Climate Change Action Plan
Mid-Term Review

Prepared for
Bass Coast Shire Council

16 December 2025

LET ME
BE FRANK.



BASS COAST

Wawa!

This report was developed on Aboriginal lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong Boon Wurrung people, whose sovereignty was never ceded.

We recognise that First Nations people have deep knowledge and experience in resilience and sustainability that is critical to respond to climate change, to heal Country, culture and community.

Despite the ongoing impacts of colonisation, First Nations people continue to generously share their knowledge, time and culture as we work together for Treaty. For this, we pay our respects and deep thanks to First Nations elders past and present, and extend this to all First Nations people.

We live, work and play on Aboriginal land. 1% of our income is paid to local First Nations organisations. We encourage everyone to pay the rent as part of the reparation system that supports First Nations self-determination and fairer wealth redistribution.

Let Me Be Frank is a member of 1% for the Planet. We donate 1% of our annual income to environmental organisations. We are proud to be part of a global network that is accelerating smart environmental giving.

Every year we work to reduce our emissions. Emissions we can't avoid are offset with Greenfleet.

Our donations and offsets, along with a summary of our achievements, are reported in our annual Accountability Report.

Cover photo: Smiths Beach on Phillip Island at sunset. Photo by Kate Nicolazzo

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About this report

As it relates to climate change the world has moved quickly in some areas and more slowly in others - but in the five years since Bass Coast launched its Climate Change Action Plan in 2020, there have been significant shifts. The political and regulatory landscape has evolved, climate science and data have become more robust, and there is growing clarity on best practice for local governments in responding to climate change.

This mid-term review comes at an ideal time to assess progress, identify emerging opportunities, and refine strategic actions to reduce emissions and strengthen climate resilience in Bass Coast. It helps ensure the Climate Change Action Plan remains aligned with the latest science, policy developments, and community expectations.

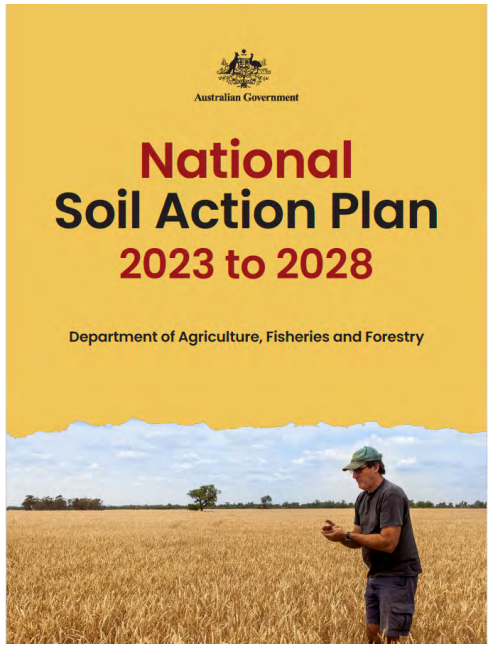
The review was completed in stages, evolving as new information and data became available. This report includes the outcomes from the first five years of delivering the Bass Coast Climate Change Action Plan, along with updates on relevant state and federal policies, funding programs, and best practice benchmarking.

It represents one input into the mid-term review process and was complemented by deep community engagement and an internal Council review.

The outputs from all elements of the review should be read together to provide the background and context for changes to the new draft Climate Change Action Plan. They can all be found on the Community Action Portal.





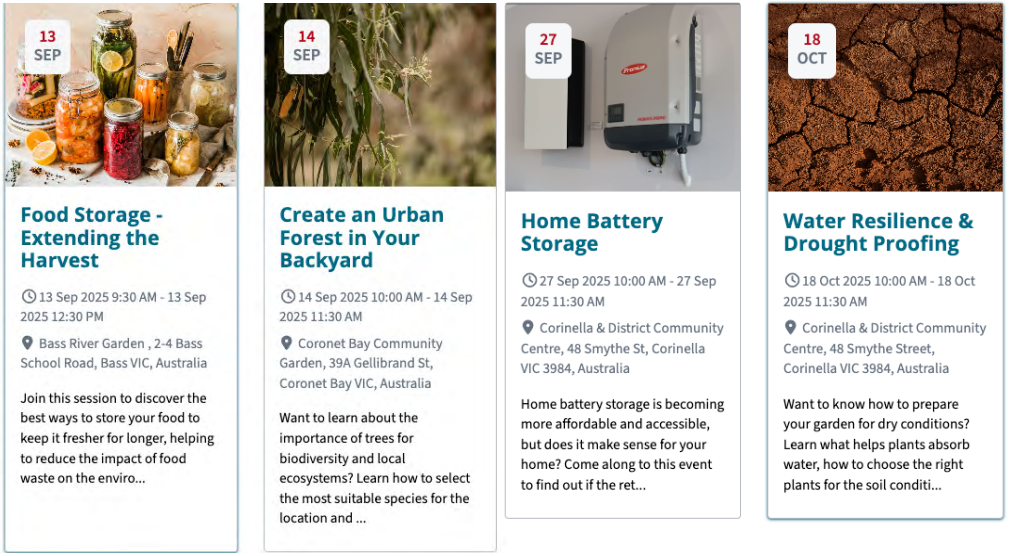




This graphic shows just a few of the new policies, plans or strategies released by the Victorian and Australian governments in the past 5 years.

The first five years (2020-2025)

Bass Coast's Climate Change Action Plan highlights 29 actions the community can take (across Households, Businesses and Organisations, Farming and Agriculture) to help deliver climate action. A further 45 actions are identified to Council to take directly to either embed climate thinking, address corporate emissions, adapt to climate change and to support the community.



Just a small sample of the workshops Council is running to support the community to mitigate, adapt to and build their resilience in the face of climate change.

Source: The CAP (Community Action Portal)

Monitoring of the Climate Change Action Plan is being carried out through regular internal reviews of Council actions, with a focus on identifying what is on track and where more work is needed. This approach ensures multi-year actions are checked annually and supports transparent reporting back to Council and the community.

Progress against Council's corporate emissions target of net-zero by 2030 is a key focus. A set of community emissions indicators is also being tracked.

Council has reported progress on implementing the plan through its Quarterly Community Reports (scroll to 'Quarterly performance reporting' and you can see the latest report) at a high level, with more detail reported through the Community Action Portal. We note the last report Council published was for the 2022/23 financial year. This is currently being updated as part of this review. These reports can be accessed through the Community Action Portal (the CAP).

We have included the latest available data in Table 1 on Page 7. This approach recognises that while Council cannot control community-wide emissions, it has an important role in enabling and supporting action.

Council progress

At this mid-point review, 10 of the 45 actions for Council have been marked complete, all the others (bar one) are in progress (ranging between 20 and 90% complete).

Highlights and Achievements

- Powering Council operations with 100% renewable electricity - this is reducing 2,000 tonnes CO2-e per year
- Exceeded our solar PV target, plus battery storage - Installed 310 kW of new panels and 120 kWh battery storage
- Integrated Transport Strategy endorsed; fleet transitioning to EVs; major EV chargers to be installed in 2025. Fleet is now made up of 18% EVs and 35% low emission vehicles.
- For every $1 Council invests in Biolinks, the partnership delivers approx. $22 in value
- 1.5 million trees planted through Biolinks Plan since 2020 resulting in approximate carbon draw down of 165,000 tonnes of CO2-e
- Hazards mapped into infrastructure risk models; AVA Toolkit embedded in Council systems.
- Climate responsibilities added to all position descriptions; staff training delivered and climate roles defined for all teams
- Solar/battery hubs established for emergencies; resilience forums built local self-reliance
- Council has made progress to improve catchment water quality through implementing Biolinks aligned with the Integrated Water Management (IWM) Plan
- Procurement Policy strengthened; near-total fossil fuel divestment; and the ESD policy was endorsed in October 2025
- Community engagement: The Community Action Portal is live; lots of workshops and information sessions, Sustainability Festivals were held in 2021 & 2023.
- Coastal protection works at Inverloch; advocacy for Western Port RAMSAR investment; Cape to Cape Resilience Plan

Barriers to progress?

- Capacity & resources – limited internal staff capacity and staff turnover, access to specialist skill slowed ongoing training, induction, and cross-department actions. This has also resulted in a failure to meet the indicator measures identified in the plan.
- Funding dependence – many projects only advanced with external grants; Council often lacked co-contribution capacity for larger works.
- Technology & infrastructure – grid issues, unsuitable EV options, and incomplete follow-up on energy audits delayed progress.
- Governance & approvals – reliance on state sign-offs (e.g. Cape to Cape Plan), shifting policies (e.g. clause removal), and timing alignment (e.g. Asset Plan).
- Unclear scope & timelines – some actions poorly defined, with no set timeframes or unrealistic expectations for ongoing delivery.
- Council role vs community expectations – tension over whether Council should provide direct incentives or simply promote state/ federal programs.
- Sharing stories of action and hope - there have been significant challenges in communicating with the community about the status of the plan, sharing progress and success. Many groups report being unable to find the Climate Change Action Plan and associated information on the Council website or the Community Action Portal.

	Indicator	Target (by 2030)	FY 20/21 (baseline)	FY 24/25 results	Results and comments
Council Emissions	Council emissions (TCO2-e)	Net Zero	13,165	2023/24 results - 11,153 (16% reduction)	All Council operational emissions sources have reduced apart from diesel. This is large part due to improved reporting practices (where previously data was not collected or reported). In the future, increasing the EV uptake in Council's fleet will help deliver on a reduction for diesel.
	% renewable energy	100%	0	100%	Target achieved!
	kW Solar installed	250 kW	0	310.8 kW plus 120.2 kWh of battery capacity	Target achieved!
	% EV in fleet	90%	2 EVs	13 total EVs plus 34% low emissions vehicles	Trending below interim targets but recoverable with renewed focus.
	% LED street lights	100%	0	40%	On track - AustNet street lighting LED replacement program to be complete by 2030.
Community Emissions	Community emissions (CO2e)	Net Zero	532,000t	497,749t	A reduction of approximately 1% from 2023/24. Reductions in electricity consumption, vehicle activity, and some agricultural commodities.
	% households with solar	60%	25%	30.1%	Increasing annually
	% business with solar	25%	-	16.6%	Trend increasing
	% households with solar plus battery	36%	-	-	Data not available yet
	% households with EV	80%	1% of households had an EV (Bass Coast LGA)	6.3% of households have an EV (VIC)	Uptake is slower than expected statewide but starting to gain traction with increased investment in infrastructure and diversity of EV makes and models available.
	% reduction in waste to landfill Grantville	10%	17,977	18,992 (estimate)	Trending in the wrong direction. This is a very hard emissions source to reduce.

