Circular Economy Framework

Engagement Summary Report

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Executive Summary

Overview

Council developed an overarching Circular Economy (CE) Framework to guide and support the development of a circular economy in Bass Coast. The CE Framework considers Council actions as well as steps to co-create circular opportunities with community, local business and key sectors. The framework is supported by annual circularity action plans that will enable Council and community to respond to emerging opportunities and priorities, which is supported by monitoring and evaluation of actions detailed in the framework.

The transition away from the 'take-make-dispose' model toward a circular economy cannot be achieved by any single organisation, and requires the co-creation of circular opportunities with community, key sectors and business. The CE Framework therefore needs to provide appropriate high-level support suited to Bass Coast to guide actions and priorities in the circular transition. It is important that community, local business and key sectors operating in Bass Coast had the opportunity to help shape up priorities and opportunities identified in the CE Framework and are aware of future engagements as implementation of the framework progresses.

The CE Framework initiative was an action within the Council Plan 2020-2025 and deliverable within Council's 2024-25 Annual Action Plan to: *Finalise a draft Circular Economy Strategy that minimises resource use, waste and emissions and facilitates recycling and reuse of existing products.* Following the community consultation period the CE Framework was updated to reflect community priorities and identified opportunities. The framework was presented to Councillors along with engagement feedback, before taken to Council meeting for final endorsement on 18 June 2025.

Engagement Activities and Promotion

Council used a variety of activities and channels to promote the engagement opportunity, including online and in-person.

Engagement surveys

Council received a total of 20 responses through online surveys and written submissions. Responses could capture all categories that were applicable, such as providing responses representing a community member, and a local business for example.

- **17** responses to online survey
- **3** written submissions in the form of email response

Promotion

- **322** visitors to the Engage Bass Coast project site
- **1** 'pop up' drop-in sessions held across the shire, with **5** attendees in total
- **1** community presentations
- **1,075** emails sent to community groups through Engage Bass Coast and Coastell Newsletters
- **64** emails sent to sustainability community groups through existing sustainability networks
- Direct email to participants and local circular economy champions that participated in the Circular Economy Business Accelerator Program
- **Media releases** with coverage in local print media Sentinel Times and San Remo Advertiser
- **1** feature in May Business Bass Coast Newsletter
- **Social media** posts – Facebook 673 views, 6 interactions, 5 link clicks; Instagram – 612 views, reach 481, 8 interactions, 7 likes, 1 share

Council also hosted a Regional Circular Economy Summit on 5 June 2025, inviting key business and industries along with other Councils, sustainability experts and decision-makers to provide practical on-ground solutions for the implementation and integration of circular economy within and beyond organisations.

Engagement Findings

Respondent demographics

Of the survey responses, overall 94.12% were members of Bass Coast community, with many that were also representing a key sector or local business. Across all submissions (including long form email responses – refer Appendix 1)76.9 % of respondents represented community, 15.4 % represented a key sector in Bass Coast and 7.7% represented a local business. Most survey responses (71%) came from males, with 29% from females.

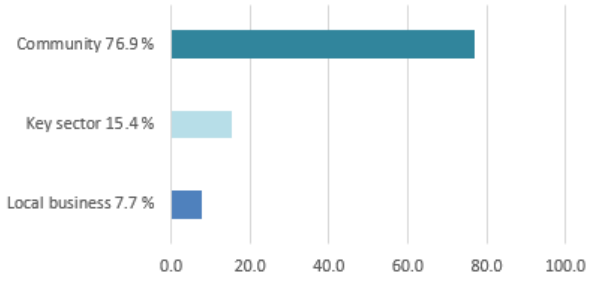


Figure 1: Respondents representing community, key sectors and local business in Bass Coast. *Note, if one respondent represented both a community member and key sector/business for completeness they are represented across both categories in Figure 1.*

