SURF COAST SHIRE COUNCIL

Climate Emergency Response Plan 2021-2031

Acknowledgement of Country **3**

Mayor's message **4**

CEO's message **5**

Executive summary **6**

1. Context and strategic position **7**

1.1 This is a climate emergency 8

1.2 Strategic position 9

1.3 Climate action 2011-2021 13

1.4 How we developed this plan 14

2. Our place **15**

2.1 Impacts of a changing climate 16

2.2 Local vulnerabilities to climate change 17

2.3 Climate change is impacting Culture and Country 18

2.4 Case studies 19

2.5 Impact on Council's role and operations 20

2.6 Council's greenhouse gas emissions profile 21

3. Vision, goals and actions **24**

3.1 Goals 26

3.2 Climate response Areas 28

3.4 Reporting progress and assessing impact 28

4. Climate Emergency Action Plan 2021-2023 **29**

4.1 Mitigation actions 30

4.2 Adaptation actions 32

4.3 Mobilisation actions 35

4.4 Advocacy 38

Acknowledgement of Country

Surf Coast Shire Council Acknowledges the Wadawurrung People and Eastern Maar People as the Traditional Owners of the lands our Shire spans. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We recognise and respect their beliefs, customs and values, which continue to sustain their intrinsic connection with Country that has endured for more than 60,000 years.

We value the contribution their Caring for Country makes to the lands, ocean, waterways, plants, wildlife and people of Surf Coast Shire, and Acknowledge we have much to learn from the Traditional Owners, especially in changing how we think, work and act in relation to climate change.

We therefore commit to walking alongside the Traditional Owners, allowing them to guide us so that together we can have a more positive impact on our environment and communities in the Surf Coast Shire.

We embrace the spirit of Reconciliation, working towards self-determination, equity of outcomes and an equal voice for Australia's First Nations People.

Eastern Maar

The contemporary Eastern Maar Nation traces an unbroken line of descent back to our Ancestors over many thousands of years.

We have survived as our Country's First People and, despite the well-documented colonial history, continue to maintain economic, traditional, cultural, familial and spiritual ties to our homeland.

Through the leadership and authority of our Elders, we are practicing our laws and customs, strengthening our system of governance and nurturing our connection to Country.

We continue to pass on our traditional knowledge from generation to generation, inducting our young people into Maar society as a cultural practice initiated by our Ancestors. It is a process that keeps customs and stories alive and ensures we are able to maintain Maar culture, language and society.

Drawing strength from our identity and past, we are able to live our culture as a set of attitudes, customs and beliefs, helping us to be resilient and adaptable in changing circumstances.

Meerreengeeye Ngakeepoorryeeyt
Eastern Maar Country Plan 2015
Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation

Wadawurrung

As Wadawurrung Traditional Owners we live by Bundjil's lore to care for Country and all things living as our Ancestors have always done. Our Dja (Country) is more than a place. Our coastal cliffs, wetlands, grassy and volcanic plains, and people were all formed by Bundjil and our Ancestor spirits who continue to live in the land, water and sky. Kareet Bareet (Black Hill near Gordon) is where Bundjil created Wadawurrung people. Lal Lal Falls near Ballarat is where Bundjil created the waterways and where he returned to before heading to his resting place in the stars, continuing to watch over us.

Our Dja is interwoven with relationships no matter whether the shape of that relation is human, granite hills, Waa (Crow) or Larrap (Manna gum). Country is filled with relations speaking language, sharing stories and following lore. These spirits link us back through time in a continuing connection with our past, our cultural practices and our stories. These spirits connect us to our Country and each other, which gives us ongoing respect for our obligation to care for our Country.

Paleert Tjaara Dja – Let's Make Country Good Together
Wadawurrung Healthy Country Plan 2020-2030
Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Mayor's message

When Surf Coast Shire Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, it responded to a community call for urgent and extensive action on climate change.

Climate change is a threat to our health, wellbeing and environment, and poses economic risks to our local businesses and industry.

The increasing frequency and intensity of heat events, and more days with higher bushfire risk, are particular concerns for our area.

Immediate action is needed to reduce the emission of harmful greenhouse gases and adapt to a changing climate.

Council must play its part to help our community and environment to thrive in a safe climate for generations to come. The Climate Emergency Corporate Response Plan 2021-2031 sets out important goals for us to achieve.

Central to the plan is our value for the process of listening to and learning from our local Traditional Owners, the Wadawurrung People and the Gulidjan and Gadubanud People of the Eastern Maar, as we respond together to climate change.

Local government can raise the benchmark and demonstrate what is possible when it comes to climate action.

We've been working hard to foster relationships with our community and government partners who share a willingness to create solutions in transitioning the globe to a sustainable future.

Local government has the opportunity to be innovative and collaborative, and to undertake direct action at the grassroots level.

I feel incredibly privileged and excited to be part of the change at a local level that we all want and need to see.

This plan is our commitment to both the immediate and longer term actions we need to take as an organisation to protect the people and places we love here in the Surf Coast Shire and beyond.

Cr Libby Stapleton
Mayor

"This plan is a practical contribution as well as a gesture of support for a community that's determined to address the climate crisis."

Cr Mike Bodsworth

"We all must act to the best of our ability to address climate change. Local government's contributions and leadership must go hand in hand with our community's to take action to protect future generations."

Cr Rose Hodge

"We need to lead the way to address climate change. It can start with grassroots and community groups influencing all levels of government. Future-proofing the planet includes achieving climate justice and Reconciliation with Australia's First Nations Peoples."

Cr Kate Gazzard

"As the government closest to the community we have a responsibility to engage and act on climate change. This action can bring our community together."

Cr Liz Pattison

CEO's message

Responding to the climate emergency requires a whole of organisation approach and commitment by all staff.

What we do affects our community locally and our planet globally, and this plan outlines the actions our organisation has committed to in playing its part responding to climate change.

Progressive action is already being taken across all areas of Council, including transforming how we run our facilities, deliver services to our community, and plan for the future.

One of the most impactful examples of action in this plan, is that from 1 July 2021, all of Council's facilities and streetlights will be powered by 100 per cent renewable electricity.

The really important and exciting thing, is that we're not doing this alone.

Being one of 46 Victorian councils participating in the Victorian Energy Collaboration, we are part of the largest emissions reduction project ever undertaken by the local government sector in Australia.

More locally, I'm pleased that we led the way in transitioning our shire to a four bin kerbside service in February 2021, including introducing food organics and garden organics collection. Already, we've seen a 33 per cent decrease in waste sent to landfill, which in turn will reduce emissions from the landfill.

I'm proud that we are continuing to identify ways to reduce and offset our greenhouse gas emissions so our organisation will be certified carbon neutral by 2022.

And while these are all important steps, I know there's still so much urgent work ahead of us, to put in place all the actions needed for climate mitigation, adaptation and mobilisation.

This plan is a living document that will be reviewed regularly so we don't lose focus of the challenges and new opportunities arising.

A new action plan will be developed every two years, to enable us to respond to emerging climate projections, innovations and opportunities for our community and environment.

We recognise the importance of existing and new partnerships with our community, other councils and agencies. These will magnify the impact of our shared actions and achievements and help create the change we need to address climate change which is the single biggest and most urgent challenge we will face in our lifetime.

This document paves the way for present and future actions that can be clearly seen and experienced in our community – actions that can lead the way towards real and tangible change.

Anne Howard
Acting Chief Executive Officer

SURF COAST SHIRE COUNCIL

"We are the sum of our parts. As local government we must play our part in addressing climate change, and this plan is our commitment to do so."

Cr Gary Allen

"Addressing climate change is the great moral challenge of our generation. I welcome the learning from world's best practice to consider how it could be applied locally."

Cr Heather Wellington

"Through responsible and innovative management of our services, land and waterways and by supporting others to manage local environments effectively, the Shire can contribute to addressing the global threat of climate change."

Cr Adrian Schonfelder

Executive summary

Surf Coast Shire Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, responding to significant petitioning from our community.

Council made its declaration in August 2019, and acknowledged the need for more urgent and extensive action to reduce emissions and respond to local climate change impacts.

This document is Council's response to the climate emergency. It:

- outlines Council's progress so far on responding to the climate emergency
- explains the challenges we face locally that make our climate emergency response so important
- highlights some of the climate actions we have undertaken over the past 10 years
- demonstrates accountability for ways we will collaborate and work together in partnership with our local Registered Aboriginal Parties to protect Country and Culture from the impacts of climate change
- articulates our vision for our **community and environment to thrive in a safe climate**
- defines our key focus areas for climate action, being **mitigation**, **adaptation** and **mobilisation**
- determines that **reducing greenhouse gas emissions** represents our top priority, and accordingly commits to purchasing 100% renewable electricity and becoming a carbon neutral organisation in 2021-22
- **identifies the actions we will take as an organisation over the next two years** to mitigate, adapt and mobilise in response to the climate emergency.

Additionally, Council recognises that our community is skilled and well placed to lead localised action on climate change. Alongside this plan, Council commits to playing a role in inspiring, informing, enabling and connecting people so our community and environment can thrive for generations to come.

1. Context and strategic position

SURF COAST SHIRE COUNCIL

1.1 This is a climate emergency

In July 2019, Surf Coast Shire Council received two community petitions calling on Council to declare a climate emergency.

Acting on climate science and projections for the future, the international Climate Emergency campaign calls on governments at all levels to declare a climate emergency, and mobilise society-wide resources at sufficient scale and speed to protect civilisation, the economy, people, species and ecosystems.

Our Surf Coast climate is changing – we now live in a hotter, drier climate compared to just 30 years ago, with an increased threat of more frequent and severe extreme weather events, particularly bushfires. A continuation of current climatic conditions and trajectories are indicating a future that is unsafe for us as human beings, and for many of the plant and animal species we live alongside.

In August 2019, Council joined seven other local governments in Victoria that had declared a climate emergency. In just one year, this number had grown to 32, and continues to rise.

Our Climate Emergency Response commits us to taking the urgent action required to make our contribution to sustain a safe climate, where existing and future communities and ecosystems will thrive. Our response centres around actions that Council and our community can take for climate change mitigation, adaptation and mobilisation.