Table 1: 2024/25 update on targets set in the Bass Coast Climate Change Action Plan

	Proposed Indicator	Results and comments
Community Engagement	# community groups supported (or amount of funding distributed)	Climate Action Grants category has been part of the Community Grants since 2022. There are two rounds per year for projects that support groups to take climate action. 17 projects have been funded since the dedicated funding program was established and $99,515.09 invested (inc. GST). Council have also supported 4 projects through the Environmental Partnerships Program. This is the first year of the program and $102,802.60 (inc. GST) has been invested so far.
	# households participating in council or community programs	While we don't have access to this data, the community survey gives us some insight. It received 72 responses (63 households, 2 businesses and 9 visitors). The businesses didn't report significant actions but the household respondents reported undertaking: • 58 planting/food-growing actions • 166 household energy-efficiency and electrification actions • 58 LED lighting upgrades • 32 hot water system upgrades • 48 appliance upgrades
	# businesses and farms participating in council or community programs	
	Reach / engagement with the portal	Since launching in 2022 the Community Action Portal has had: • 21,392 page views (across all pages) • 8,965 visitors • 122 followers • the Climate Change Action Plan has been downloaded 1,480 times
	Reach / engagement with the resilience hubs / toolkit	Various digital toolkits have been developed. These include: • SECCCA Enhancing Community Resilience Toolkit • Myli My Community Library Tool kit • Bass Coast Emergency Dashboard - See 'How to prepare for a emergency' At this stage we don't have a method for tracking uptake.
	% Household Resilience Plan (development and implementation)	See notes above - don't have a current method for tracking this data.
	% Community group membership	No method available for tracking this data.
	% Business Resilience Plan	SECCCA Small Business Climate Adaptation Toolkit launched in 2022. At this stage there has been no uptake of this program in Bass Coast and limited resources available from SECCCA for promotion and implementation support.
	% Farm Adaption Plan	Farm Adaptation Plan Toolkit was launched in 2021/22 and Landcare hosted a workshop for 20 - 30 people. They estimate 3 - 5 farm adaptation plans have been developed to date. No further funding has been available to continue or expand the program.

Table 1 (continued): 2024/25 update on targets set in the Bass Coast Climate Change Action Plan

Community members, businesses and local organisations across Bass Coast are taking meaningful climate action - from cutting energy use and installing solar, to regenerating landscapes, reducing waste and building local resilience.

However, tracking and reporting on the full breadth of these actions, as outlined in the original Climate Change Action Plan indicators, has proven complex and resource-intensive.

Collecting reliable community-level data requires specialised methodologies and significant time and resourcing. Given this, Council has prioritised directing resources toward delivering climate initiatives rather than toward extensive measurement processes.

In the next iteration of the Plan, Council will simplify and streamline community-level tracking so reporting remains meaningful, achievable, and aligned with available resources.

What's changed?

Since the adoption of the Climate Change Action Plan in 2020, there has been a profound change in the climate policy and science landscape. According to the 2024 Climate Policy Tracker from the Climate Change Authority there have been 85 new climate related policies introduced federally since 2021 and 19 in Victoria.

The high-profile climate emergency movement has slowed amid mounting budget constraints at the local and state government levels (this may also be linked to crisis fatigue in the community). While the 2025 federal election promised strong climate ambitions - real action and progress remain elusive. Disaster-related spending continues to surge. According to the Insurance Council of Australia, extreme weather events have cost $4.5 billion a year (see Figure 5). Unnatural disasters in Australia are becoming significantly more expensive to recover from and insure against, with $2.2 billion in damages recorded in just the first half of 2025. Meanwhile, the federal government continues to approve new coal and gas projects, further fuelling climate disasters.

Mandatory climate-related financial reporting is here to stay (including the need for organisations to understand their Scope 3 emissions), with many businesses taking a lead on climate action far beyond what is demanded by government. Most recently, a landmark Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice elevated climate change from a political issue to a legal obligation—declaring states must rapidly reduce emissions and may face liability for failing to prevent environmental harm. What this looks like in practice is yet to be determined, however NSW just saw approval of the largest coalmine expansion in the state overturned after a community environment group successfully argued the planning commission failed to consider the impact of all of the project's greenhouse gas emissions.

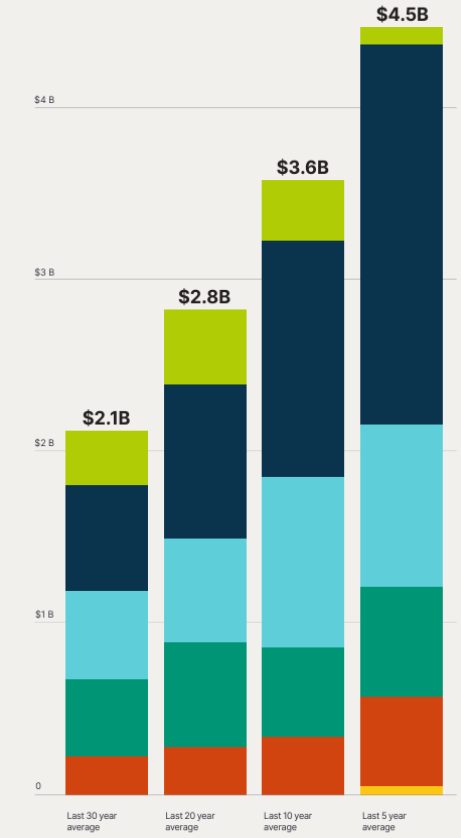


Figure 1

The Insurance Catastrophe Resilience Report 2023-24 showed that insured losses from extreme weather have grown from 0.2% of GDP (in 1995-2000) to 0.7% (2019-2024).

Research by Ipsos in 2023 found that 36% of Australians say it's likely that, within the next 25 years, they will be displaced from their home due to the effects of climate change.

Concern is greatest in Australia's regional areas. Residents of regional areas (49%) are more likely to say their area has already had severe climate impacts than those in capital cities (43%). Likewise, those in regional areas are more likely to expect severe impacts in the next 10 years (67% compared to 63%).

In August 2024, the Actuaries Institute estimated the rising cost of home insurance premiums have caused the number of Australian households experiencing home insurance affordability stress to rise by 30 percent, to 1.6 million in the past year.

Climate change is wreaking havoc in our communities and continues to disproportionately affect those with the least capacity to respond.

CLIMATE SCIENCE

The National Climate Risk Assessment (NCRA), released on 15 September 2025 after months of delay, paints a stark picture of Australia's future without urgent action to mitigate and adapt to climate change. When releasing the report Climate Change Minister Chris Bowen warned that climate risks are cascading (worsening over time), compounding (where one impact intensifies another), and concurrent (with multiple impacts striking communities simultaneously). Bass Coast is rated 2 on the Australian Climate Social Vulnerability Index (ACSVI), where 1 is the most vulnerable and 10 the least, highlighting its exposure to significant threats and hazards.

The eighth biennial State of the Climate Report (2024) summarises the current science underpinning Australia's climate and to guide decision-making across government, industry and communities.

Key findings include:

- Global air temperatures have risen by about 1.2 °C since 1850, with each decade since 1980 warmer than the last. 2023 was the warmest year on record.
- Australia has warmed by an average of 1.51 °C since 1910; sea surface temperatures have risen 1.08 °C since 1900.
- Oceans have absorbed over 90% of excess heat, the resulting ice loss Antarctica and Greenland is driving sea level rise. Our seas have risen more than 22 cm since 1900. Half of the rise has occurred since 1970.
- April to October rainfall in south-east Australia has reduced by 9% since 1994, and short-term heavy rainfall is intensifying.
- Extreme fire weather and longer fire seasons have increased since the 1950s.
- Oceans around Australia are becoming more acidic, and sea level rise is increasing coastal inundation risks.



Chris Bowen launching Australia's first comprehensive National Climate Risk Assessment.
Image Source: The Guardian

In the coming decades, Australia will experience further climate change, including:

- Rising air temperatures, with more heat extremes and fewer cold extremes.
- Ongoing decline in cool-season rainfall, leading to more time in drought.
- More intense short-duration heavy rainfall events, even in areas where average rainfall decreases or remains the same.
- More dangerous fire weather days and a longer fire season
- Continued sea level rise, and further warming and acidification of oceans.

CLIMATE MITIGATION

Global emissions are still rising. And current action remains insufficient.

Greenhouse gas concentrations hit record highs in 2023, with CO_2 at 419.2 ppm. While CO_2 emissions from human activity have levelled off over the last decade, in 2022 and 2023, the amounts of methane (CH4) and nitrous oxide (N2O), in the atmosphere increased rapidly (in large part due to agricultural practices).

Australia's 2030 target of a 43% cut below 2005 levels is not aligned with 1.5 °C or our international obligations, and we're not on track for genuine, economy-wide reductions. Outside the land and power sectors, national emissions are projected to remain above 2005 levels in 2030.

After a concerted national campaign led by prominent businesses for a 75%+ reduction target for 2035 the Federal Government announced a target of 62 - 70% on 2005 levels by 2035. This continues to fall short of Australia's fair contribution to responding to the climate crisis. Despite Minister Chris Bowen's comments that the target is "ambitious and achievable" the target is not in line with the latest climate science or Australia's fair share of the global ambition.

The Federal Government seems to be letting the states do a lot of the heavy lifting when it comes to emissions reduction. In contrast with slow progress nationally, Victoria is on track to meet its ambitious 45–50% reduction by 2030, showing that with strong policy and sustained investment, real progress is possible.

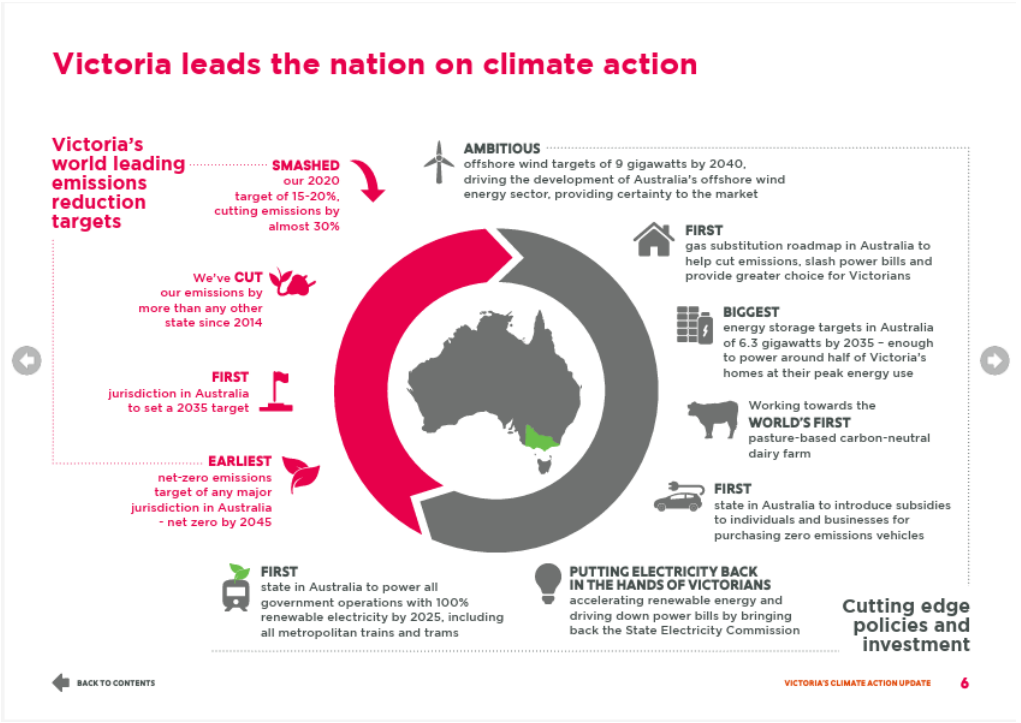


Figure 2: A Snapshot of Victoria's Climate Action from the latest Emissions Reduction Plan

Victoria was the first state to set an ambitious 2035 target of a 75-80% reduction on 2005 levels, with NSW and Qld following quickly with 70% and 75% respectively. Although earlier this year Qld looked set to review their 2035 target while maintaining the Net Zero by 2050 target to kick the can down the road a bit further.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR COMMUNITY EMISSIONS TARGETS?

