

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY HIGHLIGHTS REPORT 2025-26

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PROGRESS ON ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

We developed the Environment Strategy 2020-2030 to define and communicate how the City of Greater Geelong will act to protect and improve our region’s environment and reduce our environmental footprint.

The strategy includes five goals:

- 1. Become a zero-emission climate ready City.
- 2. Create greener community spaces.
- 3. Contribute to a circular economy by reducing waste.
- 4. Protect, enhance and restore our regions biodiversity.
- 5. Achieve better integrated water management through planning and design.

The Environment Strategy has a 2-year Action Plan and previous reporting on progress of actions can be found in our [Environment Strategy Action Plan 2024 -26](#) report.

This report provides an annual update on actions carried out in the 2025-26 financial year.

PROGRESS OF ACTIONS

Goal	On track	Completed	Incomplete	Needs improvement
1. Climate Action	13	14		2
2. Greener Community Spaces	6	6	1	
3. Circular Economy	4	8		1
4. Nature and Biodiversity	4	11	1	
5. Integrated Water Management	5	1		4

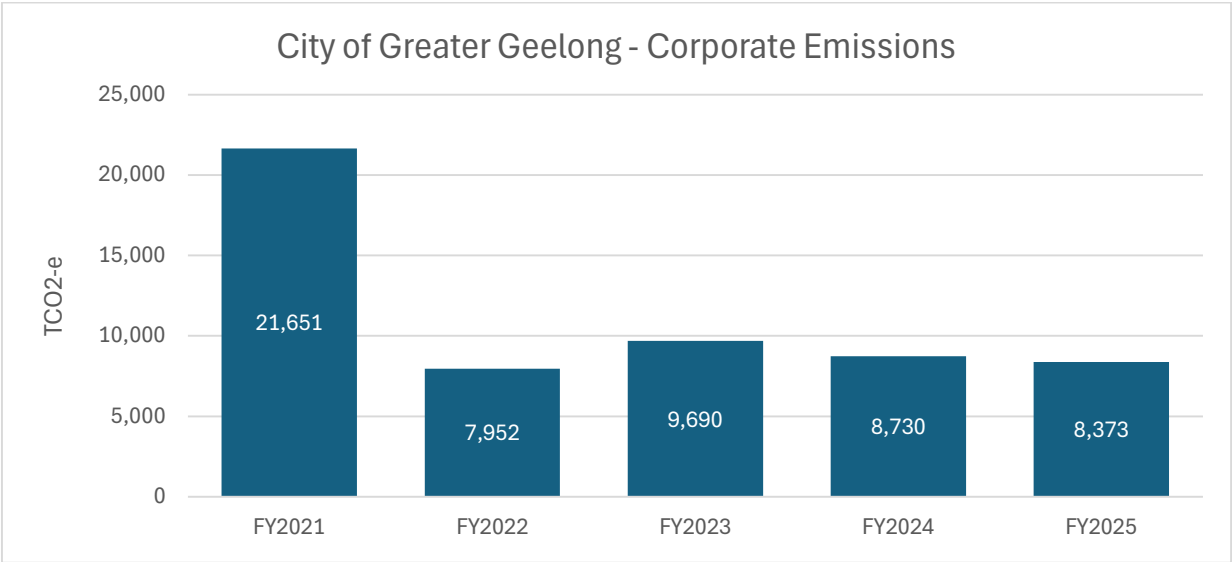
GOAL ONE: BECOME A ZERO-EMISSION, CLIMATE-READY CITY REGION

Climate change is driving rising temperatures and more extreme conditions, posing increasing risks to our environment, infrastructure and community. We have a responsibility to reduce emissions and prepare for these impacts to minimise future risks and protect community wellbeing. Without action, these changes could have significant consequences for public assets, natural systems and community health.

CORPORATE EMISSIONS

The City’s emissions profile includes natural gas used in council buildings and fuel consumption across our light and heavy fleet. Since 2021, emissions have decreased by 64%, with reduction measures delivering an estimated \$900,000 in annual savings.

These reductions have been driven by initiatives such as the VECO 100% renewable electricity contract, construction of Green Star-rated facilities, and energy efficiency upgrades and solar installations across City buildings.



*FY2026 emissions data is subject to a reporting lag and will be available in October 2026

VECO - RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY CONTRACT

The City was a founding member of the Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO) which set up a renewable electricity contract for 51 Victorian councils from the Dundonnell wind farm in south-west Victoria. This renewable electricity supply contract came into full effect from 1 July 2021. VECO is the largest ever emissions reduction project undertaken by local government in Australia and now means our buildings and facilities, including streetlights generate zero emissions.

By participating in the VECO renewable energy project, the City is estimated to have saved \$1.06 million dollars since the contract started.