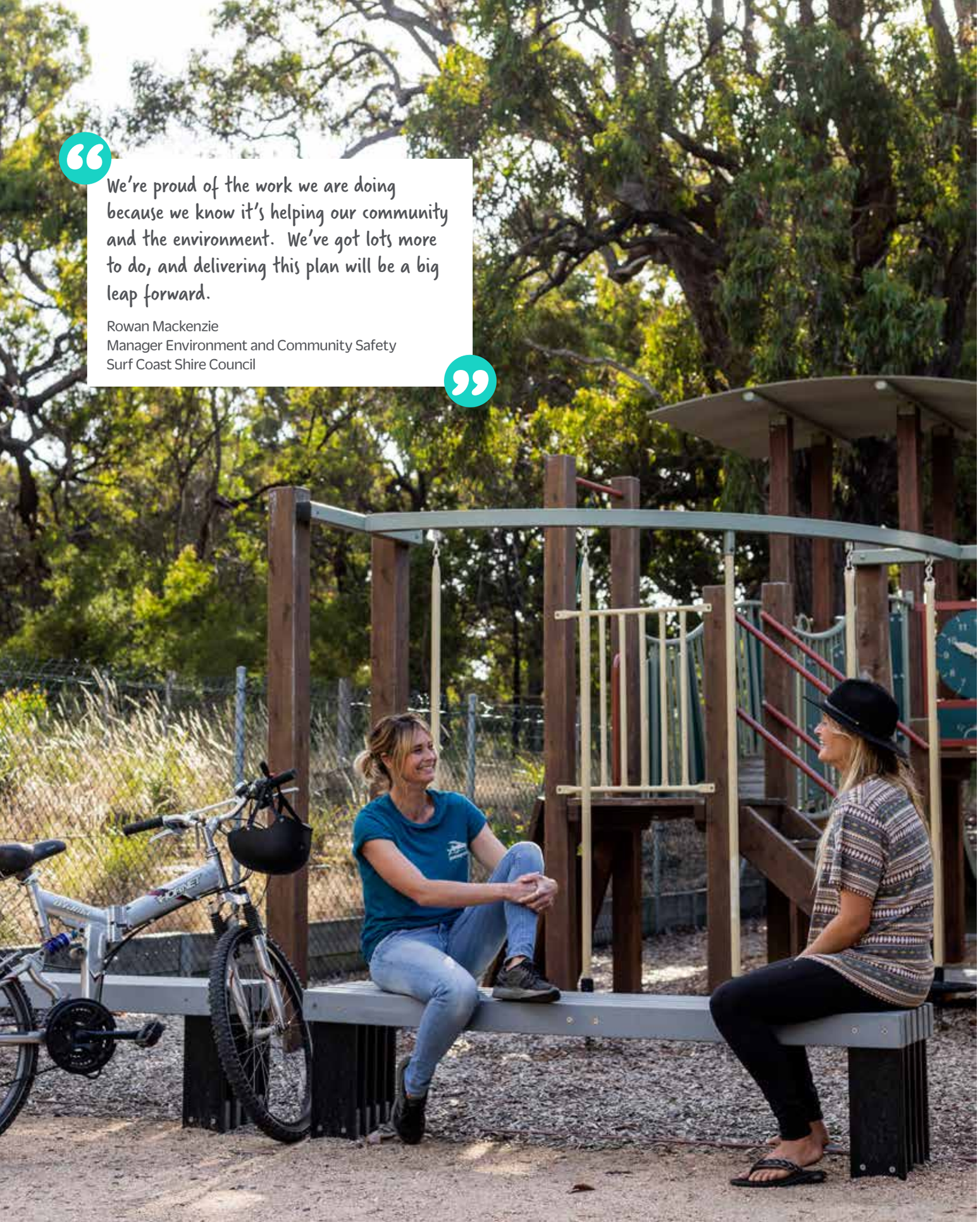
This is a climate emergency, needing urgent action now.

Global climate change

While the **2016 Paris Agreement** – an international treaty on climate change – recognised the need to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees (Celsius) above pre-industrial levels, current modelling indicates the world is on track to reach 1.5 degrees by 2030 or earlier, and between three and five degrees by 2100 (**Climate Reality Check 2020** report).

Even under the conservative warming of 1.5 degrees, this 2020 report predicts that the world is set to experience catastrophic events, including the demise of Australia's Great Barrier Reef, melting of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet and loss of forest ecosystems.

Scientists predict that 'a four degree (Celcius) future is incompatible with an organised global community, is likely to be beyond adaptation, is devastating to the majority of ecosystems and has a high probability of not being stable' (**The Third Degree** report 2019).



> We're proud of the work we are doing because we know it's helping our community and the environment. We've got lots more to do, and delivering this plan will be a big leap forward.
>
> Rowan Mackenzie
> Manager Environment and Community Safety
> Surf Coast Shire Council

1.2 Strategic position

1.2.1 Council's commitments so far

At its Ordinary Council Meeting, 27 August 2019, Council resolved:

That Council:

a) Declares a Climate Emergency.

b) Commits to develop a Climate Emergency Response Plan in partnership with the community.

c) Receives a further report on how a Climate Emergency Response Plan will be developed including any resources needed.

d) Commits to setting corporate energy, greenhouse gas emissions, water, waste, land use and biodiversity targets informed by the advice of the Renewable Energy Task Force and supported by an evidenced based analysis.

e) Confirms its commitment to use the One Planet Living Framework and Towards Environmental Leadership Program to guide corporate responses to climate change.

f) Notes the opportunity to consider climate change in future reviews of the Council Plan (incorporating the Health and Wellbeing Plan).

This climate emergency declaration (read the full **Council report**) follows many years of Council and community taking action related to climate change, however, it acknowledges the need for a more urgent and significant response.

Since our declaration, we have made the following progress:

Council endorsed a four part **Climate Emergency Response Roadmap** on 26 November 2019:

Surf Coast Shire Council's Climate Emergency Response

Corporate Response
Focuses on Council's operations, services and facilities.

PART 1 — **Short Term Action Plan 2020**
(February 2020 - February 2021)

PART 2 — **Climate Emergency Response Plan 2021-2031**
(this document)

Community Response
Ways we will support community action.

PART 3 — **Council's approach to, and role in, community action**
(endorsed 28 July 2020)

PART 4 — **Facilitate and empower community-led climate responses**
(underway)

The Short Term Action Plan included initiatives across our organisation that could be implemented quickly and within existing resources. The following Climate Emergency Response Plan 2021-2031 requires implementation over a longer timeframe and with additional resources.

Council recognises that our community is skilled and well placed to lead localised action on climate change. Council will play a role in inspiring, informing, enabling and connecting our community. More detail is provided in section 3.3, Mobilisation, and in Council's approach.

Corporate Environmental Sustainability Targets have been established (section 1.2.5 following).

The new Council Plan commencing in 2021 is currently being developed, with our Councillors and community identifying climate change as an important aspect.

1.2.2 Legal framework

The Victorian *Local Government Act 2020* sets a clear expectation that councils consider the long-term negative impacts of climate change on future generations through their planning, decision-making and actions.

Victoria's *Climate Change Act 2017* also requires councils to respond to climate change (including potential impacts and contributions to Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions) through the development of their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan. The Act calls on councils to make a five yearly emissions reduction pledge, and this document will be provided to the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change for that purpose.

The *Victorian Government's Climate Change Strategy* (May 2021) outlines targets to reduce the state's emissions from 2005 levels by 28-33% by 2025 and 45-50% by 2030. The Surf Coast Shire must play its role in achieving these targets.

Councils have additional legislative obligations related to mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change under the *Renewable Energy (Jobs and Investment) Act 2017, Planning and Environment Act 1987* and *Emergency Management Act 2013*. Further to this, the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* specifies provisions to protect against the harming of Aboriginal living cultural heritage.

For a more detailed summary of the legal framework Council is operating under click here.

> In the course of Council performing its role, we must give effect to overarching governance principles including promoting environmental, social and economic sustainability, mitigating and planning for climate change risks, and achieving the best outcomes for our community, including future generations.
>
> *Local Government Act 2020* Section 9

1.2.3 Traditional Owners and their Country Plans

Surf Coast Shire spans the Traditional lands of the Wadawurrung People and Eastern Maar People. Both Registered Aboriginal Parties have developed Country Plans which speak about their connections to Country and community, and about protecting the health of these for generations to come.

Wadawurrung Healthy Country Plan, Paleert Tjaara Dja – Let's Make Country Good Together 2020-2030

Eastern Maar Country Plan, Meerreengeeye Ngakeepoorryeeyt 2015

In their plan, the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation identifies specific threats associated with climate change, and we met together a number of times as we developed this plan.

Goal 4, 'Our organisation aligns with local Registered Aboriginal Parties' Country Plans' (section 3.3) is our commitment to continuing our conversations, growing our knowledge, developing new partnerships, and respecting Traditional Owner perspectives as we implement this plan and work with our broader community to respond to the climate emergency. Council is currently developing our organisation's *Reflect* Reconciliation Action Plan, which is also referred to in Goal 4.

Council is also responsible and accountable for our decisions, projects and actions in line with our obligations under the *Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, management plans and other relevant legislation.

1.2.4 Our climate emergency response areas – mitigation, adaptation, mobilisation

Part 3 of this plan outlines our corporate goals, objectives, targets and measures, along with our two-year action plan (Part 4) that responds to these areas:

Mitigation – minimising greenhouse gas emissions from Council's operations and enhancing natural carbon sinks.

Adaptation – enhancing the resilience of our organisation, community and environment to prepare for the impacts of our changing climate.

Mobilisation – empowering our people to implement climate solutions at work, supporting our community to take action, advocating our position, and joining in with others responding to the climate emergency.

Across climate emergency response plans globally, these three areas are well accepted and commonly used as priorities for action.

> Within the next decade we need to take significant action to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, and to also take advantage of the opportunities this transition presents.
>
> Action at the local level, which can be facilitated, supported and scaled by local government, is critical to ensure that we can achieve this transition in the short time we have, and in a way that works for local communities. Surf Coast is well placed to lead in this transition by building on the existing local community action and support shown by Council.
>
> Scott Ferraro
> Chair of Surf Coast Shire's Renewable Energy Task Force

1.2.5 Corporate environmental sustainability targets

Our organisation has committed to the following corporate environmental sustainability targets, which link with our climate emergency goals, objectives, targets and measures.