Bass Coast continues to hold one of the most ambitious and progressive emissions reduction targets for their community - Net Zero by 2030 and is one of the few local governments with a detailed plan to demonstrate how it can be achieved.

All the Councils that have set community-based targets (see page 18) acknowledge the difficulty of delivering on this target as it is not within Council's operational control. Many instead view these targets and timelines as a general ambition or aspiration shared with the community. Few, if any, have undertaken the detailed modelling that demonstrates how the community can achieve the net zero target Bass Coast has.

Bass Coast was also one of the eleven Councils across Greater South East Melbourne (GSEM) and South East Council Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA) that developed a Roadmap to Net Zero Emissions to achieve net zero across the entire region, outlining advocacy, research, communication and project delivery priorities that they can all work on together. The implementation plan for this roadmap is still taking shape.

Publicly available Snapshot Climate data reported community emissions in 2022/23 as 506,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_2e). Council has commissioned an update to this data set noting emissions for FY 2023/24 to be 502,109 tCO_2e and an emissions forecast for FY 2024/25 estimating a reduction of a further 1% to 497,749 tCO_2e. See Table 2 for more information.

The data around emissions continues to demonstrate that the interventions that have a material impact on emissions (like decarbonising our electricity supply) are led by the State or Federal Government and the best role for Local Government is to support the roll out of these policies to make sure their community directly benefits, lobby for stronger targets where possible and ensure that these policies and programs are delivered with fairness and equity in mind.

Emission Sources		FY 2023/24		FY 24/25	
Source	Sector	Emissions (tCO_2e)	(%)	Emissions (tCO_2e)	(%)
Electricity	Residential	97,802	19%	92,008	18%
	Commercial	49,856	10%	56,537	11%
	Industrial	17,975	4%	15,430	3%
Mains Gas	Residential	4,845	1%	4,873	1%
	Commercial	3,667	1%	3,729	1%
	Industrial	0	0%	0	0%
Wood	Residential	29,636	6%	30,065	6%
Bottled Gas	Residential	289	0%	293	0%
Transport	Automotive	91,315	18%	89,629	18%
	Freight	22,000	4%	22,000	4%
	Trains	0	0%	0	0%
Waste	Solid Waste	15,005	3%	15,328	3%
	Wastewater	5,072	1%	5,146	1%
Industrial Processes and Product Use (IPPU)	Product Use	13,188	3%	13,378	3%
	Industrial Processes	4,058	1%	4,116	1%
Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses (AFOLU)	Agriculture	131,125	26%	128,664	26%
	Land Use Change	-3,000	-1%	-3,000	-1%
Fugitive	All	19,275	4%	19,553	4%
TOTAL Emissions		502,109	100%	497,749	100%

Table 2: Bass Coast Shire community emissions profile prepared by Ironbark Sustainability.

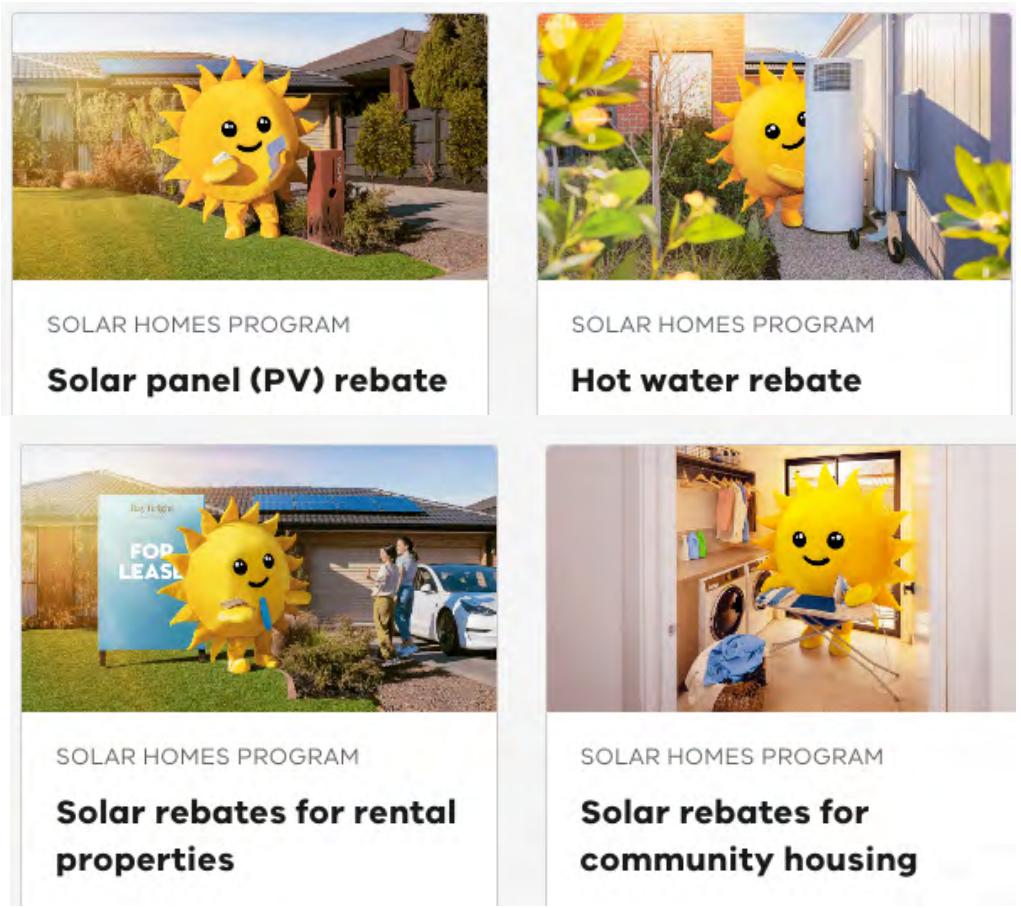
Electricity continues to be the largest source of emissions for Bass Coast (31%) and Victoria (35%). The State of Victoria is rapidly decarbonising the grid (on track for 40% renewable energy in 2025, 65% by 2030 and 95% by 2035) - meaning a large proportion of the Net Zero target is well on track (although not in line with the 2030 target initially set by Bass Coast).

For households this decarbonisation journey includes:

- Solar, battery and energy efficiency rebates through Solar Victoria and the Victorian Energy Upgrade programs
- 30% discount on batteries through the Federal Cheaper Home Batteries Program
- Banning gas connections for new homes from 2027
- Phasing out gas in existing homes (including rentals)
- Increasing minimum standards for efficiency and thermal comfort in rental homes
- The reintroduction of the State Electricity Commission (SEC) as a renewable energy company (including as a retailer)

The other major sources of emissions for both Victoria and Bass Coast are transport (Victoria 25% and Bass Coast 22%) and agriculture (Victoria 14% and Bass Coast 28%), Neither sectors are progressing as well.

Victoria's approach to decarbonising transport is focused on electrification through the Zero Emissions Vehicle (ZEV) Roadmap with reduced stamp duty, and waived registration fees (supporting a target of 50% new car sales being ZEV by 2030) and grants for businesses to facilitate uptake of electric light commercial vehicles, accelerating fleet decarbonisation among businesses. There has also been significant investment in public transport (in particular electric buses and large infrastructure projects like the metro tunnel etc) but this investment is largely focused on metropolitan areas with little allocated to regional projects.



Some of the rebates that are available through Solar Victoria



Victoria's work in understanding and reducing emissions on farms has been stop/start. In 2022 the Victorian Agriculture and Climate Change Council and Minister for Agriculture released the Victorian Agriculture and Climate Change Statement.

This statement highlighted the need for a shared long-term vision and to acknowledge the climate work farmers do everyday. To support implementation, the Victorian Government has invested in:

- Agriculture Sector Emissions Reduction Pledge to drive on-farm emissions cuts ($20 million).
- Agriculture Energy Investment Plan to boost energy efficiency and productivity ($60 million).
- A partnership with the Commonwealth on drought resilience programs for farm businesses and communities.
- Carbon Farming Outreach Program to support agroforestry, shelterbelts, and carbon market access ($15.3 million).
- Free tools and resources via Agriculture Victoria to help farmers manage climate, carbon, and energy.

This list highlights that while energy and emissions are being addressed through policy and program interventions, climate adaptation and resilience on farms is not receiving the attention (or budget) it needs.

More detail about opportunities for the Agricultural Sector are included in the emerging opportunities section of the report.

How are we reducing emissions from waste?

Municipal waste is difficult to address, or highlighted as a relatively minor contributor to emissions across the board. But for many Local Government's operating landfill, waste is responsible for the majority of corporate emissions (at least until we start calculating embodied carbon in infrastructure projects!)

Shifting to a genuinely circular economy will deliver a net zero outcome and Bass Coast is well on the way with their Circular Economy Framework.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR COUNCIL EMISSIONS TARGETS?

When it comes to operational or corporate emissions targets, there are many more local governments setting clear targets. From carbon neutrality with offsets, through certification programs like Climate Active to real reductions in efficiency, fuel switching, and ultimately working towards net zero.

Since 2012, ten (10) Victorian Councils have achieved Carbon Neutral Certification through Climate Active for their operations including: Melbourne, Yarra, Maroondah, Merri-bek, Darebin, Surf Coast, Mornington Peninsula, Moonee Valley, Wyndham and Bayside. Colac Otway Shire have worked through their own process in line with the national standards with a private provider.

In 2025 Surf Coast and Mornington Peninsula have withdrawn from the program. Surf Coast reported this was to focus on investing in local emission reduction rather than purchasing offsets and Mornington Peninsula has withdrawn in line with their decision to rescind their Climate Emergency Plan.

Conducting a brief review of the Public Disclosure Statements from these certified Councils it appears that Mornington Peninsula Shire Council was the only Council including landfill (from Rye) in their carbon accounting. Many councils report their corporate emissions without landfill, while others, including Wellington Shire, report their corporate emissions with and without landfill to provide full transparency.

Climate Active certification has been subject to significant scrutiny over the past few years. The scheme relies heavily on carbon offsets, not enough real reductions and hasn't increased transparency or oversight despite more than 150 companies and organisations leaving the program, including PwC one of the schemes earliest members (who increased emissions during their time in the program). Cooper Energy has also increased gas production, emissions intensity, and absolute emissions since certification in 2021.

Carbon Neutral Vs Net Zero Vs Real Zero?

Over the past decade (the past five years in particular), expectations for climate leadership have shifted significantly. What does it mean for an organisation to set targets, cut emissions, and report on progress today?

We have moved from Carbon Neutral - balancing emissions with an equivalent amount removed from the atmosphere, usually through purchasing carbon offsets. While this can "neutralise" emissions on paper, actual emissions may remain high if reductions are not prioritised.

To Net Zero - reducing emissions as much as possible, then balancing only the residual emissions with removals (e.g., nature-based solutions or technology). The focus is on deep cuts first, with offsets used only for emissions that are genuinely hard to eliminate. Targets are typically set for a specific year (e.g., 2030 or 2050).