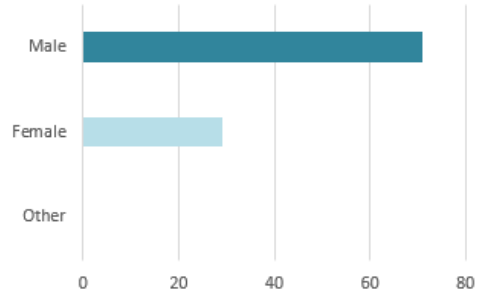


Figure 2: Respondents gender

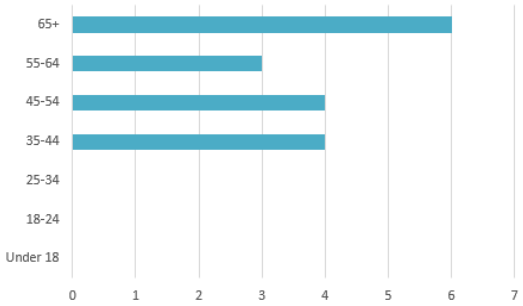


Figure 3: Respondents age groups

Survey responses

The survey included targeted survey questions tailored to community members, local business or representatives of key sectors in Bass Coast. Participants were encouraged to respond to questions from all the categories that they represented. Overall, 75% of respondents felt the draft CE Framework had captured the main ideas and opportunities. Respondents were encouraged to identify missed ideas or opportunities in the framework and case studies and ideas to support a more circular Bass Coast (refer to Appendix 1 for

specific details). Email long form submissions received are also provided in Appendix 2. A summary of the opportunities is provided below in Figure 4.



Figure 4: Summary of opportunities and case studies from respondents

General Comments

Overall, the Bass Coast community were supportive of the Circular Economy Framework. Some of the general comments provided include:

> *"An excellent and overdue initiative. Well done!"*
>
> *"I love the idea, to implement it on shire wide scale is challenging when so many people are in a 'linear' mind frame (it has to be easy-ish too) Carrot before stick..."*
>
> *"I am very excited to see this type of initiative finally gain some traction in Bass Coast. It is overdue."*
>
> *"I am so pleased about this initiative. It's SO IMPORTANT!"*
>
> *"I am looking forward to seeing the ideas that come from it."*

How feedback informed the framework

The overall sentiment of community feedback was summarised on page 13 of the final Circular Economy Framework (provided below in Figure 5). Council will continue to reflect on these community priorities as it moves to implement the framework and begin its engagement activities with community and key sectors to develop and co-create circular projects and innovations.

Our community told us:

"I am so pleased about this initiative. It's SO IMPORTANT!"

"I am looking forward to seeing the ideas that come from it."

"I love the idea, to implement it on shire wide scale is challenging when so many people are in a 'linear' mind frame (it has to be easy-ish too) carrot before stick."

Our community would like to see:

Initiatives that make circular solutions more accessible, and more affordable than 'linear' alternatives

Innovation hubs to demonstrate and share ideas

Organic waste recovered locally to produce compost and enrich local soils

Local government policy changes to better support circularity

More community-based share, repair, swap and advice services

Circular economy and climate change considered in council decision-making

Figure 5: Summary of community feedback following engagement provided in the final Circular Economy Framework (provided on page 13 of the final Circular Economy Framework).

Conclusion

Summary

Council thanks all who contributed and participated in the community engagement activities during this consultation period to refine the development of the Circular Economy Framework and identify community opportunities and priorities. Your feedback is important, it helped shape our refined framework and identify areas of us to focus on as we begin to implement the framework. Based on the engagement feedback, we have met our main objective to test our draft Circular Economy Framework with community and seek community ideas and opportunities to support a more circular Bass Coast. The framework is just the beginning of the journey toward supporting a more circular Bass Coast. There will be further opportunities for your involvement as we begin to implement the Framework, stay up to date on activities through our Engage Page.

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How Council will use your feedback

The feedback directly influenced the refinement of the CE Framework and helped to identify community sentiment and priorities outlined above. Council will continue to reflect on these areas and engage with community, local business and its key sectors as we implement the framework and co-create circular solutions to support a resilient and thriving Bass Coast.

Appendix 1

Respondents identified the following missed ideas in the draft framework:

- Elevation of emissions reduction outcomes alongside circularity targets
- Inclusion of young adults in future circular engagement and project opportunities
- Use of climate emergency in language supported by concrete action and community involvement

The following opportunities were identified:

- Tools-sharing and community advice services
- Tip shops at transfer stations
- Elevation of circular economy alongside climate impacts in all Council agenda papers and reports
- Financial incentives to support circularity – for community and business as well as developers/ projects
- Desire for an 'innovation hub' to accelerate climate and circular economy projects

Examples and case studies shared include:

- Re-use of materials in parks, gardens and bike tracks
- Recycling initiatives - polystyrene initiative & soft plastics recycling trial – Indigo Shire Council
- Yarra Ranges Coldstream tip shop
- Community sharing initiatives – fashion swaps, share and borrow programs, building materials exchange & upcycling workshops
- Plastic Bag Free Bass Coast (Boomerang bags) - use recycled fabric, for bags, play mats and other items & previously ran education programs
- City of Melbourne - compost hubs
- Fish Creek Composter - brings businesses, residents, and community groups together to encourage sustainable food consumption, disposal, and production habits in Fish Creek and across South Gippsland.