TARGET AREA	HEADLINE TARGET	SUPPORTING STATEMENT	CLIMATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE AREA
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Net zero greenhouse gas emissions	Council commits to reporting on corporate greenhouse gas emissions and developing a strategy to reach net zero emissions for Council operations.	**Mitigation** **Mobilisation**
Renewable Energy	100% renewable electricity	Council will obtain 100% of its electricity from renewable energy sources.	**Mitigation** **Mobilisation**
Waste	Zero recoverable waste to landfill	Council commits to audit, report on and reduce waste sent to landfill from Council operations.	**Mitigation** **Mobilisation**
Water	Reduce potable water use	Council commits to reducing the overall volume of potable water used for non-potable purposes through its operations.	**Adaptation** **Mobilisation**
Land use and biodiversity	Responsible land management	Council commits to developing and implementing annual action plans for all land it owns or manages.	**Mitigation** **Adaptation** **Mobilisation**

This plan prioritises actions related to the Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Renewable Energy targets. They have the most direct impact on mitigating climate change, and offer Council a significant opportunity to make a positive difference.

1.3 Climate action 2011-2021

Our climate emergency response builds on 10 years of actions aimed at reducing our impact on the natural world and responding to climate change. Some of the most impactful have been the result of collective action and partnerships between Council, our community and local agencies.

THESE ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS:

2011

Implemented Surf Coast Shire **Heatwave Plan** January 2011

Electric vehicle charging stations installed at the Civic Office and Lorne Visitor Information Centre

Established an **Environment and Rural Advisory Panel** of Councillors and community members

Developed **The Fire Game** through our Fire Up! community education program

Ongoing support for our local **Community Gardens**

Launched the **Towards Environmental Leadership Program**

Developed Council's **Draft Climate Change Adaptation Plan 2017-2020**

Surf Coast ***Plastic Wise Events and Markets Policy*** in partnership with community groups, event organisers and Great Ocean Road Coast Committee

Established a **Renewable Energy Task Force** of Councillors, community members and energy experts

Launched **Powered by Positive Program**

Submissions made by Council on container deposit schemes, unconventional gas exploration, oil exploration in the Great Australia Bight, climate change, waste and recycling management, and Victoria's circular economy

Flare installed at Anglesea Landfill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Introduced **Local Food Program 2018-2021**

Developed the ***Integrated Water Management Plan*** for the township of Winchelsea

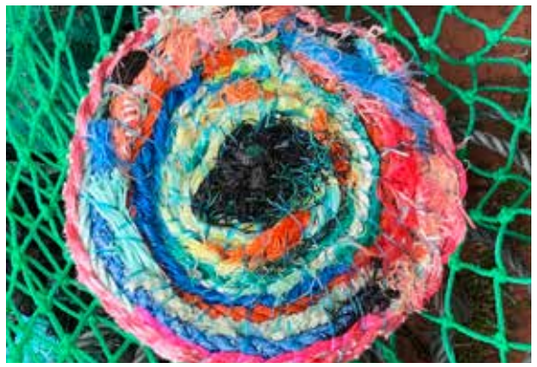
Kerbside Food Organics and Garden Organics (FOGO) pilot in Anglesea

Ongoing support for local **Plastic Wise and environmental groups, and Repair Café Surf Coast**

Implemented ***Strategic Fire Management Plan 2017-2020*** in partnership with Colac Otway and Corangamite Shires, CFA and DELWP

Community screening of film ***2040*** and panel discussion with the producer, Damon Gameau

Our Arts Seed Development Funds were themed 'Detritus' (2019) and **'Creative Action for the Climate Emergency'** (2020)



Commenced **fleet transition towards electric and hybrid vehicles**

Streetlight upgrades to LED globes has reduced electricity use by 40%

Established five **Corporate Environmental Sustainability Targets**

Ran a **Climate Youth Skills Development Program** and supported the **Surf Coast Youth 4 Climate group**

Climate change considerations embedded in project management, business case and digital transformation processes/programs

21.4% of Surf Coast households have solar installed – the highest uptake in Barwon South West region

Over 550kW of solar power capacity installed on Council facilities

Carbon dating project at Bells Beach with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Kerbside waste collection service now includes **FOGO and separate glass recycling bin**

70% of water used to irrigate Council's ovals is sourced from **recycled water**

Completed ***Climate Emergency Short Term Action Plan***

Launched **Community Climate Mobiliser program**

Victorian Energy Collaboration will see **Council buildings and streetlights powered by 100% renewable electricity**

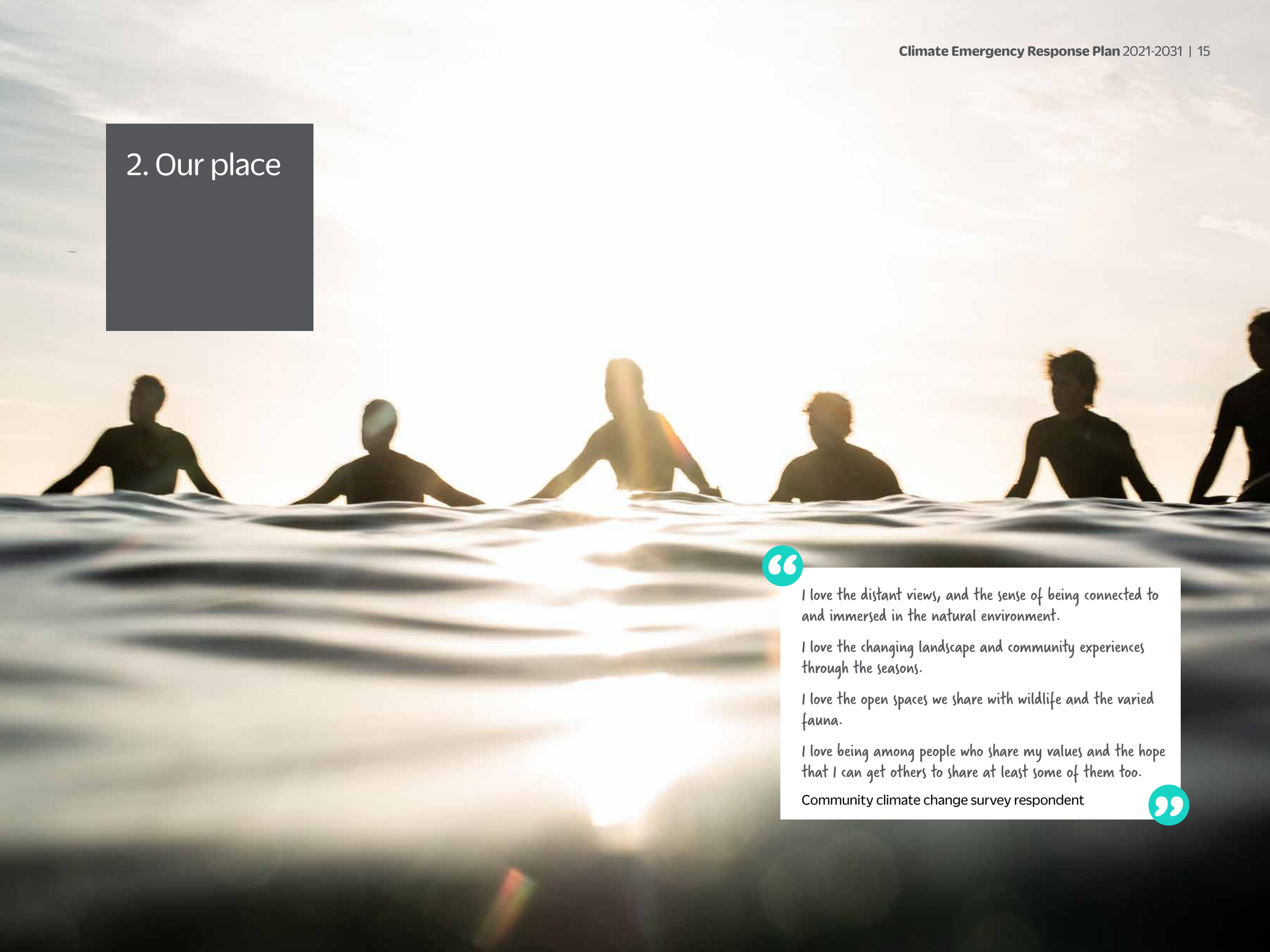
now

1.4 How we developed this plan

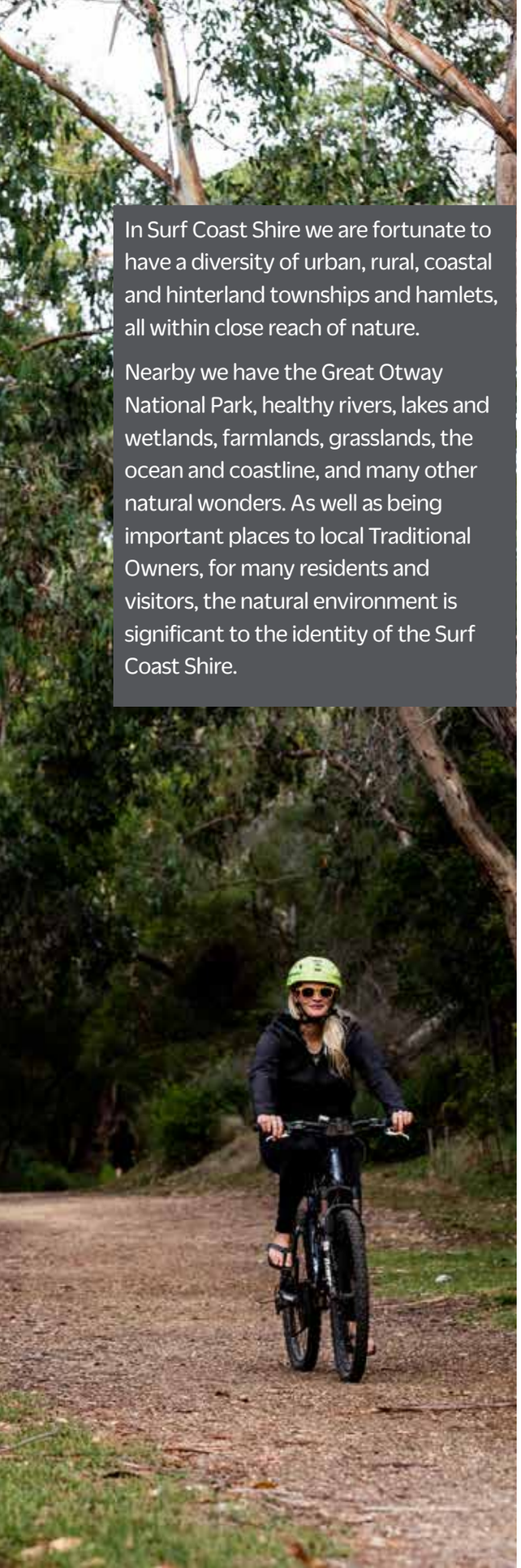
We undertook a range of activities to inform the development of this document. These included:

- 'all staff' workshops to inform and gather initial ideas
- conversations with our local Registered Aboriginal Parties
- research and review of literature such as other council's climate emergency plans and climate science articles/reports
- discussions with Council staff, community members, other councils, climate change networks and agencies
- updating our corporate greenhouse gas emissions profile and developing a carbon offset procurement plan
- surveying staff to gain input into developing the vision and focus areas
- extensive workshops across Council departments to identify possible actions and opportunities
- prioritising and confirming suggested actions based on set criteria (e.g. valuing high impact actions) and with consideration given to resourcing limitations
- gaining Council's endorsement of our proposed role in, and approach to, our community's climate emergency response
- ongoing communication and input from the Climate Emergency Internal Working Group, Leadership Group and Project Control Group (Executive Management Team).

