
9 DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

9.1 MITCHELL ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT

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Attachments: Nil

SUMMARY

This report presents a summary of activities undertaken by the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee (MEAC) for the 2018-2019 financial year and is presented to Council in accordance with the adopted Terms of Reference for the Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council:

1. Receive and note the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee 2018-2019 Annual Report.
2. The Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee is thanked for their contribution during the 2018-2019 year.

BACKGROUND

In July 2011 Mitchell Shire Council established the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee (MEAC).

The purpose of the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee is to capitalise “...on the knowledge, experience and skill available in the community to provide Mitchell Shire Council with strategic advice in respect to environmental sustainability and management issues and initiatives within the municipality”.

The current membership of MEAC was appointed by Council at the June 2018 Council meeting.

This report details the activities undertaken by the Committee during 2018-2019 and was endorsed by the Committee at their ordinary meeting on 25/07/19 meeting.

ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

During 2018-2019 the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee has held five (5) ordinary meetings, one (1) working group meeting and one group (1) inspection.

On average meetings were attended by seven (7) people. This represents approximately 115 hours of volunteer time not including reading, correspondence and travel.

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The information below presents a summary of the Committees activities from July 2018 to June 2019 under broad subject headings:

Community Environmental Events

The Committee received and noted reports on various community environmental events throughout the shire held and recommended that:

- *Council continues to support environmental educational events in the shire such as the Backyard Bird Count and local wildflower walks and*
- *MEAC supports Mitchell Shire Council's ongoing involvement in National Tree Day.*

The Committee also provided comment to officers on the Mitchell shire website review.

Strategic Planning

A presentation from Council's strategic planner on the Rural Land and Activities Review was well received. Discussion included; land banking, economic outputs, high quality agricultural land, future and innovative rural land uses, core environmental assets, climate change, water availability, Mitchell Shire's freight network and the consultation process for this project.

The Committee requested that they are considered a stakeholder for early consultation for the Rural Land and Activities Review, prior to the public consultation.

Following presentations on specific projects, Committee also requested that they are considered as stakeholders for the consultation for the following projects;

- Kilmore Creek Landscape Masterplan
- Upper Merri Integrated Water Management Plan; and
- Greening Kilmore- Integrated Water Management Plan.

The Committee also provided environmental advice on the Broadford Structure Plan Emerging Issues Paper and received an update on the Inland Rail – ARTC Project

Sustainability

Received updates and provided feedback on the following sustainability projects:

- Power Purchasing agreements for Council including a possible initiative to purchase renewable energy as part of Councils electricity procurement.
- Collaborative projects being undertaken with the Goulburn Broken Greenhouse Alliance including
 - Joint Procurement of Electric Vehicles Proof of Concept (business case development),
 - Sustainable Design Assessment in the Planning Process (SDAPP) for Subdivisions –
 - The Main Road Streetlighting Efficiency Upgrade Project

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Urban Forestry

- A working group meeting was held to discuss the development of an Urban Forestry Strategy for the Shire. At this meeting, the Committee discussed the definition of urban forestry, the benefits of trees in urban landscapes and tools available to local government for the protection of trees and planning for new trees in urban areas of the Shire. Urban Forestry continued to be a subject of interest for the Committee.
- Members were pleased to be advised that Council has become a co-signatory to *Living Melbourne: our metropolitan urban forest strategy*. Urban Forestry is a topic that the Committee has discussed for the past 12 months.

Pest Plants and Animals

The Committee received and noted a report on the outcomes of the Mitchell Shire Collaborative Weeds Workshop and provided advice in regard to the importance of replacing weed species with indigenous species for biodiversity and long term weed control and applying an administrative model similar to the Merri Creek Management Committee.

The next step in this process is to convene the first meeting of the Mitchell Shire Pest Plant and Animals Taskforce and develop an annual action plan.

Open Space

- The committee formed a working group, in accordance with the Terms of Reference, for the Ryan's Creek project and provided comprehensive advice on the Proposed Elements Survey.