Now, industry leaders like Fortescue, Lendlease, and IKEA are committing to Real Zero - eliminating all emissions at the source, without relying on offsets. It requires a complete shift to zero-emissions energy, processes, and products, removing greenhouse gases from operations altogether.

The Real Zero report by the Institute for Sustainable Futures for Climate Integrity sets a new benchmark in corporate climate leadership and accountability.

Could Bass Coast lead the way in bringing Real Zero ambition to local government?

Australia's new mandatory climate-related financial disclosure regime will require large companies, financial institutions, super funds, and government departments to publish an annual Sustainability Report aligned with AASB S2. Reports must outline governance, risk management, strategy, and metrics—including Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions, targets, and carbon credit use—with directors confirming compliance. Limited liability applies to some forward-looking disclosures for the first three years, and full audits will be mandatory from July 2030. The reforms aim to boost transparency, reduce greenwashing risk, and align Australia with global reporting standards such as IFRS S2.

Local governments are not required to report yet but the sector is expected to be incorporated into the scheme in three key ways:

1. As part of the value chain for reporting entities (i.e., as part of Scope 3 emissions for larger businesses)
2. As a reporting entity in their own right
3. Supporting local businesses to meet their obligations



Ironbark Sustainability have been supporting local governments understand their potential role in the new disclosures.

CARBON OFFSETS

We need to reduce emissions now. The first place to start is to end our reliance on fossil fuel use, as quickly as possible. Unfortunately it seems that most organisations want to purchase carbon offsets as a first step rather than prioritising emissions reduction (possibly to reduce feelings of guilt over climate inertia or to build social license to keep polluting).

The offsets market is booming, growing to over $1.1 billion in the 2024 calendar year. This is largely driven by the Safeguard Mechanism which requires Australia's highest greenhouse gas emitting facilities to reduce their emissions in line with Australia's emission reduction targets of 43% below 2005 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2050. However, they can buy and surrender Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) or Safeguard Mechanism credit units (SMCs) for all emissions over and above their safeguard.

Despite the popularity of offsets, in particular ACCUs, there are serious concerns around the integrity of the market, creating potential risks and liabilities in the long term for organisations relying on offsets to deliver their carbon targets.

In her speech to the Climate Integrity Summit in 2023 Polly Hemming from The Australia Institute states it plainly:

"Carbon offsets may have a small role to play in Australia's climate policy. But it must be acknowledged that it comes at the expense of genuine decarbonisation and that when they're used in bad faith offsets result in an increase in emissions."

If carbon offsets do form part of Bass Coast's strategy for emissions reduction at a corporate or community level then Council will need to consider carefully how to ensure transparency and integrity in their purchase and surrender.

How much does it cost to offset?

Operating budgets are tight for local government and only getting tighter. When, where and how much to invest in climate action is a complex question that doesn't have a simple answer. Councils who have withdrawn from the Climate Active program may have done so purely due to cost, others for political reasons.

It is important to understand the cost for offsets and certification as Bass Coast assesses the value and impact of a certification pathway (like Climate Active) versus a self-reporting approach similar to that undertaken by Colac Otway.

Recently Merri-bek updated their Carbon Offset Purchasing Policy to include Gold Standard Verified Emissions Reduction (VERs) which are substantially cheaper than Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs). This was following media reports that Merri-bek had spent $70,000 on ACCUs to achieve carbon neutrality with Climate Active. Yarra also purchases international credits to achieve their carbon neutrality certification.

Prices for carbon offsets vary greatly. The World Bank Carbon pricing Dashboard shows prices between $1 USD and $158 USD a tonne in 2025. ACCUs currently trade for around $35-40 a tonne as opposed to many Gold Standard VERs that trade under $10 a tonne.

For Bass Coast the current footprint of around 13,000 tonnes (including the emissions from landfill which is often excluded from most local government profiles) means the cost for offsetting could be anywhere between $130,000 and $500,000 each year. An unrealistic cost for any local government. The increasing accuracy of emissions reporting is likely to increase the footprint in the short-term, further increasing the cost. If Bass Coast was to exclude landfill the footprint drops to around 3000 tonnes (mostly due to transport emissions) which could cost between $30,000 and $120,000 to offset.

	Municipality	Council corporate targets	Community emissions targets
Urban	Yarra	Remains certified 'Carbon Neutral'. Working towards achieving gross zero carbon emissions from all Council operations by 2030.	Zero emissions by 2035
	Merri-bek	Remains certified 'Carbon Neutral'. Net zero emissions by 2040	75% emissions reduction by 2030 (against 2011/12 baseline), net zero by 2035 and drawdown ('negative emissions') by 2040
	Stonnington	Zero carbon emissions by 2030	Achieve zero carbon emissions by 2030
	Glen Eira	Zero direct Council emissions by 2031.	Net zero by 2030
	Maribyrnong	Certified 'Carbon Neutral'. Publishes their own Zero Carbon Emissions Disclosure Statement	Zero emissions by 2030
	Melbourne	Remains certified 'Carbon Neutral'. Net zero emissions by 2040	Net zero emissions by 2040
	Port Phillip	Certified 'Carbon Neutral'. Publish their own disclosure	Net zero emissions by 2050
	Banyule	Be a carbon neutral organisation by 2028	Zero net emissions by 2040
Regional	Baw Baw	Unclear	Net zero emissions by 2050 (via signing onto Take 2)
	Latrobe	Net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2035	Supports a target of net zero emissions by 2050
	Wellington	Net zero by 2040 (excluding landfill, with offsets)	Supports a target of net zero emissions by 2050
	East Gippsland	Unclear	Unclear
	Surf Coast	Net zero by 2030 (excluding Anglesea landfill, with offsets)	None published
	Colac Otway	Maintain Carbon Neutral Council Operations (Scope 1 & 2). Net Zero Corporate Emissions (Scope 1, 2 & 3) by 2040.	Our community will have transitioned to a Net Zero Carbon Community by 2040.
State			Net zero emissions by 2045 (75–80% below 2005 levels by 2035)
National			Net zero by 2050 (62-70% below 2005 levels by 2035)

Table 3: The latest net zero targets across Victorian local governments as well as state and federal targets

CLIMATE RISK, ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE

Climate change is here, and it is going to get worse before it gets better. While we invest in climate mitigation, we have to also keep our eye on managing our growing climate risks, how we adapt and build resilience.

Our national approach

Despite a widespread and growing awareness and wariness about the risks posed by climate change Australia is yet to finalise a national Climate Adaptation Plan - although it is in development. We have just released Australia's first-ever comprehensive, national evaluation of climate change risks - the National Climate Risk Assessment (NCRA). The NCRA identified 56 nationally significant climate risks, with 11 priority risks selected for deeper analysis. The priority risks include:

- Defence and national security: Risk to domestic disaster response when simultaneous natural hazards and security contingencies overlap, potentially stretching government and emergency services beyond capacity.
- Economy, trade and finance: Disruption to economic systems due to climate shocks and gradual shifts.
- Health and social services: Risks to human health and well-being from both slow-onset climate changes and extreme events.
- Infrastructure and built environment: Exposure to physical climate hazards like flooding, heatwaves, and coastal erosion.
- Natural environment: Risks like biodiversity loss, ecosystem disruption, and species extinction.
- Primary industries and food: Impacts on agriculture and food security through changing climate conditions.
- Regional and remote communities: Vulnerability of communities with limited infrastructure and adaptive capacity.
- Water Resources: Threatened by drought, altered seasonal patterns, and supply challenges.

The NCRA has assessed climate risks and impacts in Australia at three levels of global heating: 1.5ºC, 2ºC, and 3ºC above pre-industrial levels. At these levels, it identifies severe risks with catastrophic impacts for Australians if we don't do more to cut climate pollution. Globally we are still on track for 3 degrees of warming. The Climate Council summarised the findings from the report in the infographic below.



The National Climate Risk Assessment also considers the unique and specific climate impacts and risks faced by First Nations communities in Australia. It emphasises the need to recognise and incorporate First Nations values, knowledge, and cultural practices in understanding and responding to climate risks. Overall, this highlights the necessity of integrating First Nations knowledge and values into climate risk assessments and adaptation strategies to address the challenges climate change poses on these communities effectively.

It highlights:

- First Nations communities are experiencing multiple and interconnected impacts from climate change, which affect their land, water, health, and cultural practices and can exacerbate existing inequalities and vulnerabilities.
- The critical role of First Nations peoples in environmental stewardship and sustainable management of natural resources. Their deep connection to the land and waters provides valuable insights for adaptation strategies.
- The need for a participatory approach to directly engage First Nations stakeholders, and understand diverse perspectives and experiences.
- Plans for ongoing assessments of climate risks specific to First Nations communities
- The overlap of climate risks across various systems, indicating that the impacts on First Nations communities are not isolated but interconnected with broader national climate risks.

Victorian approach

Under the Climate Change Act 2017 the Victorian government must publish five-yearly Adaptation Action Plans (AAPs) across seven critical systems—Built Environment, Education & Training, Health & Human Services, Natural Environment, Primary Production, Transport, and Water Cycle.

Victoria has also developed place-based five-year Regional Adaptation Strategies (including for Gippsland), co-designed with communities to reflect local climate vulnerabilities and guide context-specific adaptation actions. In addition, there is a significant amount of work underway for coastal hazard adaptation planning under the state's Victoria's Resilient Coast – Adapting for 2100+ framework that includes local adaptation responses to sea-level rise and erosion.

Victoria is also updating flood modeling and planning controls, improving early warning systems, and strengthening emergency response infrastructure in preparation for extreme weather events.

HOW ARE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS MANAGING CLIMATE RISK?

Local governments across Australia are implementing a variety of strategies to manage the climate risks they are most exposed to, and enhance community resilience. As identified in the ALGA report Adapting Together: Local Government Leadership in a Changing Climate it is difficult to find publicly available information on local government climate adaptation.

Information is fragmented and context-specific, making it virtually impossible to gain a full understanding of locally led adaptation across the nation. We know that local government is critical and fulfill a role that cannot be undertaken by any other level of government. We also know that local government is bearing a disproportionate financial burden, the Grattan Institute estimated an additional $1 billion is required annually to maintain current conditions for roads under local government control alone.

Despite this awareness local governments are not being funded adequately to manage climate risks and in the absence of this funding the ALGA report found that most actions underway are low- or no-cost updates to internal governance and processes. Of these, two-thirds focused on development of climate risk assessments and adaptation plans.

This echoes the desktop analysis of Let Me Be Frank. Finding that many Councils are undertaking a detailed assessment of their asset base and integrating climate resilience into the maintenance and management of their assets. This doesn't extend to climate resilience or adaptation at a broader scale across the community. Some examples of current practice are shared on the following page.

Where does biodiversity fit?

The UN emphasises that Biodiversity is our strongest natural defense against climate change. Protecting, managing, and restoring forests alone accounts for about two-thirds of the total mitigation potential of all nature-based solutions. Biodiversity also underpins climate adaptation by making ecosystems more resilient and helping communities cope with climate impacts. Healthy, species-rich ecosystems are better able to withstand stresses such as extreme weather, drought, and floods, while providing essential services like carbon sequestration, water regulation, and food security—critical foundations for climate resilience.