STREET LIGHTING LED UPGRADES

In 2025, the City of Greater Geelong, in partnership with Powercor, completed a major LED Street Lighting and Smart Control Project. Over 4.5 years, more than 22,000 inefficient streetlights were replaced with energy-efficient LED fittings, making it the largest council-led smart lighting rollout in Australia.

The upgrades are forecast to deliver operational savings of approximately \$2.2 million and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by over 3,300 tonnes of CO₂ each year. Lighting compliance and safety were also improved, particularly in high-risk areas.

In addition to the LED upgrades, smart controllers and a Central Management System were integrated, enabling remote monitoring and adaptive lighting control to enable further efficiency gains.



ALL ELECTRIC HOMES 2025

Since 2023, the Electric Homes Program has engaged more than 3,200 residents, generated over 2,300 enquiries, and delivered 759 household electrification upgrades. Supported by a Council investment of approximately \$150,000, the program has leveraged almost \$4.9 million in community investment, representing a return of approximately \$32 for every dollar invested.

Participating households are projected to save more than \$11.5 million in energy costs over the life of installed technologies while avoiding approximately 35,400 tonnes of CO₂-e emissions. The program has also delivered significant community benefits through the donation of 45.32kW of solar PV and 12 heat pump hot water systems to local households and organisations.



Source: All Electric Homes - Geelong Sustainability

BARWON SOUTH WEST CLIMATE ALLIANCE - RESILIENT COMMUNITIES ASSETS PROJECT

The Barwon South West Climate Alliance (BSWCA) is a regional partnership of local governments and organisations working collaboratively on climate change. The City is Chair of the BSWCA, playing a leadership role in driving priority projects across the region. The Resilient Communities Assets Project supports councils and partner organisations to better understand and respond to climate-related risks to community infrastructure and assets.

Funded through the Department of Justice and Community Safety, the project provides participating organisations with baseline climate risk assessment methodologies, spatial data tools, and asset vulnerability analysis to help identify and prioritise risks from hazards such as flooding, heat, bushfire and coastal inundation.

Delivered across the Barwon South West region, the project enables councils to access technical expertise, regional datasets and shared capability development that would otherwise be difficult to resource individually. It is also strengthening long-term organisational capacity by supporting integration of climate risk considerations into asset management, strategic planning and future investment decisions. Outcomes from the project will inform adaptation planning, infrastructure resilience, and evidence-based decision making across the region.



Coastal Inundation Mapping – Portarlington

GOAL TWO: CREATE GREENER COMMUNITY SPACES

Population growth is increasing pressure on our urban areas, which risk becoming hotter and less liveable without considered action. Expanding green infrastructure such as trees, parks and open spaces will help cool our city, enhance biodiversity and improve community wellbeing. Creating greener community spaces is essential to supporting healthier, more resilient and liveable neighbourhoods.

NATURE STRIP LANDSCAPING GUIDELINES

The City updated its Nature Strip Landscaping Guidelines in 2025, responding to growing community demand for more flexible, greener and more diverse nature strips.

Importantly, the guidelines place an emphasis on strengthening biodiversity outcomes by encouraging indigenous plants and urban wildlife habitat. They also contribute to climate resilience by promoting greener streetscapes that help reduce urban heat, improve urban cooling, and enhance overall liveability and community wellbeing.

The guidelines provide clear direction on permitted works, clarify responsibilities between the City and residents, and ensure safety, accessibility and protection of public infrastructure. They also support greater design flexibility, including edible gardens and varied planting approaches.



Planted nature strip – Mt Duneed

GUIDELINES AND CLIMATE CHANGE PARTNERSHIP GRANTS IN ACTION

The City's Climate Change Partnership Grants are supporting Highton Rotary Club's Nature Strip Blitz project, which demonstrates early implementation of the guidelines, with community-led projects delivering practical outcomes on the ground. The pilot program commenced in 2025, transforming 20 nature strips into indigenous gardens designed to support biodiversity and create pollinator pathways.

Following strong local uptake, the initiative has expanded in 2026 to support around 100 households across Geelong and the Bellarine, with participants receiving design guidance, plants, mulch and hands-on support. Projects prioritise indigenous, drought-tolerant species to reduce water use, attract pollinators and help cool streets.

Beyond environmental benefits, the program highlights the social value of nature strip landscaping, with residents reporting increased neighbour interaction, knowledge sharing and a stronger sense of community connectedness as streets are collectively transformed.



A nature strip being transformed through the Highton Rotary Club's Nature Strip Blitz project

TREE CITIES OF THE WORLD STATUS

Awarded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the recognition acknowledges cities that meet global standards in urban tree management. In 2025, 283 cities across 24 countries were designated as Tree Cities of the World. Greater Geelong is one of only 12 Australian councils recognised, and one of just two in Victoria alongside Banyule City Council.