2. Our place



> I love the distant views, and the sense of being connected to and immersed in the natural environment.
>
> I love the changing landscape and community experiences through the seasons.
>
> I love the open spaces we share with wildlife and the varied fauna.
>
> I love being among people who share my values and the hope that I can get others to share at least some of them too.
>
> Community climate change survey respondent



In Surf Coast Shire we are fortunate to have a diversity of urban, rural, coastal and hinterland townships and hamlets, all within close reach of nature.

Nearby we have the Great Otway National Park, healthy rivers, lakes and wetlands, farmlands, grasslands, the ocean and coastline, and many other natural wonders. As well as being important places to local Traditional Owners, for many residents and visitors, the natural environment is significant to the identity of the Surf Coast Shire.

Perhaps living so close to nature also connects us more directly with the threats of climate change.

In our 2021 community climate survey, 75% of respondents stated they are already experiencing its impacts. Natural hazards/extreme weather events; threats to biodiversity and ecosystems; and climate-related diseases and health issues were the top three impacts being noticed. The top-rating additional concerns for the future (reported by over 50% of respondents) were changes to the climate and weather patterns; water shortage and supply uncertainty; and threats to culture and heritage.

While it may seem daunting to tackle the complexity and severity of the predicted changes, we have a terrific opportunity to work together, utilise emerging technology and implement solutions to safeguard our communities and ecosystems now and into the future.

2.1 Impacts of a changing climate

Surf Coast Shire and our broader region are already experiencing the impacts of climate change, and this is expected to become more noticeable over time. The 2019 Barwon Climate Projections report by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the CSIRO predicts the following impacts for the Barwon South West Region:

Temperature increase

Maximum and minimum daily temperatures will continue to increase year round over this century. By the 2030s an increase in daily maximum temperature of 0.8-1.5 degrees Celcius is expected.

Bushfire

The vegetation and geography of the Surf Coast Shire makes it extremely vulnerable to bushfire. This is exacerbated further under climate change with harsher fire weather and longer fire seasons expected.

Heatwaves

Climate change is predicted to worsen heatwave events in the Surf Coast Shire, particularly our inland areas. Increased frequency and intensity of heat events is predicted to impact already vulnerable people and industries.

Coastal and oceanic changes

Coastal inundation, storm surge, sea level rise, erosion and flash flooding in coastal areas will worsen with our changing climate. This will affect how we recreate and live on coastlines, and has the potential to majorly impact cultural heritage sites. Ocean temperatures and acidification levels are also expected to increase significantly, endangering many marine species.

Water scarcity and quality

Water security is a concern for our region with rainfall expected to decline in the future, reducing the amount of water stored in local reservoirs and driving water demand up and supply down. A reduction in water supply and quality also threatens the health of waterways, wetlands and water availability for plants and animals.

Ecosystems and biodiversity

Climate change is expected to intensify the pressure on our ecosystems and biodiversity due to increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events, rising sea levels and ocean acidification, changes to waterway flows and levels, and the pervasiveness of introduced species.

Health and wellbeing

Climate change impacts have direct and indirect consequences for human health and wellbeing. This includes heat-related illness and death, vector-borne, water-borne and food-borne diseases, the decline of nutritional quality of food, aggravation of chronic illnesses and adverse mental health effects.

> *I think the coastal areas are significantly at risk from sea level rise and erosion. I am concerned about the impact this has on important cultural sites, such as middens all along the coast. The Great Ocean Road itself, and all it stands for to local communities, the economy and tourists is at risk directly and indirectly.*
>
> Community climate change survey respondent

2.2 Local vulnerabilities to climate change

Council's stated purpose is to help our community and environment to thrive.

We recognise that certain ecosystems, geographic areas and members of our community are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change than others. We will continue to identify and better understand these local vulnerabilities so we can work with our community to plan for, and respond to, our changing local conditions.

For example:

- Communities within our forested and bushland areas face a higher risk from extreme fire events than those in urban or rural grassy areas.
- Urban, inland communities will be more exposed to hotter, longer heatwaves than coastal communities.
- Communities, natural ecosystems and significant cultural sites close to the coast at low elevation will be more severely impacted by sea level rise and storm surges.
- Natural ecosystems that are already vulnerable may not survive the changes (while others may benefit). Native grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plains are one example explored in a case study, section 2.4.
- Many young people have expressed concern about climate change, and are experiencing high levels of psychological stress and anxiety about current environmental and societal shifts, and uncertainties about the future.
- Populations of older people and those with prevailing illness or disease have a higher risk of being affected by extreme weather events, including heatwaves and smoke from bushfires.
- People from low socio-economic areas have a greater disadvantage when it comes to preparing their properties, households and businesses to decarbonise and prepare for future climate change impacts.

> For many young people on the Surf Coast our hobbies are based around the outdoors and ocean environment. We are fortunate that most of our natural surroundings remain pristine and untouched. It is really concerning to see this starting to change with the effects of a changing climate taking place.
>
> Katie Rau
> Surf Coast Youth 4 Climate member and Surf Coast resident

> Parts of the Otway Ranges are vulnerable to bushfire. My fear is that we get an intense fire like last year's that ripped through East Gippsland and the Southern NSW coast, destroying so many trees and animals, sterilising the soil and destroying the seed bank.
>
> Community climate change survey respondent

2.3 Climate change is impacting Culture and Country

Climate change poses a significant risk to Country, Culture and people. Natural disasters, extreme weather events and other climate change impacts threaten culturally significant sites located along our coast, waterways and inland.

These sites, some thousands of years old, have significant cultural and historic meaning to the Eastern Maar People and Wadawurrung People. Ecosystems, plants and animal species also hold important meaning, and a decline in the health and populations of our natural systems can lead to negative impacts on mental and physical health.

In our 2021 community climate survey, 48 per cent of respondents indicated they had already observed the degradation and loss of cultural sites and heritage values. Just over 50 per cent identified loss of Culture and heritage as a relevant climate change impact in future, one of the highest priority areas for action identified.

These findings, coupled with Traditional Owners' experiences and aspirations, highlight the importance of learning about and protecting culturally significant sites from current and future climate change impacts.

> For Aboriginal people, Country is more than the land, water and air, the plants and animals. It's more than just what we can see – it's our spirituality, our Ancestors and our connection. It is the way we feel, the way we live and the connection that holds and defines us. When the health of our Country declines, so does the health of our citizens – we are all inextricably linked.
>
> We have had responsibility for caring for our Country for thousands of years. We have never simply taken from our Country without understanding the natural systems and managing them so that they stay healthy and keep providing for us.
>
> Meerreengeeye Ngakeepoorryeeyt
> Eastern Maar Country Plan 2015
> Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation

> We are the protectors and carers of this Country and this Country protects and cares for us. We belong to and are spiritually connected to this Country and this Country is part of us. We are inseparable, no matter where we are, we are bound together. When Country is sick, we are sick. We talk to Country in language to help us both heal. Our stories, dances and songs keep us strong in our culture. Our lore and law guide us in keeping our people and Country connected and healthy.
>
> Paleert Tjaara Dja
> – Let's Make Country Good Together 2020-2030
> Wadawurrung Healthy Country Plan
> Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

2.4 Case studies

Loss of coastal Culture

Many beaches along the unique Surf Coast, including Bells Beach and Point Roadknight, have significant value to Traditional Owners. Some have cultural sites dating back thousands of years which help foster connection to ancestors while telling stories of how people used to live.

As sea levels rise, cliffs, sand dunes and other formations erode, and storm surges and coastal inundation increases, these sites are at risk of disappearing forever.

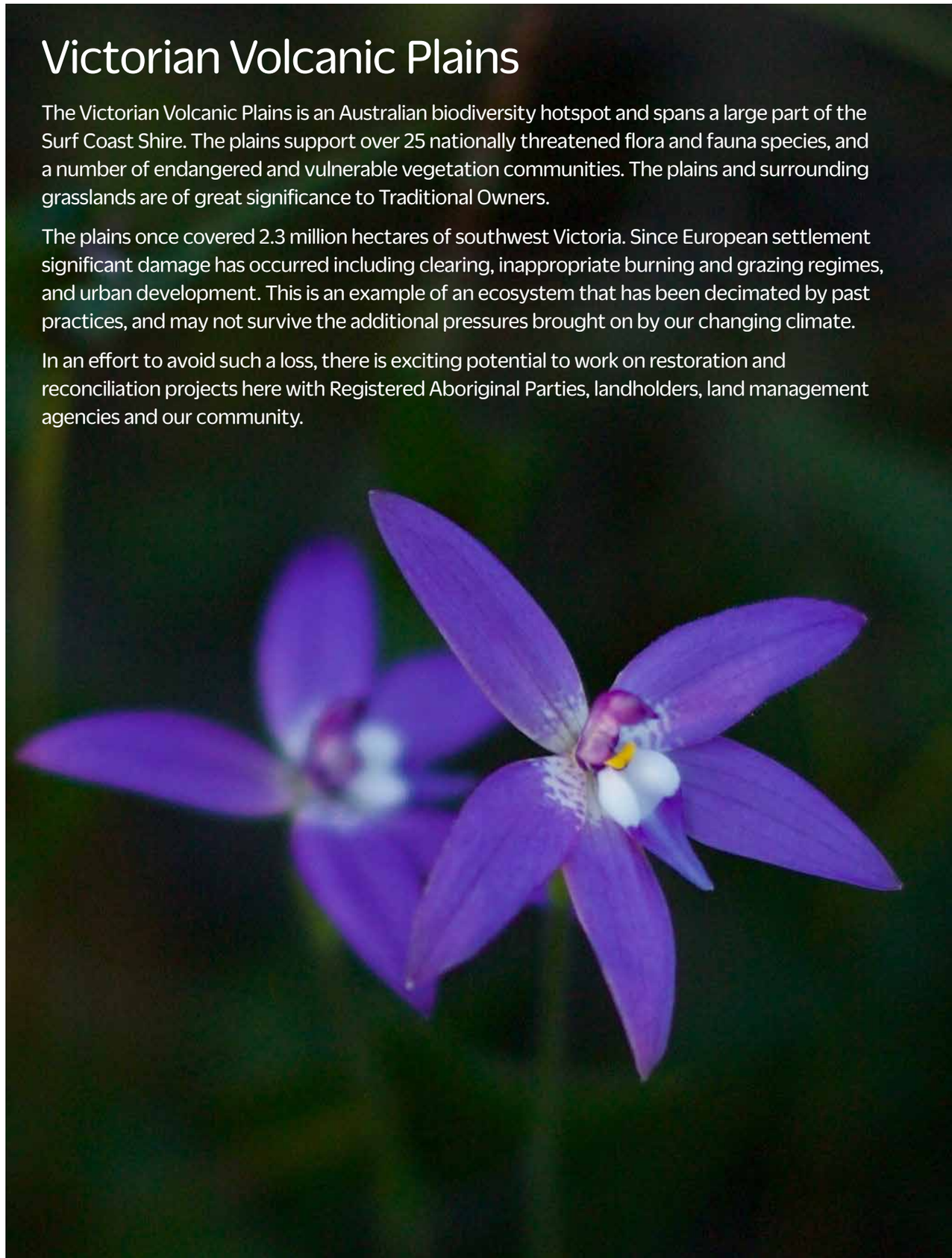
If we work together with Registered Aboriginal Parties, other agencies and our community now, we can implement innovative techniques to minimise the impacts. Encouraging beach goers to be sensitive with their movements in these delicate areas will also help to safeguard these incredible sites.