Australia's Nature Positive Plan will be a key to delivering strong biodiversity outcomes with a goal of zero new extinctions and a commitment to protect 30% of Australia's land and seas by 2030. The Plan has led to the creation of a Nature Repair Market to leverage private investment to help regenerate our natural systems. Bass Coast is well positioned to adopt an approach that supports regeneration.





Merri-bek City Council undertook a staged approach to managing Climate Risk, starting with a high-level Climate Risk Strategy and Foundational Action Plan. This approach acknowledges the depth of work Council needs to do to deeply understand Council's climate-related risks and design actions to address them (hence the 2-year Foundational Action Plan). Merri-bek acknowledged that they need to gather information, do risk assessments, and have clear decision-making processes in place before integrating the Climate Risk Framework into the updated Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-2030 (which is currently out for consultation)

The City of Casey undertook a detailed climate risk identification and management process (with funding from the Victorian Government) that formed the basis for their detailed Climate Resilient Casey 2024-2030. Casey intends to flesh out more detailed climate resilience and adaptation work at a township level over the next 12-24 months.

The City of Greater Geelong and partners have undertaken coastal protection initiatives, including dune restoration and seawall construction and the award-winning Dell Eco Reef as a suite of nature-based solutions designed to combat coastal erosion along the Bellarine Peninsula. Brisbane City Council is investing in flood resilience projects, such as constructing levees and improving stormwater infrastructure to mitigate the impacts of severe weather events.

There are many climate related risks to Councils beyond infrastructure, assets and the natural environment. Wyndham City are building social networks and increasing cohesion to help their local communities adapt, survive and thrive in the face of climate change. Yarra City Council is updating their Work Health and Safety policies to more appropriately deal with changing weather patterns and extreme weather events.

We are yet to see comprehensive action being (publicly) taken by local governments to guard against other, slightly indirect risks such as increasing litigation and liability arising from planning and/or investment decisions.



The growing budgetary impacts of climate-related events are increasingly being recognised in the sector.

In Bass Coast, coastal erosion continues to place a significant and growing financial burden on Council. In 2024/25, emergency works at Inverloch Surf Beach cost around $330,000, with the State Government contributing just $104,262, leaving Council to cover approximately $226,000.

These works, ranging from beach renourishment, sandbag wall maintenance to reinstating safe access tracks and building sea walls, were required in response to multiple storm surge and high tide events across the year. With state government budgets tightening, the likelihood is that Council will shoulder a growing share of these costs into the future.

Best practice climate responses

Victorian councils have been taking action on climate change for well over two decades. The approach taken by each council is different, depending on their level of resourcing, risk profile, officer expertise, community demand, and political will.

Drawing on this long experience and available literature, Let Me Be Frank has developed a set of best practice elements for local governments to consider when acting on climate. They are outlined below. When reviewing these, it is important to note that each exists on a spectrum, and requires a foundation to build on. Councils should not necessarily seek to deliver each element to the same degree.

Take the first point 'Mandate a whole of council response' as an example. A council with a long history of climate action, that has declared a climate emergency, and has strong political support, should mandate a whole of council response. A council that has quietly been acting on climate change and mainly focused on their own operations, may need to lay foundations – educating staff and councilors, and building confidence in public facing climate communications – prior to mandating a whole of council response.

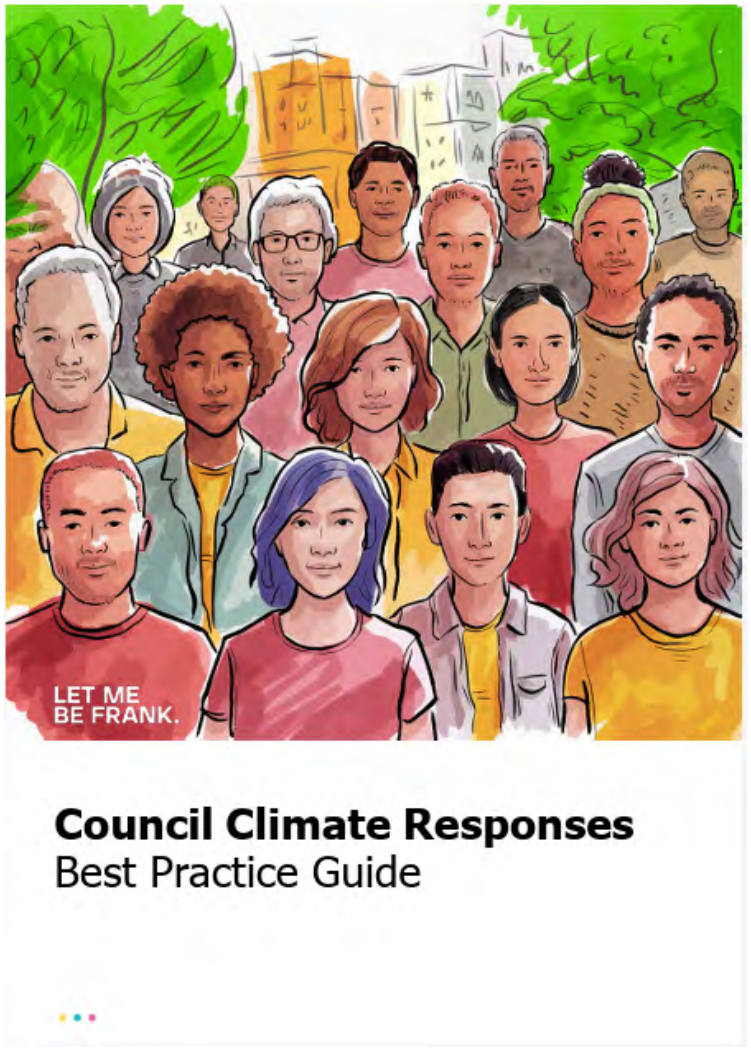
This section of the report explores how Bass Coast is currently working to best practice in their climate response and examples of best practice in action in local governments across Australia.

ELEMENTS OF BEST PRACTICE

1. **Mandate a whole of council response:** Climate change directly or indirectly impacts every part of council operations. Following, every part of council can play a role in the response.
2. **Think and act at a systemic level:** It is more effective – in terms of impact and costs – to embed the climate response into existing projects, initiatives and ways of working, rather than trying to add it on at the end
3. **Centre the rights of nature:** We need to move away from thinking of nature simply as tool for outcomes like urban cooling and acknowledge its inherent and essential value to sustain all forms of life.
4. **Centre Traditional Custodians and First Nations as rights holders:** Linked to the point above, many First Nations people experience systemic disadvantage. However, many First Nations people also hold deep knowledge of and connection to Country, which can form part of the local climate solutions and resilience.
5. **Centre equity and social justice:** Climate change unevenly impacts social systems, acting as a threat multiplier for people already experiencing disadvantage. Direct investment should be directed towards those most in need locally.
6. **Leverage partnerships and alliances:** Regional and collaborative approaches are typically more cost effective and can multiply impact.
7. **Collaborate with community:** As the level of government closest to community, councils are well placed to collaborate with community on communications, delivery, and/or advocacy.
8. **Communicate the urgency and tell the story of the response:** There is a scientific and global consensus for urgent climate action. It is important to be honest about this need, and at the same time, point to positive climate action in order to maintain hope.

9. **Set clear targets and goals to strengthen monitoring and reporting:** Done well, monitoring and reporting supports effective investment, tells the all important story of progress, and helps identify opportunities to scale up.
10. **Be transparent and accountable:** Collaboration to address climate change requires transparency and accountability. It creates more opportunities to learn from the successes (and failures) of others.
11. **Finance solutions and leverage council purchasing power:** Funding climate action will require innovative and collaborative finance solutions. Councils have the opportunity to influence suppliers and service providers through procurement.
12. **Move beyond mitigation:** Climate change is already impacting councils and communities. Given this, adaptation and resilience measures are just as important as mitigation.
13. **Accelerate to zero and beyond:** To change the trajectory of climate change, we will need to reach zero emissions and then begin to draw down emissions.
14. **Be a true leader. Don't be afraid of failure:** Tangible leadership is required to build the confidence of others to act. Selecting and driving one or two innovation areas relevant to the local context (while practicing fast following for action in other areas) can make the most of limited resources, while demonstrating leadership.

For more information about best practice elements, download Let Me Be Frank's Best Practice Climate Response Elements for Councils.



Benchmarking Bass Coast

Bass Coast has strong foundations across many best practice elements of an effective climate response. This mid-term review provides an opportunity to deepen the approach by focusing on a few key areas.

Best Practice Element	Comments
1. Mandate a whole of Council response	Bass Coast has done this well to date. Climate action is clearly a priority across all levels in the organisation. The Council Plan highlights delivering on the Climate Change Action Plan as the key opportunity to deliver on the Naturally Beautiful Strategic Objective. Almost every department has had a lead role in implementation of one or more actions. Bass Coast is well on their way to responding to climate change as a whole Council.
2. Think and act at a systemic level	Bass Coast are well set up to do this with the mandate outlined above. The focus in the first few years of the Climate Change Action Plan on the foundational activities outlined in the plan (like staff training and position descriptions) as well as the work to refresh or revise key organisational strategies with climate change threats and opportunities in mind have set strong foundations. There seems to be broad awareness that climate change is or will impact every part of Council operations and services and the opportunities for action are organisation wide. However there is more work to do to embed this awareness more deeply into action, for example relaunching or extending the training to new staff and then evaluating how well (or not) Bass Coast Shire Council is responding.
3. Centre the rights of nature	Protecting and investing nature are clearly priorities for the community and Council. Bass Coast is clearly taking a lead in delivering on this best practice principle.
4. Centre Traditional Custodians and First Nations as rights holders	This is one area where Bass Coast deosn't seem to have made much progress . There is one action identified to work with Bunurong Traditional Owners and it doesn't seem to have progressed. It is important to understand why and explore how Bass Coast can reprioritise this work.
5. Centre equity and social justice	Bass Coast has primarily been partnering with and supporting community organisations to deliver climate justice outcomes. This could be a stronger focus in the second phase of the Climate Change Action Plan.
6. Leverage partnerships and alliances	Bass Coast has extremely strong local and regional networks and is maximising those to deliver strong outcomes for the community. Great examples of this include the work with Landcare on Biolinks, SECCCA's work on Asset Vulnerability. Bass Coast also does a great job of leveraging existing state government programs like Solar Victoria through partnerships with Solar Savers.
7. Collaborate with community	There is a strong climate action community in Bass Coast and several community focused advisory groups involved. Community groups are supported through grants and formal partnerships for delivering programs like the Living Lightly program with Bass Coast Adult Learning (BCAL), South Gippsland Shire Council, Renew and the community gardens. Following the community engagement as part of this review there is an opportunity to strengthen this through the development of a community reference group.

