects (Eltham Copper Butterfly, Platy Patch, and Forest Creek Revitalisation). Promote on social media.	Community Engagement Team and Natural Environment Team

Goal		Strategy action areas	Year 1 actions	Lead team/s
Private land conservation is supported through Council advocacy, partnerships and incentives	17	Maintain landholder incentives programs for biodiversity protection and enhancement	Inform the Rating and Revenue Strategy review with regards to maintaining the Trust for Nature rate rebate scheme.	Rating and Revenue Team
	18	Continue as a partner in landholder capacity building programs such as *Healthy Landscapes Program*	Continue participation in Healthy Landscapes Program	Climate Change Coordinator
	19	Provide landholder information packages to new landholders outlining best practice biodiversity management on urban, peri-urban and rural lands	Review the previous landholder information package and explore whether it is feasible to re-instate the hardcopy package that was previously mailed out to new landholders. Include information on the Council website	Community Engagement Team and Natural Environment Team
Biodiversity investment is better coordinated across land tenures to maximise landscape-scale outcomes	20	Coordinate on-ground works with Landcare groups, other agencies and Traditional Owners (i.e. prioritise areas where everyone is working) to align investment	Convene an annual planning workshop with agencies to align investment priorities	Natural Environment Team
			Identify opportunities to pursue joint funding or establish collaborative projects	Natural Environment Team
	21	Continue to provide access to community funding for environmental projects	Establish partnership funding round for 2027	Natural Environment Team
	22	Participate in agency or community led pest animal management programs (this requires a cross-tenure approach)	*Year 2 or beyond*	