Victorian Volcanic Plains

The Victorian Volcanic Plains is an Australian biodiversity hotspot and spans a large part of the Surf Coast Shire. The plains support over 25 nationally threatened flora and fauna species, and a number of endangered and vulnerable vegetation communities. The plains and surrounding grasslands are of great significance to Traditional Owners.

The plains once covered 2.3 million hectares of southwest Victoria. Since European settlement significant damage has occurred including clearing, inappropriate burning and grazing regimes, and urban development. This is an example of an ecosystem that has been decimated by past practices, and may not survive the additional pressures brought on by our changing climate.

In an effort to avoid such a loss, there is exciting potential to work on restoration and reconciliation projects here with Registered Aboriginal Parties, landholders, land management agencies and our community.



2.5 Impact on Council's role and operations

The most recent Victorian Local Government and Climate Change Acts have increased the obligations for local governments to make decisions and take action to protect their communities from the threats of climate change.

Council's purpose – to help our community and environment to thrive – demonstrates a more local and intrinsic care for our people and natural places that also motivates us to act.

Many areas of Council's operations, services and facilities are likely to be impacted by climate change, such as:

- more intense rainfall and heat events will influence our stormwater and infrastructure management
- a drier, warmer climate will impact water security and irrigation of ovals and recreational facilities
- an increased need to prepare for and respond to community health and wellbeing impacts, and to build community resilience.

These impacts will affect how we:

- manage our assets and infrastructure
- deliver services and programs to our community
- manage Council land
- make decisions about Council's investments, liabilities, insurances and financial security
- foster the health and wellbeing of our staff and community members
- support our staff to deliver their work objectives.

Our climate emergency response therefore focuses on reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and building resilience in our organisation, our community and our environment.

> Under climate change, there is an increased risk to our community, not just of fire but also heat, storm and flood events. Climate projections show that we are expected to experience a 49 per cent increase in high-risk fire danger days.
>
> Nick Guyett
> Resilient Communities Officer
> Surf Coast Shire Council

> The impacts of climate change on public health are being recognised globally in research, frameworks, strategies and public health advocacy groups. Research indicates that exposure to increased temperature extremes compromises the body's ability to regulate its temperature. Prolonged exposure may induce direct or indirect health complications including chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cerebrovascular disease, and diabetes-related conditions. Extended periods of hot and cold weather are associated with increased hospital admissions and increased mortality including self-harm.
>
> Alicia Hooper
> Social Planning and Recovery Advisor
> Surf Coast Shire Council

2.6 Council's greenhouse gas emissions profile

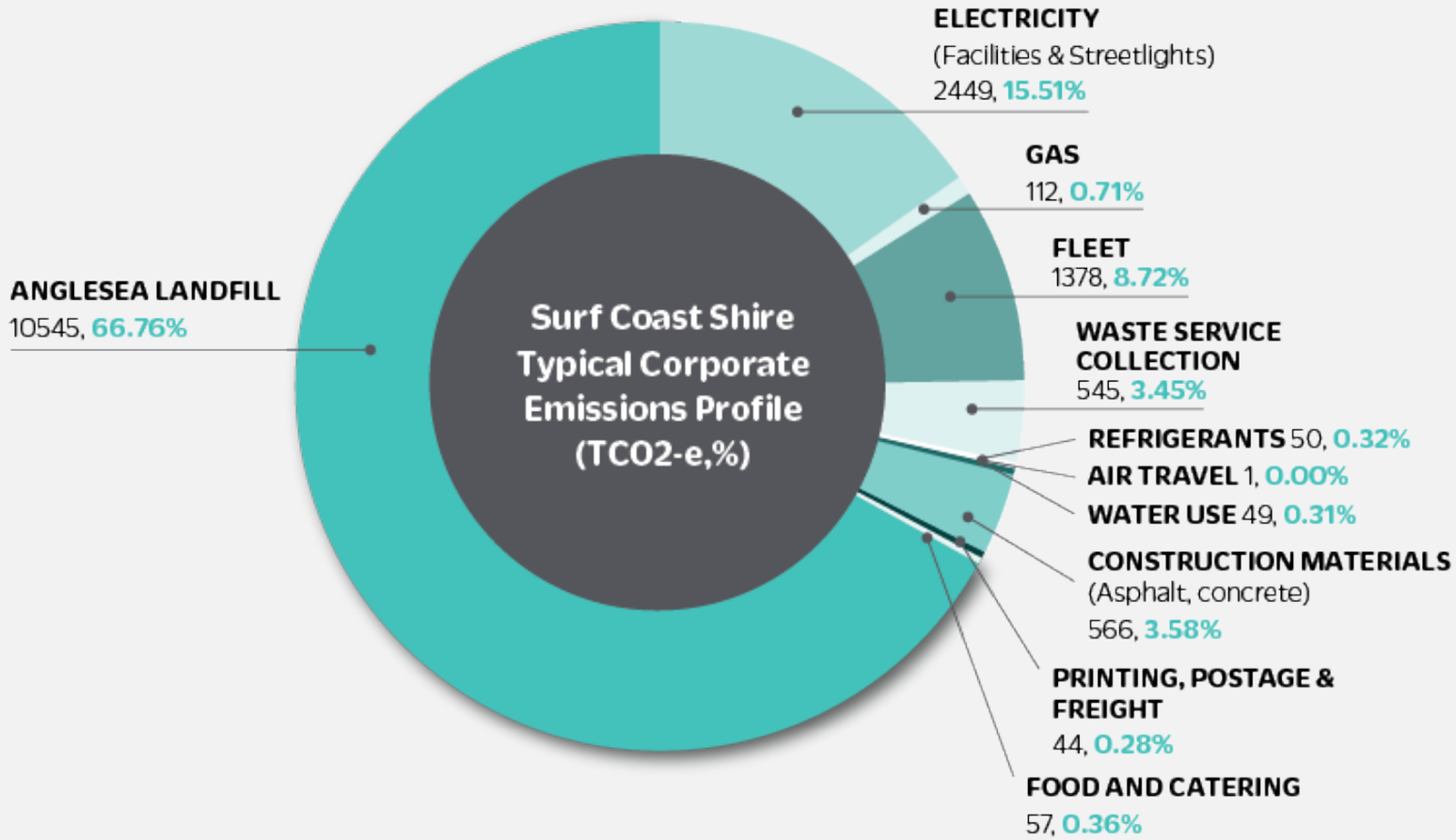
A breakdown of greenhouse gas emissions generated annually from Council's operations, facilities and services is shown below. This corporate greenhouse gas emissions profile has been developed in line with the principles of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol Corporate Accounting and Reporting Standard and has been independently reviewed to ensure it is consistent with best practice industry and local government standards. The profile enables us to better understand the volumes and sources of greenhouse gas emissions arising from Council's operations, and allows us to take targeted, evidence-based action.

Corporate greenhouse gas emissions profiles can vary significantly between Local Government Areas. Unlike many other councils, we manage a landfill, which includes a significant component of legacy emissions from decaying organic matter deposited since the landfill opened in the 1970s. A flare has been installed onsite to transform emissions from methane to the relatively less potent greenhouse gas of carbon dioxide, significantly reducing the emissions attributed to this facility.