Best Practice Element	Comments
8. Communicate the urgency and tell the story of the response	While there is broad community awareness of climate risks and hazards, which is reinforced across key strategic documents, Council's direct communication could be stronger. Currently, the main Council website provides little clear or prominent information on climate action. The link between the Community Action Portal and the Council homepage should be made more visible, so the community can more easily find and engage with Council's climate response.
9. Set clear targets and goals to strengthen monitoring and reporting	The current plan incorporates a detailed Monitoring and Evaluation framework, of which this mid-term review is a key component, supported by defined KPIs and targets. Internal monitoring and reporting processes for progress against delivery are well-established, with the Climate Action Tracker providing a clear structure to identify action owners, sponsors, and supporters. This tool makes responsibilities and points of contact transparent within Council, helping staff understand where to go for further information. However, reporting through the Tracker is largely descriptive rather than evaluative, with limited reflection on the effectiveness or impact of actions to date. Simplifying aspects of the framework would also help ensure staff can consistently deliver against monitoring requirements and considering how Climate KPIs could be integrated into Council Reporting.
10. Be transparent and accountable	While internal monitoring practices are strong, there has been little public reporting beyond Council's own emissions. Greater transparency and accountability to the community are needed to sustain engagement and collaboration. Sharing accessible progress updates, including evaluative insights not just descriptive reporting, would help the community understand what is working well, where challenges remain, and how they can play an active role. By extending the clarity already achieved internally through the Climate Action Tracker into public-facing communication, Council can foster shared ownership of the climate response and keep momentum strong.
11. Finance solutions and leverage council purchasing power	Bass Coast has a strong focus on divestment in its investment policy but at this stage doesn't provide direct financing solutions to residents, businesses or community groups. Supporting community-led financing solutions may help address this.
12. Move beyond mitigation	Bass Coast is facing such significant threats from climate change and responding to these threats is already a priority for Council. The need to adapt and build resilience well understood within the organisation.
13. Accelerate to zero and beyond	While Bass Coast has very strong targets for Net Zero in their operations and in the community, progress remains slow in areas like transport. The decision to include waste in the operational footprint is brave and will require a specific strategy and significant investment to reduce to zero. While it is clearly acknowledged that Council can't deliver the community's net zero target directly and can only support the community to make those changes, to date that support has focused on residential solar and energy efficiency programs, not businesses or agriculture - this could be a focus for the next iteration of the Climate Change Action Plan.
14. Be a true leader. Don't be afraid of failure	The Governance structure outlined in the Plan sets the tone for "honest communication of success and failure in project and program implementation" however it's unclear where Bass Coast is looking to take a strong leadership role (on behalf of the community or sector) and then document and share lessons from those leadership experiences. This could be an area to explore in the next iteration of the Climate Change Action Plan.

Emerging opportunities

This section of the report brings together insights gathered throughout the review period to identify the emerging opportunities for Bass Coast Shire Council to consider for inclusion in the next iteration of the Climate Change Action Plan. These opportunities have been considered progressively as new information and data became available and reflect the areas where Council could focus its climate efforts over the next five years.

Seven emerging opportunities have been identified and are outlined in the following pages, each with suggested actions that may be incorporated into the updated Plan. They include:

1. Addressing the cost of living and climate crisis
2. Net Zero Businesses
3. Pilot local sustainable transport options
4. Nature as our greatest asset
5. Supporting the circular economy
6. Climate-smart agriculture and eco-tourism
7. Local food resilience and health



Aileen is part of a growing movement of Bass Coast residents replacing gas appliances and electrifying their homes. Source: The Community Action Portal.

ADDRESSING THE COST OF LIVING AND CLIMATE CRISIS

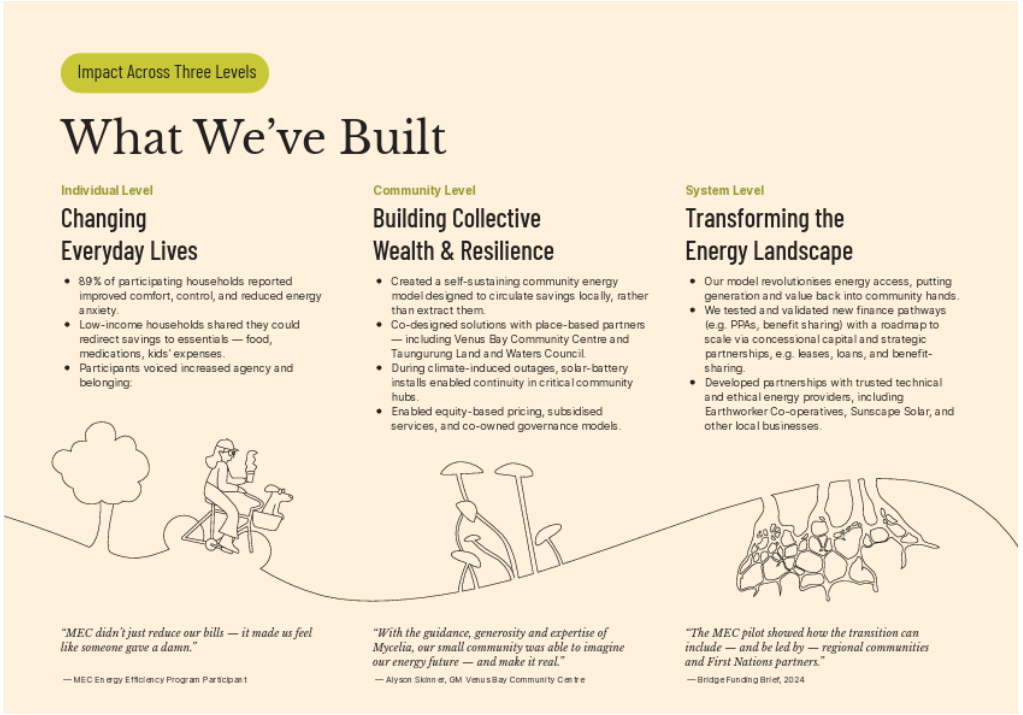
The intersection of the cost of living crisis and the climate crisis presents a clear opportunity to deliver solutions that meet multiple community needs at once. Rising energy costs, combined with increasing climate impacts, are placing additional stress on households, particularly those most at risk of being left behind in the energy transition.

Council can play a stronger enabling role by actively supporting community groups and social enterprises that are driving practical, on-the-ground solutions to reduce household energy costs while accelerating the transition to clean energy. This could include deeper investment in partnerships with community organisations to build local capacity for the energy transition, and initiatives to deliver affordable energy efficiency upgrades.

By strengthening these partnerships, Council can help scale proven solutions, build community resilience, and ensure that the benefits of the energy transition - lower bills, healthier homes, and reduced emissions - are shared equitably across the community.

Potential actions to test with the community

- Partner with community organisations to deliver programs with a focus on practical, low-cost energy efficiency upgrades (draught proofing, insulation, efficient heating/cooling), prioritising vulnerable households.
- Deepen partnerships with local energy transition groups: Provide seed funding, resourcing, or joint initiatives to build local skills, awareness, and peer-to-peer support.
- Targeted energy justice fund: Establish a dedicated fund or grant stream for low-income households to access rebates, retrofit assistance, or energy upgrades.
- Bulk-buy and collective purchasing programs: Continue to invest community-led bulk buys of rooftop solar, batteries, and efficient appliances to reduce upfront costs for residents.
- Energy champions program: Train and support local volunteers or community workers as "energy champions" to help neighbours understand energy options, access rebates, and take practical action.
- Climate-safe, cost-saving homes pilot: Partner with housing providers to retrofit social housing or rental properties, demonstrating combined benefits of lower bills, healthier living conditions, and emissions reduction.



Mycelia Energy Collective is getting ready to relaunch in 2025 (with support from Council) after a very successful pilot.

NET ZERO BUSINESSES

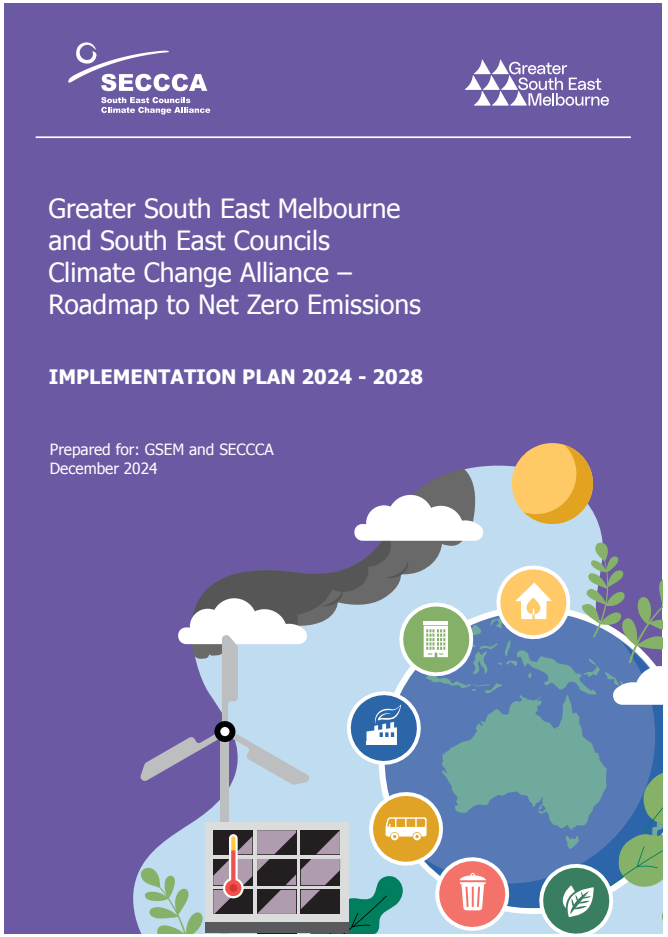
Large industrial and commercial businesses, as well as high-emitting community facilities, account for a significant share of emissions in Bass Coast. The Ironbark report will provide an evidence base that highlights the major sites contributing to the municipality's emissions profile. Addressing these emissions offers a high-impact opportunity for Council to support the local economy in transitioning to net zero while strengthening partnerships with businesses and institutions that are critical to the community.

Council could play a facilitative role by working directly with large emitters and key organisations to assess opportunities, identify barriers, and co-design pathways to net zero. This approach could extend beyond businesses to include high-profile community assets such as the Wonthaggi Swimming Pool and local schools. Importantly, this aligns with the GSEM & SECCCA Net Zero Implementation Plan, suggesting regional collaboration and support may be able to support this work.

Potential actions to test with the community and stakeholders

- Develop a "Large Emitters Engagement Program": Establish a structured program to engage the top 10–15 emitters in the LGA, offering support to develop their own net zero or carbon reduction plans.
- Facilitated partnerships with SECCCA: Work with SECCCA to deliver tailored technical advice, capacity building, and funding advocacy for large emitters, building on the Net Zero Implementation Plan.
- Net zero pathway support for community facilities: Pilot projects with high-energy-use facilities such as Wonthaggi Swimming Pool or schools, showcasing the co-benefits of energy efficiency, renewable energy, and healthier environments.
- Council as a leader and convener: Share learnings from Council's own emissions reduction work to model best practice, while creating forums or roundtables for businesses and institutions to collaborate on solutions.
- Explore joint funding models: Advocate for and broker investment opportunities (e.g., grants, loans, PPAs, EUFs) to support large emitters in undertaking deep retrofits or clean energy transitions.
- Recognition and accountability: Establish a voluntary "Bass Coast Net Zero Leaders" network or award program to highlight businesses and facilities making significant progress, encouraging wider participation.

By supporting larger emitters and facilities in developing their own net zero plans, Bass Coast can drive rapid emissions reductions, demonstrate leadership, and create strong local case studies that inspire community-wide action.



