

4.5 REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Responsible Director: Deb Cailes

RECOMMENDATION

That Council note the discussions and outcomes that the Environmental Advisory Committee, as representatives of the community, have contributed to council in 2021.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide an annual report on the Environmental Advisory Committee for 2021, in accordance with the committee Terms of Reference.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) is to inform and advise Council on environmental and sustainability related issues and Council's role in improving the natural environment of Monash. The EAC has advisory capacity only and has no delegated authority to make decisions as if they were Council. Advisory Committees provide advice to Council and staff to assist them in their decision making.

Since 2007, EAC has provided advice on Council's environmental sustainability programs and with a focus on the implementation, monitoring, and review of the 2016-2026 Environmental Sustainability Strategy actions and resulting strategic projects.

EAC is represented by up to 15 community members and three Councillors. The term for the community membership is 2 years. Community members are appointed by Council following a public expression of interest.

DISCUSSION

The 2020-2022 EAC membership appointments were endorsed by council in July 2020 and they first met in December 2020 following council elections. Eight 2018-2020 EAC members renewed their membership and seven new EAC members were appointed in accordance with the Terms of Reference.

During 2021, the EAC committee agreed to move the meetings to monthly from 6pm-7.30pm on the first Monday of the month. All but one meeting was held online. The Community Committee members have an 81% attendance record with a number attending 100% of the time.

The 2021 meeting format included workshops during meeting time, to enable all community and council members more opportunity to collaborate with others when providing feedback under the following agenda:

- Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country, Attendance and Apologies

- Conflict of Interest declaration.
- Workshop on topic of interest including occasional staff presentations.
- Outstanding actions and other the business

The table below lists the topics discussed during 2021 by the EAC Committee and how this information was used to support and inform program delivery. All topics align with the priorities of Environmental Sustainability Strategy:

2021 meeting	Topics	Outcome
January	Sustainability In Procurement Sustainable Communications	Inform future procurement policies (sustainability criteria 20% approved) Help to focus the communication of topics which align with strategy priorities and are of most interest to community.
February	Increasing vegetation and canopy and Draft Tree Management Strategy	Inform future program Contributions informed Tree Management Strategy
March	Circular Economy and recycling	Better understand what the concept of Circular Economy means in the community and how to best translate it. How council can involve the community to participate.
April	Zero Net Carbon for council and community	Better understand what the concept of zero net carbon mean to the community, expectations of council role to support community and business and how can we help the community to take leadership in this issue.
May	Imagine Monash in 2040 Low Carbon Communities Paper	Contribution to Vision and Council Plan Feedback on future campaign ideas to help reduce barriers to sustainable action.
June	Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) Monash Boulevard Plan	Awareness of WSUD Contribution to Council's long term Urban planning.
July	Community Garden Policy Waste Exchange Program	Feedback on value of community gardens and need to address governance and OHS requirements. Feedback on value of waste exchange program for local businesses.
August	Litter Prevention	Awareness of litter education and enforcement program
September	Sustainability Innovation and Solutions Workshop	Provide new discussion points for 2022, aligned with council and community priorities and support program delivery.
October	Waste and Recycling	Awareness of recycling through education which will also clarify communications with wider public.
November	Environmental Effects Statement (ESS) Birds of Monash	Inform on the ESS for the Suburban Rail Loop. Awareness of rich Monash biodiversity and importance of GreenShoots programs

December	Priority topics for 2022	Select priorities to be further explored in 2022 to inform future council programs.
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As representatives of the community, the members identified the following discussion topics which they would like to focus in 2022, and which align with the delivery of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016-2026 priorities and benefit to our local community:

- 1) Sustainable living (buildings and planning) - to improve energy efficiency and ensure homes are built to standard and role of council.
- 2) Communicating on Sustainability (with a focus on circular economy thinking).
- 3) Sustainable local transport in the community - including cycling and Electric Vehicle infrastructure.
- 4) Blockchains/Microgrids to support community solar power sharing.

All EAC members have been informed on the new Policy for Advisory Committees and updated Governance rules for Advisory Committees, and the agenda was updated to align with the changes.

Five members resigned in the last 12 months (mainly due to relocation outside of Monash). Four new casual vacancy members were recruited in 2021, taking the membership to 14.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

As per the Terms of Reference, EAC provide advice and guidance on the delivery of Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016-26 actions and related programs.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

EAC provides the opportunity to access community perspective to support the delivery of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2016-26. Community membership is based on public invitation and members selected to provide a balanced representation of the community.

CONCLUSION

That Council note the discussions and outcomes that the Environmental Advisory Committee has contributed in 2021.