Surf Coast Shire Council's typical greenhouse gas emissions profile

Average before procurement of renewable electricity

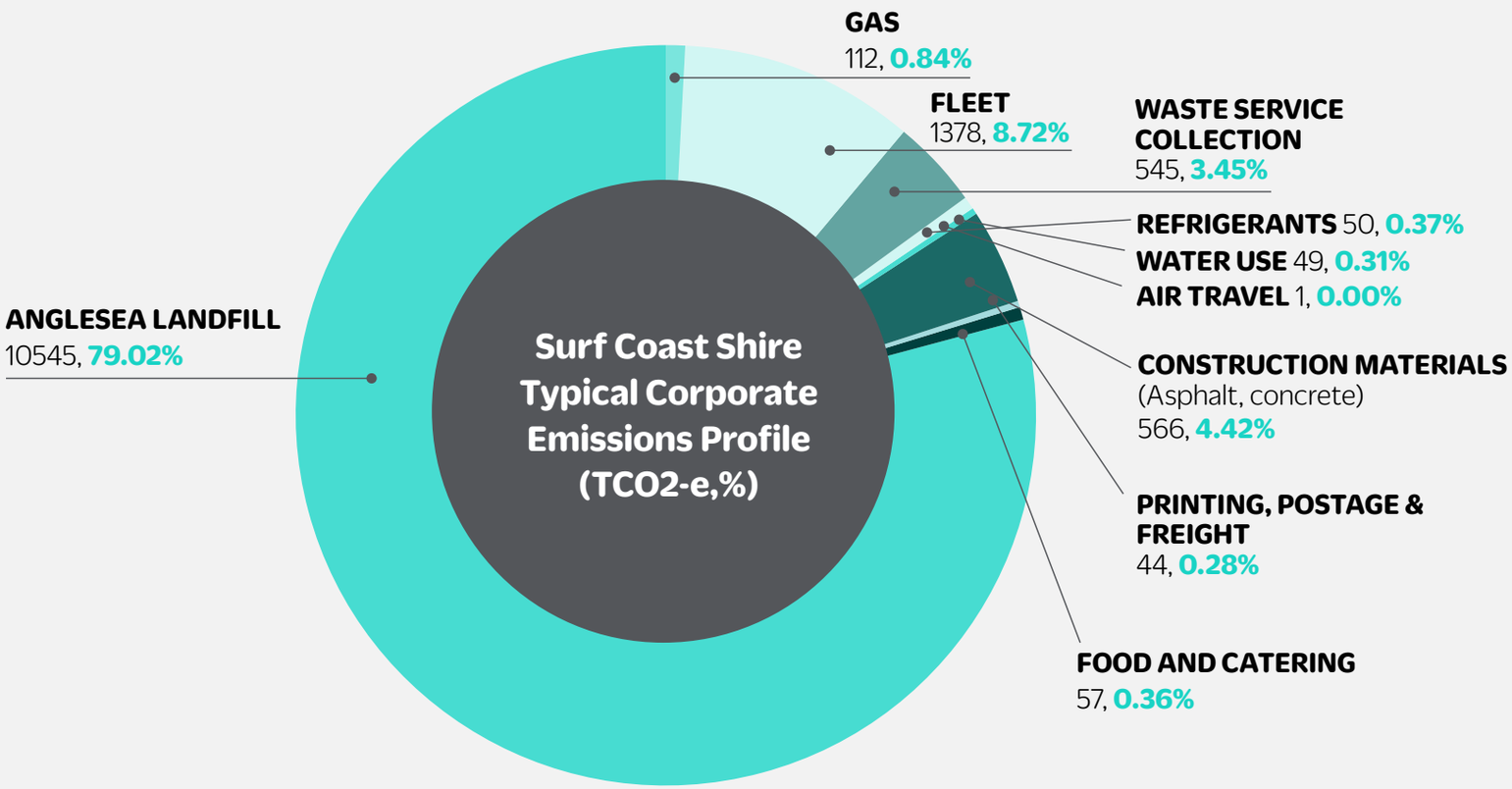
Average annual emissions: 15,794 TC02e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions)



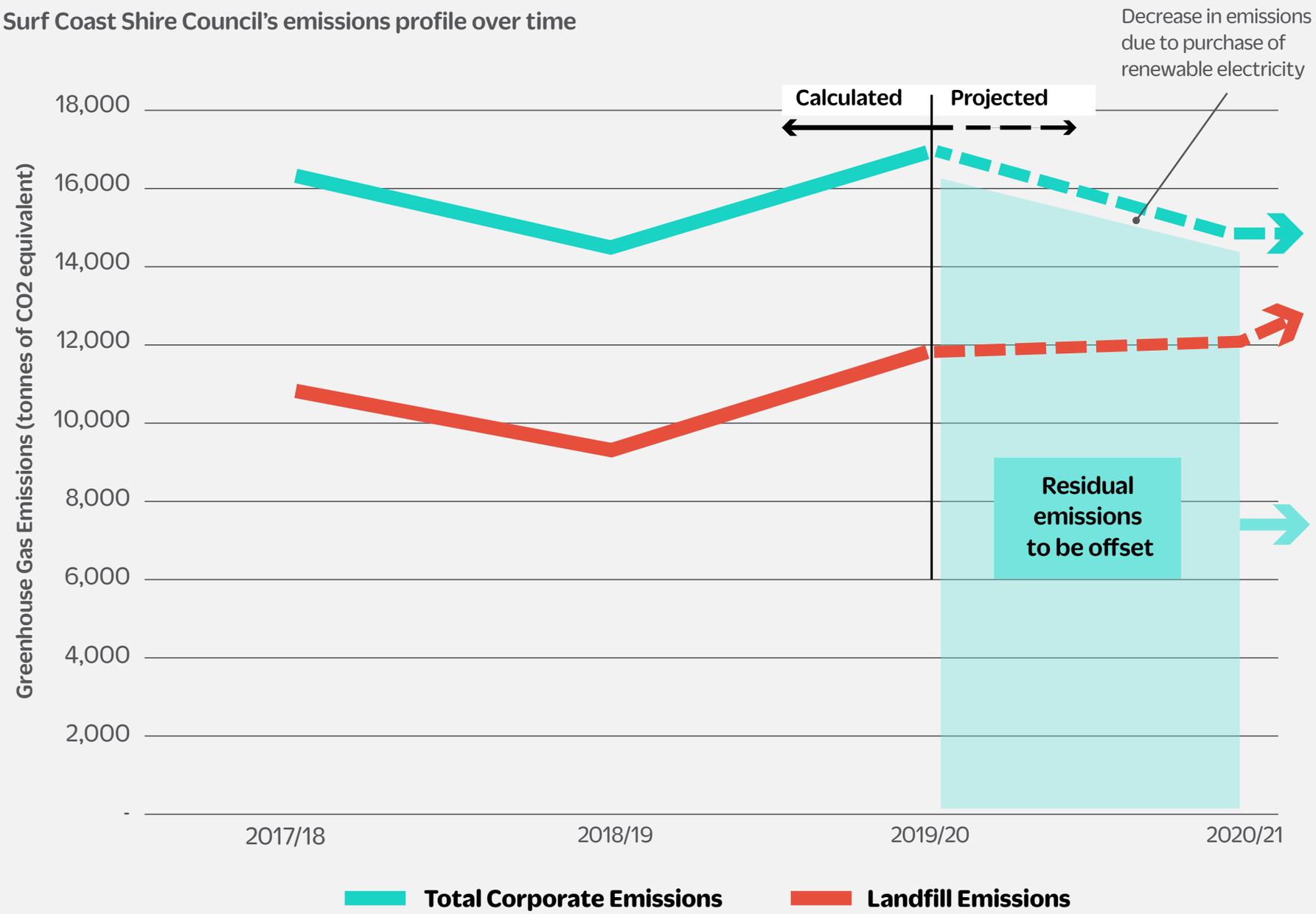
The Surf Coast Shire Council's corporate emissions profile varies year on year, depending mainly on the magnitude of emissions from the Anglesea Landfill. By procuring 100% renewable electricity for our facilities and streetlights from July 2021, we expect to reduce our emissions by around 2,450 tonnes per annum, or approximately 15.5%. The figures below depict Council's projected emissions profile following the procurement of 100% renewable energy.

Surf Coast Shire Council's projected greenhouse gas emissions profile once renewable energy is purchased

Approximate annual emissions expected: 13,345 TC02e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions)



Surf Coast Shire Council's emissions profile over time



Corporate emissions in future

The proposed new Aquatic and Health Centre for Torquay has the potential to significantly increase Council's emissions profile due to the high gas, electricity and water use typically required for such facilities. We will consider the implications this will have on our net zero ambitions and emissions reduction goal, and work to embed climate considerations and environmentally sustainable design into plans for the new facility.

3. Vision, goals and actions

OUR VISION

Our community and environment are thriving in a safe climate

OUR GOALS

Each goal has associated objectives, measures and targets.

Our actions are outlined in an Action Plan developed every two years.

Goal 1

Our organisation is carbon neutral

Goal 2

Our organisation generates, stores and uses renewable electricity

Goal 3

Our organisation is adapting well to a changing climate

Goal 4

Our organisation is working with local Registered Aboriginal Parties and First Nations on climate action

Goal 5

Our organisation facilitates and empowers community responses to the climate emergency

Goal 6

Our organisation is a climate emergency leader

Climate Emergency Response Areas

Mitigation

Adaptation

Mobilisation

3.1 GOALS

GOAL 1 – OUR ORGANISATION IS CARBON NEUTRAL

Objective 1: Reduce Council's scope 1 and 2 corporate greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2030 (excluding the Anglesea Landfill).

Measure: Tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent greenhouse gas emissions emitted to the atmosphere annually from Council's operations, services and facilities (excluding the Anglesea Landfill).

Target: Zero Scope 1 and 2 corporate greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (excluding the Anglesea Landfill).

Objective 2: Reduce Council's scope 3 corporate greenhouse gas emissions

Measure: Tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent greenhouse gas emissions emitted to the atmosphere annually from scope 3 emissions associated with Council's operations, services and facilities.

Target: An annual reduction from the previous year.

GOAL 2 – OUR ORGANISATION GENERATES, STORES AND USES RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY

Objective 4: Increase the renewable energy generation and storage capacity each year at Council sites and facilities.

Measure: Installed renewable energy generation and storage capacity at Council facilities as measured at end of financial year.

Target: Install solar and storage on all new facilities and undertake retrofits on existing facilities where a payback is achieved.

Objective 5: Consume only renewable electricity and avoid consuming electricity and fuels from fossil fuel sources.

Measure: Amount of fossil fuel consumed by Council's operations, services and facilities.

Target a): 100% renewable electricity consumed from 1 July 2021 for all council owned and operated facilities and streetlights.

Target b): Annual reduction in consumption of gas, diesel, petrol and other fossil fuels used in Council operations and facilities.

GOAL 3 – OUR ORGANISATION IS ADAPTING WELL TO A CHANGING CLIMATE

Objective 6: Improve our organisational adaptive capacity

Measure: Local Government Adaptive Capacity Checklist (Victorian Climate Resilient Councils Program tool)

Target: Adaptive capacity shifted toward the 'Adaptation is core business' end of the scale; measured every two years at the completion of the each Action Plan.

Objective 7: Build resilience to reduce our vulnerability to climate impacts

Measure: Climate risk assessments undertaken on Council assets, strategies and services

Target: Climate risk treatments implemented annually

GOAL 4 – OUR ORGANISATION IS WORKING WITH LOCAL REGISTERED ABORIGINAL PARTIES AND FIRST NATIONS ON CLIMATE ACTION

Objective 8: Consult with, and include local RAPs in all/relevant projects and decision-making processes

Measure: RAPs are engaged early in projects and given the opportunity to consult on key/relevant projects

Target: All projects that require RAP involvement.