The Committee made a recommendation to our strategic planning team that Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee are considered as a stakeholder for early consultation for the development of the Kilmore Creek Precinct Landscape Masterplan, this led to an onsite meeting with MEAC members, officers and the consultants for the project

The Southern Regional Park /Upper Merri Wallan Regional Park became a regular feature of MEAC meetings with updates received at most meetings in the 2018-2019 year. This is a project the Committee continues to monitor and support and identified that the project will have multiple benefits – recreational, environmental, water management.

Members were also kept updated of works within bushland reserves such as the pine removal project with the CFA in Monument Hill Reserve, Kilmore.

General business discussions;

In general business a wide variety of topics were raised and discussed including the following;

- Motorbike tracks

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- Woolworths proposal, Northern Highway Kilmore
- Loss of Peppercorn trees, Supermarket carpark Seymour
- Blackberries on private land
- Gardens for Wildlife program run through the Australian Plants Society, Mitchell.
- Roadside weed control
- Waste Management
- Opportunities for revegetation in Hidden Valley and initiated officer discussion with Melbourne Water.
- Seymour Alternative Farming Expo
- Sunday and Dry Creek Flood Study

Future actions

The Committee re looking forward to providing environmental advice to Council on the following topics during 2019/2020: Beveridge North West PSP, Broadford Structure Plan, Integrated Water Management projects, Kilmore Creek Precinct Landscape Master Plan, Ryan's Creek Revitalisation Plan, Southern Regional Park Proposal, Waste Management, urban forestry/ecology and the development of an Environment Policy.

CONSULTATION

The Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee is an example of Level 4 “*Collaborate*” level of community engagement in the Mitchell Shire Council *Community Engagement Framework* 2018. The goal of Level 4 consultation is “*Working together to develop an understanding of all issues and interests to work out alternatives and identify preferred solutions for joint decision making*”.

The Committee continues to promote itself as a consultation mechanism for Council decision making.

FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There is an annual budget allocation provided to support and to co-ordinate the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee meetings.

Administration tasks associated with the operation of the Committee are undertaken by Council's Environment Team and currently amount to approximately 80 hours of officer time per year.

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS

This report is presented in accordance with the adopted Terms of Reference for the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee which states that “*The Committee will be given the opportunity to present to Council at least once per annum*”, in addition to this the *Council Plan 2017-2021* includes the action “*The Environment Advisory Committee regularly reports to Council*”.

The operation of the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee assists Council in delivering the following actions of the *Council Plan 2017-2021*:

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- *“Increase the use of the Environment Advisory Committee as a mechanism for community engagement on relevant environment matters;*
- *The Environment Advisory Committee is engaged on environmental matters impacting the community;*
- *Support Council’s Advisory Committee members; and*
- *Support the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee”.*

The Advisory Committees have been established by Council in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1989*. They have been established to provide specific external expertise and input into strategy development and implementation and comprise one or more Councillors, Council Officers, and several community representatives.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL)

The purpose of the Mitchell Shire Environment Advisory Committee is to provide advice and make formal recommendations to Council on matters concerning the management of the natural environment.

This report illustrates that the Committee has successfully fulfilled its role and purpose for the 2018-2019 year.

CHARTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The rights protected in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* were considered in preparing this report and it’s determined that the subject matter does not raise any human rights issues.

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in this matter.

CONCLUSION

During 2018-2019 financial year, the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee has operated in accordance with the adopted Terms of Reference, holding five (5) ordinary meetings, one (1) onsite inspection and one (1) working group meeting.

The Committee continue to work at a strategic level, but also bring issues of local significance to the table.

This year the Committee has focused on a variety of strategic planning matters, which is a reflection of the changing land use changes in the Shire. The Committee look forward to working on strategic planning matters further, but also on issues and opportunities for biodiversity protection, urban forestry, waste management and recycling, sustainability, water quality and the development of an Environment Policy.