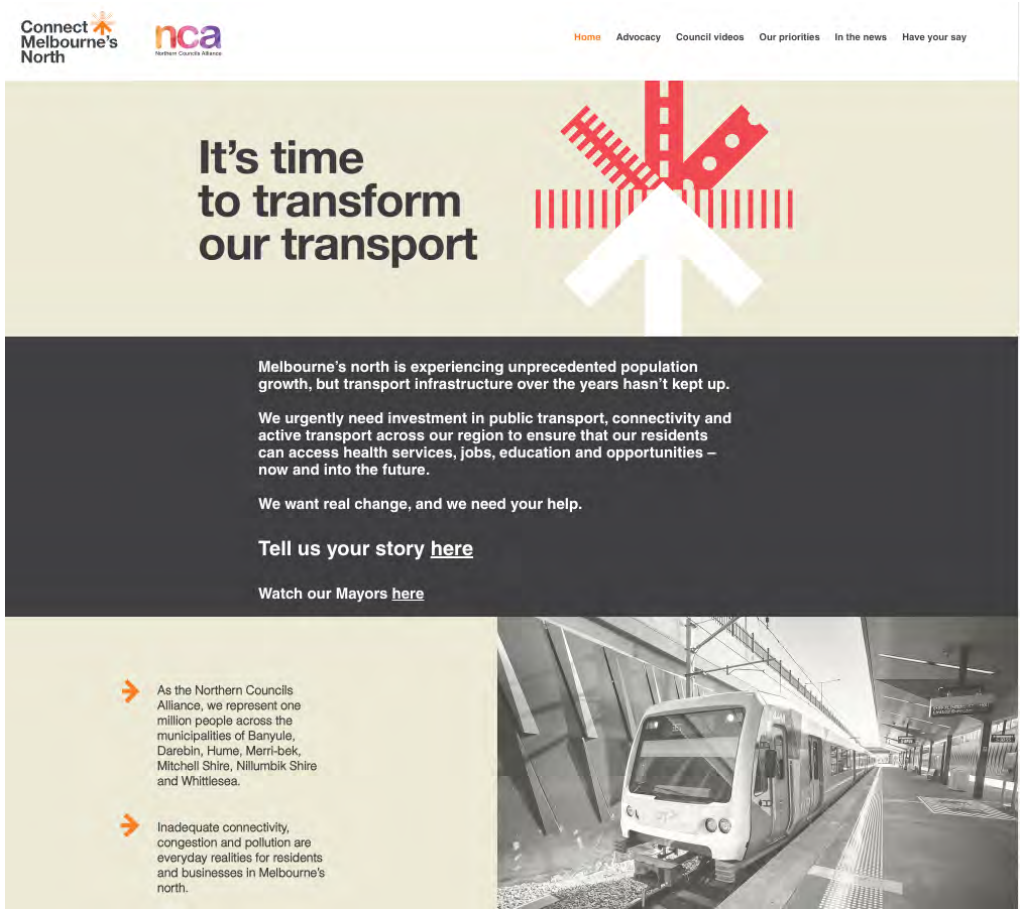
The South East Council Climate Change Alliance (SECCCA) could play a role in supporting large emitters in Bass Coast to future proof their business with their own net zero plan.

PILOT LOCAL SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT OPTIONS

Transport remains one of the largest and most challenging sources of emissions everywhere, and in Bass Coast. There is also an opportunity to further relieve cost of living pressures through investment in public transport. EV uptake is limited to people in the community who can afford it and relying on EV uptake too heavily has the potential to further widen the socio-economic gap in the local community.

The Integrated Transport Strategy and recent township movement studies have highlighted the need for improved, low-emissions transport options to reduce car dependency, manage seasonal congestion, and cut greenhouse gas emissions. While large-scale public transport investments are costly and generally outside of Council's direct control, there is growing interest in smaller, localised pilots that could demonstrate the benefits of sustainable transport and build a case for future funding. Local government also has an important role in mobilising the community to advocate for increased state and federal investment in public transport. The northern metropolitan councils recently launched a campaign along these lines called Connect Melbourne's North.

Ideas raised through community discussions include a summertime bus service in Cape Paterson to connect residents and visitors with the beach, as well as a range of concepts for Phillip Island to ease peak-season traffic. These smaller-scale pilots could test demand, improve access, and reduce congestion and emissions during peak times, while also helping to build momentum for larger, longer-term investments.



The Northern Council Alliance invites people to share their stories and get involved in the advocacy to Connect Melbourne's North.

Potential actions to test with the community and stakeholders:

- Seasonal Cape Paterson Beach Shuttle Pilot: Trial a low-emissions shuttle service (electric or biodiesel) during peak summer weeks to reduce private car trips, ease local traffic pressure, and improve beach access.
- Phillip Island Sustainable Transport Pilot: Identify a hotspot (e.g., Cowes foreshore, Penguin Parade, or San Remo) to trial shuttle buses, bike hire hubs, or micro-mobility options during the summer tourist season.
- Community-led transport partnerships: Work with local groups or businesses (surf clubs, visitor attractions, holiday parks) to co-fund or co-manage seasonal services.
- Leverage technology to test uptake: Use booking apps or QR-coded passes to measure demand and collect data on usage, cost-effectiveness, and emissions reductions.
- Link pilots to advocacy: Package pilot results into a strong evidence base to advocate to state government and transport agencies for sustained investment in public transport infrastructure across Bass Coast.
- Mobilise the community (potentially across the region) to demand investment in public transport solutions.
- Explore innovative funding models: Consider sponsorships (e.g. local businesses), ticketing, or grants (state tourism, transport or climate funds) to offset high operating costs.
- Supercharge small-scale mobility: Complement shuttles with bike and e-scooter hire stations, wayfinding improvements, and safe walking/bike connections to extend the benefits.

By starting with a smaller-scale, high-visibility pilot, Bass Coast can demonstrate leadership in sustainable transport, test real-world demand, and create a compelling case for larger public and private sector investment in low-emissions transport.



The Gippsland Community e-Bus Pilot Project from Sandy Point to Venus Bay should provide insight into the opportunities for Bass Coast. Source: https://www.sandypointebus.com/

NATURE AS OUR GREATEST ASSET

Healthy and biodiverse ecosystems are Bass Coast's greatest defence against climate change impacts. They provide critical services such as carbon storage, flood mitigation, coastal protection, pollination, and cooling in towns and cities.

Bass Coast is ideally positioned to adopt an approach that supports nature recovery and regeneration. Building on the success of initiatives such as Biolinks and Council's Urban Forest Strategy and their contribution to delivering the Integrated Water Management (IWM) Plan, Council has an opportunity to strengthen its leadership in biodiversity protection and ecosystem restoration.

State and federal funding is hard to access, however Council's investment along with philanthropic support would go a long way to strengthening and scaling up biodiversity and restoration projects. Investment could be leveraged to scale up local efforts, strengthen partnerships with Traditional Owners, Landcare groups, and community organisations, and ensure that nature-based solutions remain at the heart of the climate response.

This also raises an important community conversation: should Council direct investment towards purchasing external offsets to meet net zero commitments, or prioritise local biodiversity restoration that delivers multiple co-benefits for the community? We tested the community preferences regarding this trade-off at the October engagement session and it was clear there is a preference to invest in local biodiversity restoration (the Post Engagement Summary Report has more information).

We also need to consider the important partnership Bass Coast Shire Council has started to build with Biodiversity Legacy to launch the Nature Recovery Foundation (NRF). The NRF is a bold initiative committed to reversing biodiversity decline on Victoria's Bass Coast and protecting the natural environment for future generations. The NRF will:

- Protect priority areas of remnant biodiversity.
- Secure and restore land with high ecological potential.
- Create viable habitat refuges connected through biolinks.
- Leverage partnerships and green investment for long-term sustainability.
- Build a lasting legacy for future generations.



Image source: Biodiversity Legacy

Potential actions to test with the community and stakeholders

- Scale up Biolinks and landscape restoration: Expand biolink corridors, revegetation, and wetland restoration projects that build resilience and connectivity across landscapes.
- Scale up the Nature Recovery Foundation with Biodiversity Legacy
- Leverage philanthropy: Develop proposals that attract co-investment from state/federal government and philanthropic sources to accelerate local restoration.
- Offset vs. local restoration dialogue: Engage the community in deciding whether Bass Coast should invest in external carbon offsets or prioritise local restoration projects that also support biodiversity and climate resilience.
- Partner with Traditional Owners and Landcare groups: Embed Bunurong cultural knowledge into biodiversity restoration and co-design projects with Landcare and community groups.
- Promote community involvement: Establish opportunities for residents, schools, and businesses to contribute (through volunteering, sponsorship, or citizen science) to local restoration efforts.
- Measure and celebrate co-benefits: Track biodiversity gains, carbon sequestration, and social wellbeing outcomes, and share stories to build ongoing community support.

By positioning nature as the region's greatest asset, Bass Coast can protect biodiversity, strengthen climate resilience, and engage the community in a shared vision for restoration and stewardship.



Bass Coast Shire Council celebrated National Tree Day on instagram sharing some facts about the Moonah (Melaleuca lanceolata) on Churchill Island for 200+ years. A remnant stand lines the eastern side of the island. Gnarled and wind-swept, these ancient Moonahs have weathered over two centuries of coastal life!

SUPPORTING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

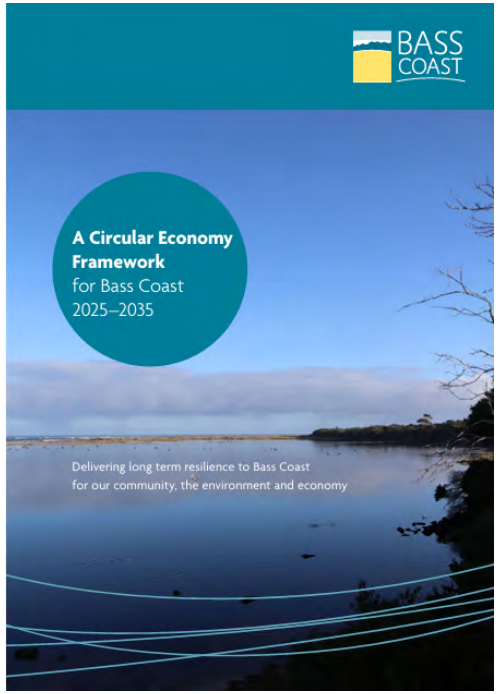
Waste management in Bass Coast is approaching a critical transition point. The Granville landfill site has an operating life only to 2032, and current studies indicate that future waste may need to be transported to larger regional facilities in Dandenong or Gippsland. While this will address immediate disposal needs, it risks increasing transport emissions and sending valuable resources out of the region.

Council has an opportunity to take a leadership role in shaping a long-term vision for waste management under the circular economy framework. Rather than viewing waste solely as a disposal issue, Bass Coast can position waste streams as a resource to be recovered, repaired, and reused—supporting both environmental outcomes and local economic opportunities. This shift will require early investment, strong partnerships, and proactive planning to ensure the community is ready for a post-landfill future.