Objective 9: Align our Climate Emergency Response with local RAPs' Country Plans and priorities

Measure: Conduct an internal review of the CECRP and receive feedback from RAPs

Target: Conduct an internal review of the CECRP and receive feedback from RAPs

GOAL 5 – OUR ORGANISATION FACILITATES AND EMPOWERS COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY.

Objective 10: Support and partner with the community to take climate action through Council programs, processes and activities

Measure: Report to Council identifying successes, challenges and recommended actions or changes

Target: Minimum reporting twice per annum

Objective 11: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the municipality and build community resilience to climate impacts

Measure: Monitor the community emissions profile and review findings from the community climate change survey

Target: Every two years

GOAL 6 – OUR ORGANISATION IS A CLIMATE EMERGENCY LEADER

Objective 13: The actions in theClimate Emergency Action Plansare delivered.

Measure: Number of actions completed from Action Plan .

Target: 80% of actions implemented/completed.

Objective 14: Advocate for climate emergency policy improvements at regional, state and national levels.

Measure: The number of Council submissions on issues relating to climate change.

Target: No target.

Objective 15: Reaffirm and/or establish new formal partnerships with other organisations for mutual progress on climate action.

Measure: The number of partnerships.

Target: No target.

The Towards Environmental Leadership Program is Council's commitment to working together with our community to protect our natural world and encourage sustainable practices.

The web-based platform shares locally relevant information about climate change, our environment, local food, waste avoidance, water and energy. A highlight is the wonderful collection of tips and stories shared by skilled and passionate people in our Surf Coast community.

3.2 Climate Emergency Response Areas

Mitigation

Minimising greenhouse gas emissions from Council's operations and enhancing natural carbon sinks.

Human-induced greenhouse gas emissions are the major cause of climate change. To sustain a safe climate into the future, atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations need to be reduced significantly. We can help do this by first reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, then by offsetting those we can't, and drawing down carbon from the atmosphere, for example by planting trees and protecting carbon sinks.

Adaptation

Enhancing the resilience of our organisation, community and environment to prepare for the impacts of our changing climate.

The Surf Coast Shire is already experiencing climate change impacts – to our ecosystems, health, water, food security, built environments and economy. Learning to adapt well to these impacts, as an organisation and a community, is critical to thriving in a changing climate.

With our bushfire threat being amongst the highest in the world, continuing our existing emergency management and bushfire preparedness programs are a priority for adaptation.

Mobilisation

Empowering our people to implement climate solutions at work, supporting our community to take action, advocating our position, and joining in with others responding to the climate emergency.

Sustaining a safe climate now and in the future requires every one of us to respond with urgency on an ongoing basis. Our mobilisation actions are separated into corporate and community components.

Corporate

As an organisation we must ensure that our people are informed and well-placed to address climate change and incorporate our climate emergency response into their work. We have many opportunities to alter existing governance and decision-making processes to enable all staff and contractors to consider and address climate change as we go about our daily practices and plan new projects/programs. Council also has a role to play in advocacy, and creating and strengthening local partnerships, particularly with our local Registered Aboriginal Parties.

Community

We are lucky to have many passionate and skilled individuals, groups, education settings and businesses leading the way on climate action, with significant experience to contribute to a community climate emergency response. Council's role will be to inspire, inform, enable and connect people to develop a localised, community owned and led response.

So far we have completed a community climate change survey and community greenhouse gas emissions profile, hosted an online events series called Surf Coast Reimagined, and kept in regular contact with climate-focused community members.

Our 2021 survey told us that providing local climate data, information, mapping and projections are the most useful things Council can do to help our community prepare for a changing climate. Connecting people, providing access to Traditional Owner knowledge, grant funding, and supporting our youth and vulnerable people are other things we may assist with.

Launched in April 2021, Council's Community Climate Mobiliser program will instigate broader community conversations to identify priority actions for the Surf Coast community's climate emergency response.

3.3 Reporting progress and assessing impact

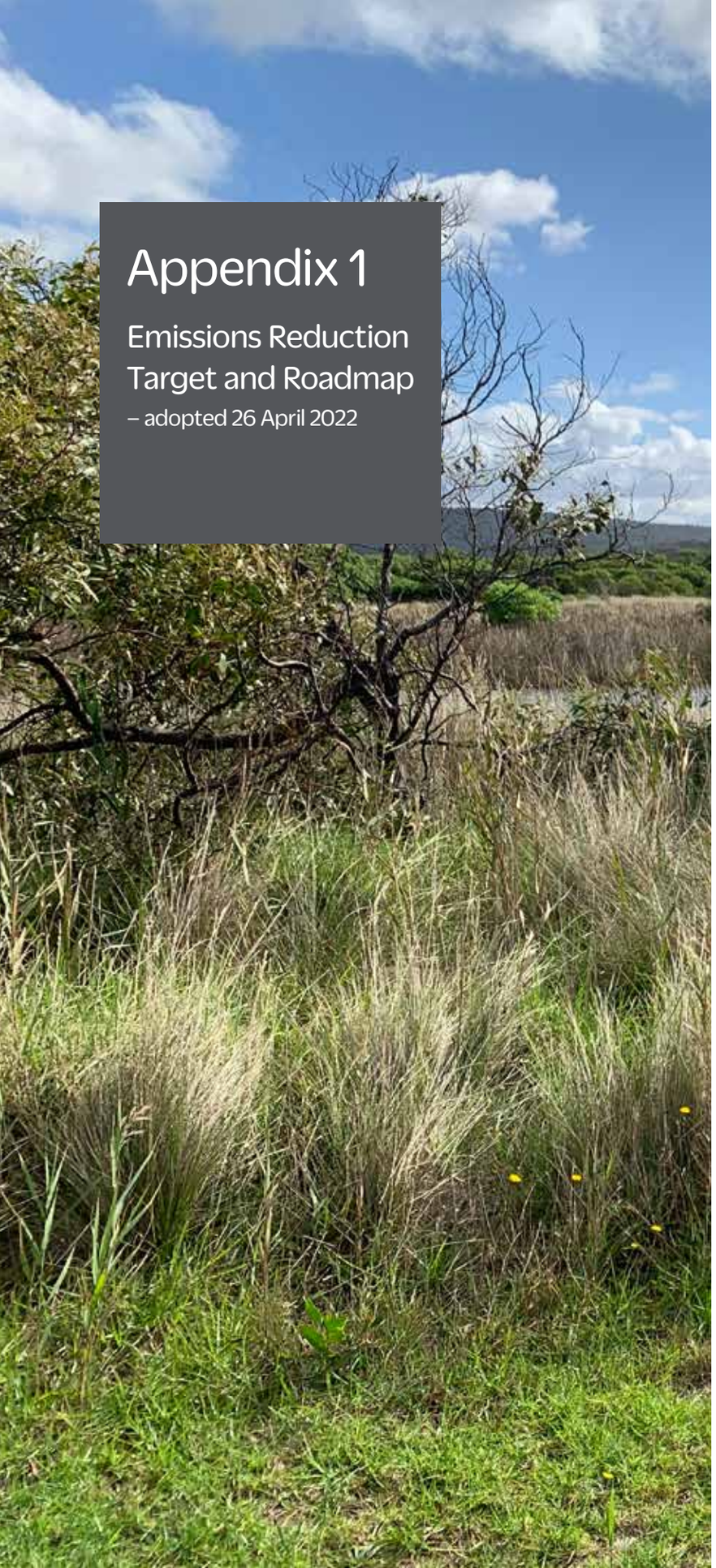
Our Climate Emergency Goals and Action Plan* – Council's Manager Environment and Community Safety is responsible for reporting progress quarterly to the Executive Management Team, Councillors and the community, using a traffic light status update system.

Our Corporate Environmental Sustainability Targets – Council's Manager Environment and Community Safety will report on progress towards these targets annually to the stakeholders above, including an update on our greenhouse gas emission profile.

Our Towards Environmental Leadership website will house the related reports and stories for our community to access.

**An updated Action Plan will be developed every two years, prior to annual budget processes. This approach will enable us to respond to the rapid evolution of climate change science, information, technology, legislation and available solutions, and to the impacts being experienced locally.*

Appendices



Appendix 1

Emissions Reduction Target and Roadmap

– adopted 26 April 2022

Emissions reduction target and roadmap

In April 2022 Council adopted a corporate emissions reduction target and roadmap. This commitment ensures that Council does not rely solely on offsetting, but develops a pathway to actively reduce emissions that arise through its operations.

In line with the internationally recognised Greenhouse Gas Protocol methodology Council's corporate greenhouse gas emissions profile quantifies the emissions associated with all of Council's operations. Emissions sources are captured in three categories:

SCOPE 1: DIRECT EMISSIONS FROM OUR OPERATIONS

- 87% of Council's emissions profile (landfill gas, fleet fuel combustion, gas and refrigerants in facilities) in Council's baseline year of 2020-21

SCOPE 2: INDIRECT EMISSIONS FROM PURCHASED ELECTRICITY

- 3% of Council's emissions profile (purchased electricity) in Council's baseline year of 2020-21

SCOPE 3: ALL OTHER INDIRECT EMISSIONS THAT OCCUR AS A RESULT OF OUR OPERATIONS

- 10% of Council's emissions profile (contractor fuel, construction materials, street lights, catering) in Council's baseline year of 2020-21

The Anglesea Landfill is Council's largest emissions source, accounting for approximately 75% of Council's corporate greenhouse gas emissions in Council's baseline year of 2020-21. Emissions are unable to be eliminated due to existing organic material which will continue to emit legacy emissions for over 20 years. The emissions target is therefore focused on non-landfill scope 1 and 2 emissions sources over which Council has greater operational control. While the target is focused on non-landfill emissions, the roadmap does includes a commitment to limit, capture and offset landfill emissions.

