

## 9.2 MITCHELL ENVIRONMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE 2017/2018 ANNUAL REPORT

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**Attachments:** Nil

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### SUMMARY

This report presents a summary of activities undertaken by the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee (MEAC) for the 2017/2018 financial year and is presented to Council in accordance with the adopted Terms of Reference for the Committee.

### RECOMMENDATION

**THAT** Council: Receive and note the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee 2017/2018 Annual Report.

### 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 2017/2018 and was endorsed by the Committee at their ordinary meeting on 1 August 2018 meeting.

### ISSUES AND DISCUSSION

During 2017/2018 the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee met nine (9) times and considered a wide range of topics including waste management, weed control, key advocacy projects, fauna and flora, flood mitigation, urban forestry, strategic planning matters and environmental education. On average meetings were attended by nine (9) people.

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The information below presents a summary of the Committees activities from July 2017 to June 2018, under broad subject headings:

#### State and Regional Legislation and Policies

- The Committee participated in a one-day workshop with the Murrindindi Environment Advisory Committee and natural resource agency and local government staff for the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority's review of the local plan for the Commuting Hills Region. This document will help prioritise environmental projects for the region moving forward.

#### Council Plans, Strategies and Policies

The Committee has added value to many Council plans, strategies and policies, as detailed below:

Provided written advice to Council on:

- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan.
  - This advice focused on health indicators, connecting communities by footpaths, bike paths and public transport, the value of open space, connection to nature and the need for quantitative analysis.
- Draft Seymour Structure Plan
  - This advice highlighted the need for development to be sympathetic to the environmental values of Seymour, the need to improve water quality; actions for sustainability, identification of bio-links and the need to further recognise the environmental assets in Seymour (waterways, parks etc.)
- Provided feedback on the Whiteheads Creek Flood Study, including suggestions to assist with the community engagement phase of the project
- Provided significant input into and endorsed the 2017/2018 Environment Strategies Action Plan
- Endorsed the Draft Mitchell Shire Council Roadside Weeds and Pests Program, with the understanding that the roadside weeds program includes species other than those targeted as part of the funding agreement and sites are planned and prioritised through treatment method.
- Made initial comments community survey for the review of the of the Mitchell Shire Domestic Animals Management Plan and registered interest in being involved in the review of the Plan.
- Received and noted a presentation on the Draft Mitchell Shire Advocacy Plan, providing feedback and confirming that MEAC would like to be involved in the further development of key advocacy projects, including the development of liveability indicators.
  - The Committee reflected on that many of the projects that MEAC have been discussed in meetings and in written advice to Council, have been captured in Council's key advocacy projects including;
    - Southern regional open space;
    - Public transport and active transport;
    - Linking people to nature through the provision of pathways etc.;
    - Inclusion of the Kilmore Creek in the Kilmore revitalisation plans;
    - Inclusion of the Goulburn River and bushland reserves as part of the Seymour Revitalisation Plan; and

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- The Wallan-Heathcote Rail trail

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### Council Programs and Projects

In addition to MEAC's work at a strategic level, the Committee also provided environmental advice on the following Council programs and projects:

- Noted an update on the Monument Hill Working Group.
- Considered and endorsed Citizen Science initiatives for Mitchell Shire Council;
- Recommended Council investigates student placement/internship opportunities.
- Supported the 2017/2018 Mitchell Shire waterway naming project and committed to assisting the Mitchell Shire Environment Team to identify priority sites.
- Received and noted the 2017 National Tree Day evaluation and made suggestions for improvements in the evaluation process into the future
- Supported and participated in the Aussie Backyard Bird Count 2017 and Pollinator Week. And suggested Council promotes a new Frog Identification app, as part of Councils support of citizen science programs.
- Supported Mitchell Shire Council's advocacy to ban e-waste to landfill, ban single use plastic bags and continue investigations into waste to energy production opportunities.
- Urged Council to continue and advocate for education on waste minimisations, a recycling deposit system and collaboration with neighbouring Councils, industry and water authorities.
- Considered the Moreland Urban Forest Strategy and how a similar plan could be applied to Mitchell Shire, these conversations are ongoing
- Requested Council officers address the issue of advertising signs nailed to trees in public places. e.g. roadsides.
- Congratulated Council on the Retro Suburbia book launch and actively promoted further environmental educational events in the shire.
- Supported the Australian Plants Society – Mitchell's Gardens for Wildlife Program.
- MEAC also wrote to Council congratulating them on the purchase of the land adjacent Greenhill Reserve.

### Guest Speakers

The Committee was fortunate to have many quality guest speakers including;

- Council's Strategic Planner presented on the draft Seymour Structure Plan.
- Council's Manager Engineering and Major Projects gave a presentation on the Whiteheads Creek Flood Study.
- Council's Director Advocacy and Community Services presented to the Committee on the priorities of the Draft Mitchell Shire Advocacy Strategy.
- Council's Operations and Parks Manager presentation focused on projects that support the Goulburn Valley Waste and Resource Recovery Implementation Plan including e-waste and turning waste into energy.

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In addition, the Committee oversaw the review of the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee Terms of Reference, which were adopted by Council, new positions advertised, and a new Committee was welcomed in June 2018.

- The Committee completed the first Mitchell Shire Environment Advisory Committee evaluation, as an action of the *Mitchell Shire Council Plan 2017-2021*. This report was received and noted, and the Committee recommended improvements detailed in the evaluation are adopted to improve the functionality of the 2018-2020 Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee.

## CONSULTATION

Council's *Community Engagement Framework 2016* identifies Advisory Committees as an important community consultation resource to assist Council in making informed decisions.

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.

## 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*:

- *"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.

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### **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 2017/2018 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 2017/2018 financial year, the Mitchell Environment Advisory Committee has operated in accordance with the adopted Terms of Reference, meeting nine (9) times. The Committee continue to work at a high strategic level, but also bring issues of local significance to the table. The advice provided by the Committee has added value to Council's operations, the natural environment and the wider community.