Appendix 2

De-identified long responses:

Respondent No. 1

'Thanks for the opportunity to review this. I have had a read which has provoked some thoughts.

1) I think one of the biggest limitations is finding local and sustainable outlets for circular economy, which don't create more emissions through transport. The issue always seems to be having the technology or facilities locally to accept or screen products for re-use. I think this is where council would need to step in.
2) Also have some thoughts around CE for wastewater as an example – we need more COD and are currently looking for carbon rich waste. It would be great to have a directory of what resources are available locally that are currently sent to waste facilities that we could review and determine if we could use. Eg. If the a local business has carbon rich effluent or waste, we would be keen on using it at our WWTPs, otherwise we just have to purchase it new e.g. glycerine. If there was a dataset of current waste, we would also be interested in other forms to use. It's about making the information available – like a CE waste marketplace online!'

Respondent No. 2

Comments specific to Opportunities in the Circular transition table, provided by key sector representative:

- 'Construction –
  - include renewable (eg. certified forestry timber)
- Agriculture –
  - Facilitate distribution and use of recycled water (eg. trial on PI)
  - Facilitate agro forestry as a source of renewable building products
  - Waste recycling eg. silage wrap, drum muster
  - Support local food distribution and networks
- Tourism –
  - Promote travel by EV and public transport'

Respondent No. 3

'Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft CE Framework.

I respect and appreciate the work that has gone in to developing the Draft CE Framework and would certainly support Council moving quickly to ensure greater circularity in Bass Coast, but I must admit to being a little underwhelmed by the Draft.

In particular, while it has useful high-level, generic information (and quite a bit of management-speak), it is short on concrete actions. It also seems to lack urgency, e.g., as I understand what's written, it won't be till 2026-27 that Council has "a clear understanding [of] its key opportunities to increase circularity across its operations and … Bass Coast."

I don't mean to be negative, and realise a Framework is intentionally a high-level document, however in my view it should contain more specifics about what Council will actually do to substantially improve circularity and should communicate a stronger sense of urgency. After all, as the Foundation document notes: "we are going backwards" despite the various initiatives it mentions dating back to 2011.

It is time for more direct, concrete, innovative and radical action than proposed in the Draft. For example, I suggest the following five actions that Council should take **this year**:

1. introduce **incentives/disincentives that have financial implications** for businesses and/or consumers in Bass Coast (which could be cost- and revenue-neutral for Council itself), e.g., expediting planning /building approval for developers/projects that follow the circular economy guidance for construction clients mentioned in the Foundation document
2. embed circular economy principles, goals and targets into Council's **procurement guidelines**
3. ensure a serious, fully functioning "**tip shop**" is operating at the Wonthaggi Transfer Station (and perhaps other sites around the Shire). Some locals recall a tip shop being promised when the contract to run the Transfer Station was decided on some years ago and it is likely a requirement in the existing contract, but if it does exist at all, it is not serious or fully functioning. See: https://www.racv.com.au/royalauto/sustainability/sustainable-living/best-second-hand-tip-shops-in-victoria.html
4. identify a site and begin conversion of a building (e.g., Mitchell House) into a **Circular Economy and Climate Change Hub**. There is lots of information available about actions people can take to increase circularity and mitigate/adapt to climate change (website, pamphlets, etc.). But getting that information into the hands (hearts and minds) of people is the challenge. A physical space

where people could go for displays, demonstrations, workshops, independent advice, etc. could play a big part in doing that. It could be self-funding, e.g., charging suppliers of appropriate goods and services (like water tank and solar panel suppliers, energy efficient consultants, and eco-friendly architects) to have display space

5. require that all Council agenda papers/reports have a separate **Circular Economy and Climate Impact Section** comprising a preliminary assessment of the circularity and climate impacts of the matter at hand. It should address implications for both Council operations and, more importantly, for the broader community.

Four further comments:

- Page 2 has an Acknowledgement of Country, a note about Diversity and Inclusion, and another about Gender Impact Assessment. While not denying the importance of these things, more germane to a framework on the Circular Economy would be an Acknowledgement of the Climate Emergency and a note about Climate Impact Assessment. I suggest these be included in the final
- It is not clear where the data in the graphic on page 10 comes from nor the methodologies used to generate it. While I'd like to believe some of that data, in the absence of exact sources and methodologies I am somewhat sceptical and question whether it should be included in the final
- The final Framework should commit that future Annual Circularly Action Plans will be released in draft form for community consultation and comment

I suggest that Council's focus should be primarily on actions by the Bass Coast community (including businesses) where the biggest opportunities/solutions lie, rather than on Council's own operations.'