Surf Coast Shire Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Target

Limit, capture and offset landfill emissions

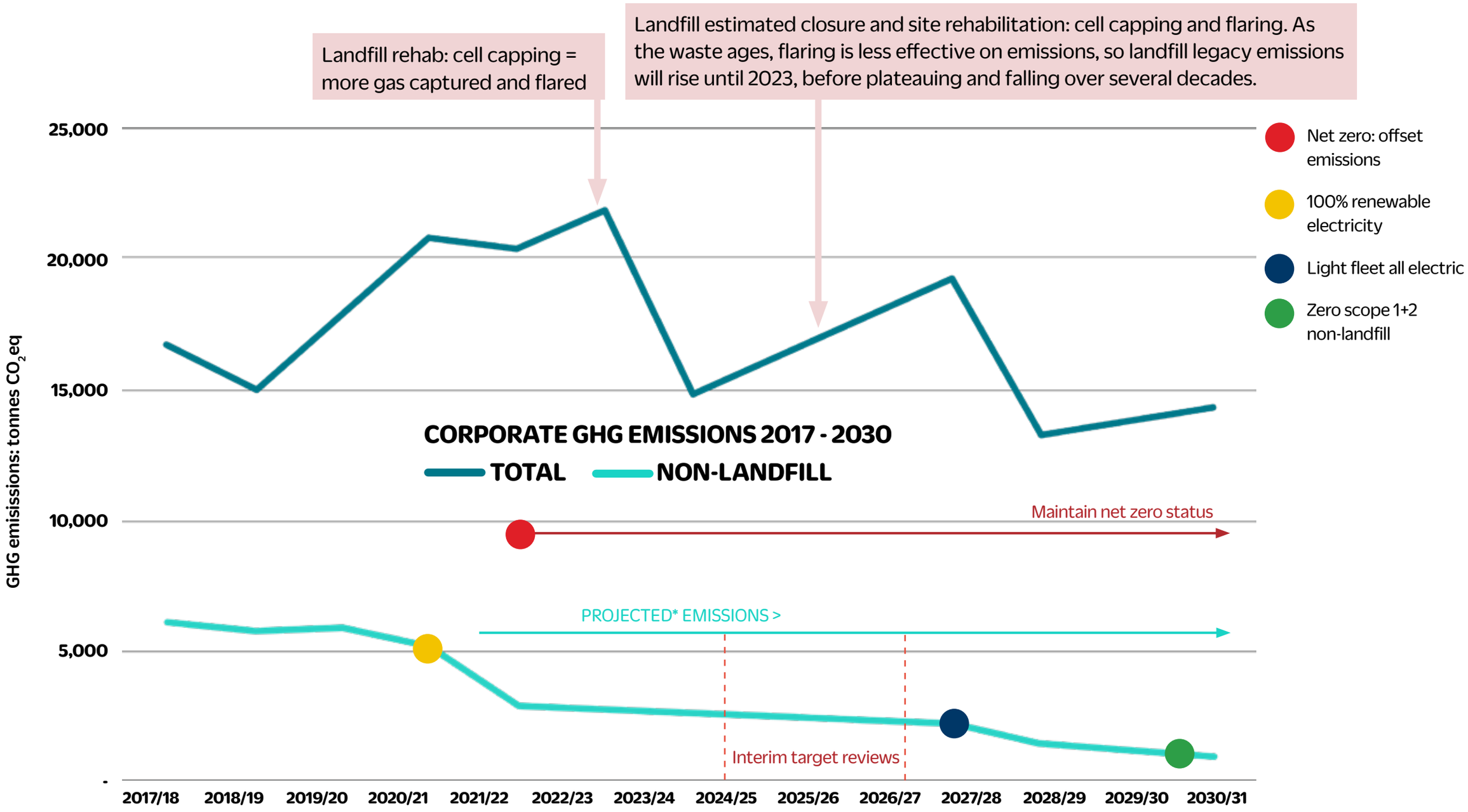
- Municipal food organics and garden organics diverted landfill from 2021
- Commercial and industrial organic material diverted from landfill by 2025
- Landfill gas capture and flaring maximised (ongoing exploration as technology advances)
- Continued exploration of opportunities to generate electricty from the landfill flare and the site pre/post closure

Net Zero Emissions by 2030

- Carbon levy established Anglesea Landfill to fund purchase of offsets
- Council's GHG emissions are offset and Climate Active certification achieved
- Investigate options for future local offset investment

Zero scope 1 and 2 non-landfill emissions by 2030

- Zero scope 2 emissions by 2021 (100% renewable electricty from 2021)
- Zero scope 1 non-landfill emissions by 2030
- 100% electric vehicles for Council's light fleet by 2028



ACHIEVED

- ✓ 100% renewable electricity
- ✓ FOGO waste diversion
- ✓ More than 585kW solar and 50kW battery storage installed

2022-2026

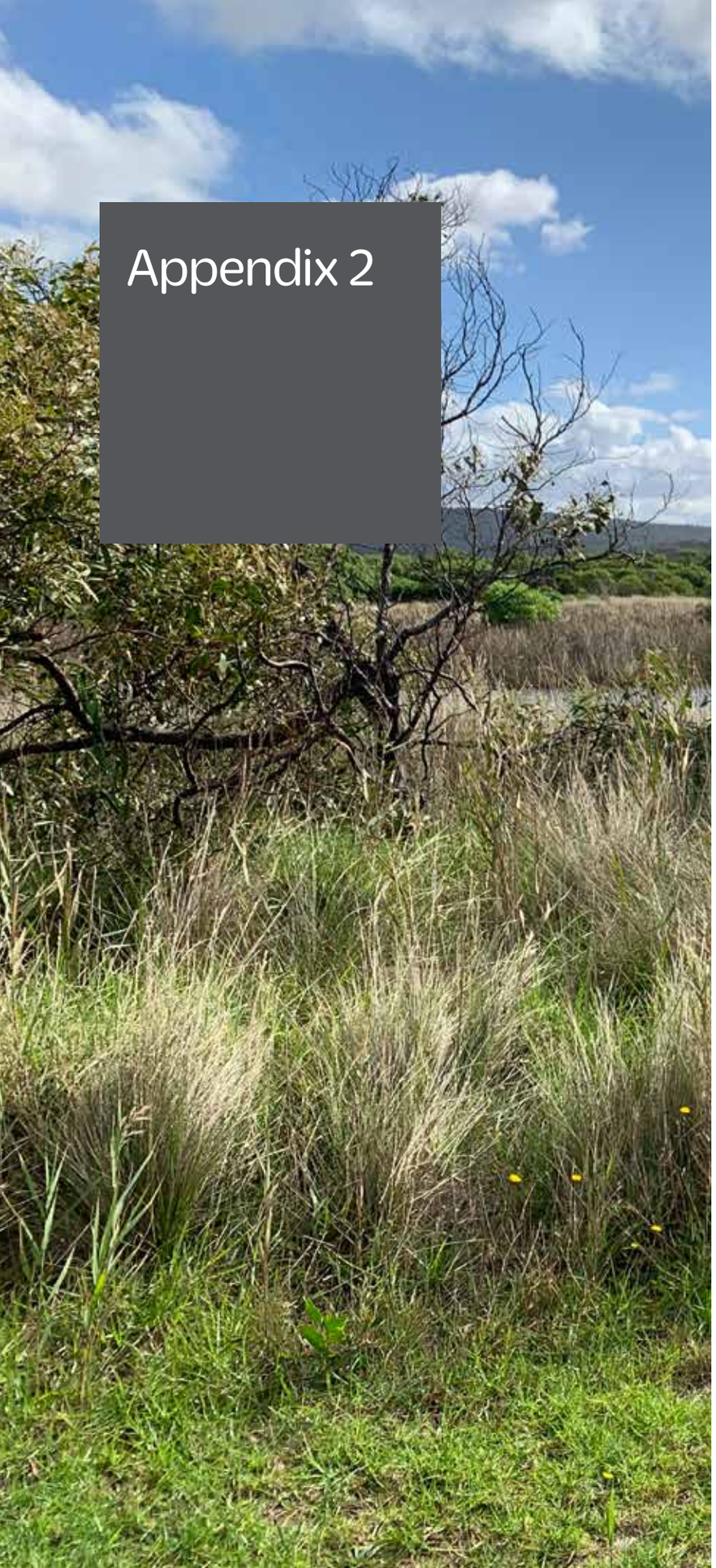
Accelerated focus within existing budgets and resources:

- Light fleet transition to electric
- Sustainable Facilities Policy driving electrification and efficiences (renewals, upgrade & new builds)
- Lanfill emissions investigation of opportunities

2026 - 2030

- Additional investment likely required for remaining electrification works with longer ROI
- Technology advances required for heavy plant/ vehicles

NOTE: Landfill emissions are highly variable and difficult to forecast. the projected total emissions in this chart are an estimate based on historical data.



Appendix 2

Climate adaptation planning framework

In order to deliver on Goal 3 of this plan, our organisation is thriving in a changing climate, a climate adaptation planning framework has been developed to better coordinate our adaptation responses across the organisation and ensure we're building resilience to the current and future impacts of climate change. An internal working group, with key stakeholders from across the organisation, has developed this high level framework, which includes:

- Guiding principles to apply across all our adaptation areas
- Eight areas where Council can make a difference and will focus our adaptation action
- The outcomes we want to achieve in each of the focus areas.

Guiding Principles

COLLABORATION

We work together with Traditional Owners, with other levels of government, agencies and across Council.

BEST PRACTICE

We strive for best practice, using the best available data, tools and technology to continually improve our adaptation responses.

EQUITY

We recognise climate change does not affect everyone equally. The impacts of climate change perpetuate and magnify inequalities. We are committed to ensuring all people have the opportunity to participate and share the benefits of our climate efforts.

INTEGRATION

We consider the interaction of mitigation and mobilisation outcomes with adaptation responses.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

We believe community members are experts in their own lives and places; we value their knowledge and enable them to contribute their unique skills to climate change solutions and we empower them with knowledge on local climate risk.

Governance, Risk and Financial Management	Emergency Management and Community Resilience	Land Use Planning	Land Management	Integrated Water Management	Asset Management	Advocacy, Coordination and Engagement	Economic Development

And the outcomes we want to see

We understand our climate risk and continually embed adaptive responses in projects, strategies and services across the organisation. We manage Council funds sustainably; we invest now to save later.	Our community are aware of risks and actively building resilience to climate impacts. Our emergency management capacity is adequate to respond to increased extreme weather and compounding events.	Our planning scheme addresses current and projected climate impacts and our land use planning is congruent with the Shire's future climate. Our land management practices are forward looking and are resilient to our future climate.	We actively regenerate our open space to support ecosystem resilience and human health and wellbeing.	We take a systems view of water management and work collaboratively with partners to conserve water and provide multiple environmental and community benefits.	We have a clear understanding of our vulnerabilities and are investing in proactive approaches to build the resilience of Council assets and infrastructure.	We advocate broadly for urgent action and we are an active player in regionally coordinated climate adaptation planning. We are actively engaging with other levels of government, agencies and the community.	We develop our local economy within planetary and social boundaries and support local businesses to adapt.