Potential actions to test with the community and stakeholders:

- Resource recovery micro-hubs: Establish localised hubs for repair, reuse, recycling, and upcycling to reduce waste volumes and create new jobs.
- Expand repair and reuse programs: Partner with community organisations to scale initiatives such as repair cafés, tool libraries, and swap/reuse events.
- Circular economy planning zones: Secure space in Wonthaggi to support future circular economy enterprises and resource recovery infrastructure.
- Pilot innovative collection models: Build on trials such as hydrogen-powered bin collection vehicles to reduce transport emissions, and explore smart collection systems to optimise efficiency.
- Local market development: Support procurement and markets for recycled or repurposed materials to create demand and close the loop locally.
- Education and behaviour change: Deliver community campaigns on waste avoidance, repair, and circular consumption, shifting household practices and business engagement.
- Regional partnerships: Collaborate with Sustainability Victoria, neighbouring councils and SECCCA to advocate for investment in local resource recovery infrastructure and shared circular economy projects.

By reimagining waste through a circular economy lens, Bass Coast can turn its looming landfill challenge into an opportunity to reduce emissions, support innovation, and build a resilient, resource-smart local economy.



Bass Coast has a Circular Economy Framework that Council can build on to deliver even better outcomes

CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE AND ECO-TOURISM

The food and agriculture sector is both highly exposed to climate impacts (along with forestry and fisheries) and a significant source of regional emissions. At the same time, it represents one of the greatest opportunities for transition and innovation. By investing in climate-smart practices, Bass Coast can help farmers and land managers thrive in a changing environment, while strengthening the local economy, local food production and protecting natural systems.

There are multiple pathways to achieve this transformation. Regenerative agriculture and agroforestry can restore soil health, increase biodiversity, and sequester carbon—enabling farms to access new income streams through Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) or biodiversity certificates under the forthcoming Nature Repair Market. Developing climate-resilient crops, diversifying into drought-tolerant species, and strengthening local food supply chains will further enhance resilience. Opportunities also exist in bioenergy cropping, climate-friendly branding, and premium market access.

Tourism—particularly eco-tourism—offers another complementary growth area. Bass Coast's natural beauty and biodiversity position the region to attract nature-based tourism investment. Experiences elsewhere (e.g. East Gippsland's 2023 ECO Destination certification) show that, if carefully managed, eco-tourism can deliver both conservation and economic benefits. Investing in nature-based tourism, protecting ecosystems, and educating visitors can generate significant co-benefits for climate adaptation and biodiversity.

The challenge for Council is to identify the most effective role it can play—whether as an enabler, partner, or advocate—to support the local transition to sustainable, climate-resilient agriculture and eco-tourism. Collaboration with neighbouring councils, Landcare, farmers, and industry stakeholders will be essential, alongside advocacy to State and Federal governments for policy and funding support.

Potential actions to test with the community and stakeholders:

- Support regenerative agriculture and agroforestry: Expand programs that restore soil health, improve water retention, and generate carbon/biodiversity credits.
- Develop climate-resilient crops and practices: Partner with research institutions and local farmers to trial drought- and heat-tolerant varieties, and promote crop/livestock diversification.
- Strengthen sustainable supply chains: Invest in local and regional food systems that reduce emissions, shorten supply chains, and improve resilience.
- Pilot bioenergy opportunities: Explore the feasibility of bioenergy cropping as a new income stream and emissions reduction pathway.
- Leverage certification and branding: Support farmers and tourism operators to access organic, fair trade, and climate-friendly certifications to target premium markets.
- Eco-tourism development: Progress opportunities for Bass Coast to pursue ECO Destination certification, building on best practice examples, and invest in visitor education, conservation zones, and sustainable infrastructure.
- Continue to partner with Landcare to access Climate-Smart Agriculture Program funding: Position Bass Coast projects for federal Partnerships & Innovation Grants ($250,000–$5m) and Capacity Building Grants ($10,000–$1m).
- Advocate for transition support: Ensure that State and Federal governments provide resources for farmers and businesses to manage climate-related transitions while protecting livelihoods.

By combining climate-smart agriculture with eco-tourism and nature protection, Bass Coast can reduce emissions, build resilience, and create sustainable economic opportunities that benefit both people and the environment.

LOCAL FOOD RESILIENCE AND HEALTH

Food systems are at the heart of both community wellbeing and climate resilience. Bass Coast and South Gippsland are already showing leadership through the establishment of the Bass Coast and South Gippsland Food Alliance, which provides a strong platform for collaboration. This emerging alliance creates opportunities to link food production, distribution, and access to broader climate and sustainability goals.

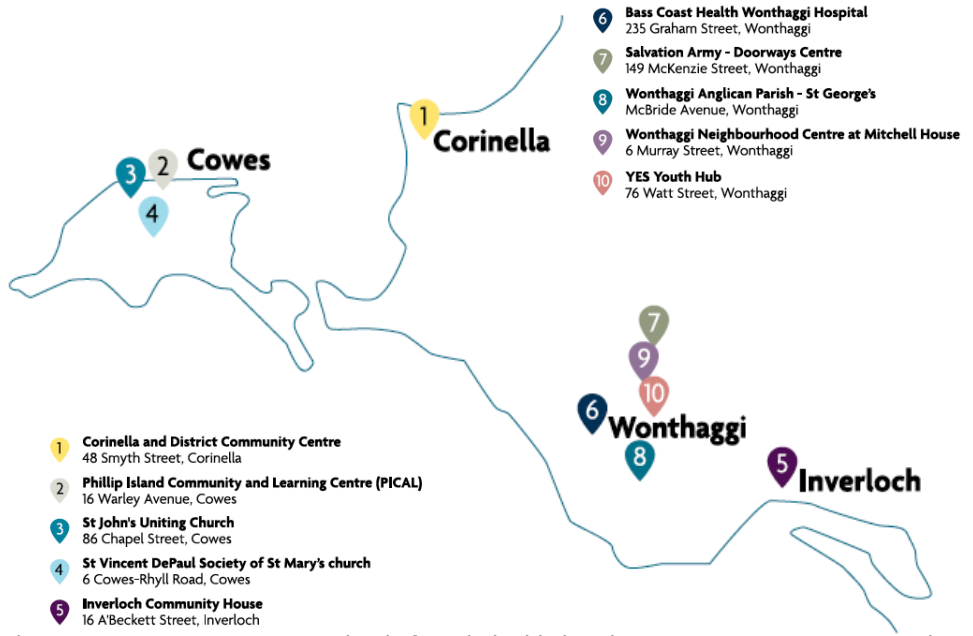
Local food resilience is becoming increasingly important as climate risks, supply chain disruptions, and cost-of-living pressures impact how people access affordable, healthy food. At the same time, local food production and distribution can play a role in reducing emissions, building circular economy links (e.g. through food waste reduction and composting), and strengthening community connection.

Equity also sits at the centre of this challenge. Many households face barriers to accessing healthy and affordable food. By embedding food equity into climate planning, Council can help ensure the benefits of local food initiatives are shared across the community—particularly for those most at risk.

Potential actions to test with the community and stakeholders:

- Support the Food Alliance: Invest in the Bass Coast and South Gippsland Food Alliance to coordinate action on local food resilience, food justice, and climate-friendly food systems.
- Strengthen local food production: Support community gardens, urban farms, and local growers to build capacity and supply chains for fresh, sustainable produce.
- Address food insecurity: Partner with food relief agencies, schools, and neighbourhood houses to improve equitable access to healthy, local food.
- Close the loop on food waste: Scale up composting programs, food rescue initiatives, and local waste-to-soil projects that reduce emissions and feed back into local food production.
- Healthy and climate-friendly diets campaign: Build community awareness of the co-benefits of local, seasonal, and low-emissions food choices for health, affordability, and climate.
- Food system risk assessment: Undertake a regional assessment of climate risks to food supply (e.g. heat, drought, flooding) to inform adaptation planning and local resilience-building.
- Leverage regional partnerships: Work with South Gippsland Shire and VicHealth to align food system initiatives with broader climate, health, and circular economy strategies.

By focusing on local food resilience, equity, and health, Bass Coast can reduce climate risks, improve wellbeing, cut waste, and build stronger community connections across the region.



The Bass Coast Community Food Relief Guide highlights the community organisations already supporting local residents with food relief.

Closing reflections and recommendations

This mid-term review has highlighted the significant progress Bass Coast Shire Council has made in delivering the Climate Change Action Plan, as well as the evolving context, community expectations, and operational realities that now shape the way ahead. Based on the evidence gathered through internal interviews, data analysis, policy review, community input, and best-practice benchmarking, Let Me Be Frank provides the following recommendations to guide the development of the revised Climate Change Action Plan in 2026.

1. Reduce the number of actions in the Plan

The current Plan is comprehensive but overly broad. The revised Plan should streamline the number of actions by:

- Removing actions that have been fully delivered
- Revising or retiring actions that are no longer achievable or relevant due to policy shifts, resourcing constraints, or changes in community expectations

A more focused Plan will enable stronger delivery, clearer ownership, and more meaningful reporting.

2. Build on what Council already does well

Council has strong foundations in several areas, particularly Biolinks, conservation programs, and the Nature Recovery Foundation. These programs are valued by the community and deliver significant impact. The next Plan should consolidate and expand these strengths to increase reach, scale, and visibility.

3. Reshape the Climate Change Action Plan into clear themes for action

A revised structure organised around intuitive, community-aligned themes, for example Nature and Water, Climate Adaptation and Resilience, Transport, and Energy, will make the Plan more accessible, strategic, and aligned with Council's organisational responsibilities.

4. Prioritise real emissions reduction in Council operations

Council should continue to focus its operational emissions efforts on genuine emissions-reduction initiatives rather than relying on offsets or certification programs. This will build credibility, deliver long-term savings, and model best practice.

5. Resource a clear pathway for fleet transition and landfill closure

Two major operational opportunities require dedicated resourcing in the next Plan to deliver on operational emissions reduction:

- A costed and time-bound fleet transition plan that accelerates Council's shift to electric and efficient vehicles
- A clear plan for the closure of the Grantville Landfill site, including emissions management, rehabilitation, and long-term monitoring

Both represent major emissions sources and are critical to achieving meaningful reductions.

6. Continue transparent, consistent reporting to the community

Maintaining open reporting of Council's operational emissions performance is essential. This transparency builds trust, demonstrates progress, and helps the community understand the challenges and opportunities ahead.

7. Continue investing in grassroots community organisations

Bass Coast is home to passionate and effective community-led groups. Continued support — financial, partnership-based, and through technical advice — will strengthen community capacity and multiply climate action outcomes.

8. Strengthen and expand use of the Community Action Portal

The Portal is an important tool for informing, motivating, and connecting the community. Council should further integrate it across climate programs and include more guidance on adaptation and resilience actions, not only mitigation — noting that this is already underway.

9. Explore how to better mobilise the community on climate action

There is only so much a local government can do alone. The next Plan should consider how Council can best mobilise the community — whether through supporting local groups, running targeted council-led programs, or advocating for stronger state and federal action that aligns with local needs.

10. Pilot a targeted program to support local businesses to reach net zero

Council now has strong baseline data on business emissions from the recent Ironbark Sustainability work. This creates an opportunity to design a small, focused pilot to support local businesses to take early action toward net zero, providing tailored outreach, tools, or incentives.

FINAL NOTE

These recommendations provide a clear pathway for refining the Climate Change Action Plan so it remains focused, achievable, and aligned with best practice. Importantly, they reflect the insights gathered throughout the review and will support Council to deliver high-impact climate action that meets community expectations and responds to the changing climate and policy environment.

Noon gudgin!



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