The City manages more than 190,000 urban trees, including over 119,000 street trees and 45,000 trees in parks, spanning 393 species. In the past year, more than 6,300 trees were planted across the region, with a further 4,000 trees incorporated through new developments. Trees play a central role in shaping Greater Geelong's character and liveability, with Lara, home to the highest number of City-managed trees.



Tree planting at Barwon Heads

The region's most common species include River Red Gum, Yellow Gum and Brush Box, and there are 53 recorded tree hollows - features that can take up to a century to form and provide important habitat for wildlife. Trees also contribute to health and wellbeing, with street trees absorbing around 73 tonnes of air pollution each year and helping manage stormwater volumes equivalent to four Olympic-sized swimming pools.

NEW URBAN DEVELOPMENTS

Increased Canopy Coverage Targets

New increased tree canopy targets now exist for new urban developments. Plan for Victoria sets a target to increase canopy cover to 30 per cent and new planning scheme controls have been introduced that set a minimum canopy cover requirement on private land of approximately 10 per cent on land up to 1,000 square metres and 20 per cent on land greater than 1,000 square metres. This will mean that for many new developments there will be requirements to enhance canopy cover.

Developer Delivered New Reserves

As our urban areas continue to grow, so too does our green infrastructure, including new reserves. Delivered by developers and vested in the City of Greater Geelong, these reserves come in a variety of forms, including community reserves, nature reserves, linear reserves, drainage reserves and small walkway reserves. In 2025-26, 44 new reserves totalling 24.65 hectares were handed over to the City, contributing to an expanding green network.

DRAFT URBAN FOREST STRATEGY

The Urban Forest Strategy (UFS) has been updated, and a draft is ready for Council consideration and public comment. The Draft UFS seeks to increase the municipal canopy target from 25 per cent to 30 per cent by 2036, increase alignment with state government policy, more strategic selection of available planting sites, strengthen community partnerships beyond Council owned and managed land, and improve coordination across Council programs.

Current planting programs alone are not sufficient to achieve the long-term canopy target, and opportunities exist to expand planting into underutilised spaces including nature strips, road reserves, drainage corridors, vacant land, and private land.

The Draft Urban Forest Strategy will be presented to Council in July 2026 for consideration and release for public feedback.

GOAL THREE: CONTRIBUTE TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY BY REDUCING WASTE

The City of Greater Geelong set a vision to contribute to a circular economy by leading and supporting the community to actively avoid waste and increase the reuse and recycling of products and materials. Achievements and outcomes for 2025-26 demonstrate our commitment to this goal.

BETTER FOR GEELONG BAGGED COMPOST

Every year, we turn 35,000 tonnes of garden material from residents' bins into premium compost, right here in Greater Geelong.

In April 2026, that compost became even more accessible, launching in convenient 25-litre bags at local Mitre-10 stores. Previously only available in bulk, this new format makes it easier for households to enjoy high-quality, locally produced compost. This milestone not only expands access for the community but also strengthens our partnership with a trusted national retailer.

Now, more residents can garden sustainably with a product that supports resource recovery, reduces waste, and helps create healthier soils.



Better for Geelong Compost 25-litre bags available for purchase at a local Mitre-10 store.

DETOX YOUR HOME EVENT

A Detox Your Home event is a free community drop-off service where residents can safely dispose of household chemicals (e.g. paints, pesticides and cleaners) that cannot be placed in kerbside bins or accepted at resource recovery centres, helping protect public health, waterways and the environment.

In May 2026, the City delivered a highly successful Detox Your Home event at the Corio Depot. For the first time, the event included a textile drop-off, expanding opportunities for resource recovery.

A total of 1,860 kg (5,437 items) of textiles were collected. Of these, 79 per cent will be rehomed in communities where they are most needed. The remaining items will be repurposed into industrial rags, furniture padding, insulation fillers and craft materials (14 per cent), or processed into clinker for cement production (7 per cent) as an alternative to fossil fuels.

TURNING ROAD WASTE INTO A RESOURCE

Across the City, the pothole repair program is doing more than maintaining roads - it is putting circular economy principles into practice.

Instead of sending leftover asphalt to landfill, crews collect and return it to depots at Corio, Belmont and Drysdale, where it is stockpiled and repurposed into road base for future works. Around 9,000 tonnes of reclaimed asphalt pavement is reused each year, helping to keep valuable materials in circulation.

In 2025 alone, in-house teams processed 11,148 tonnes - equivalent to about 465 truck and trailer loads - turning waste into a resource. This approach reduces disposal costs, cuts landfill and supports more sustainable procurement, delivering better outcomes for the community.



Stockpiled road asphalt.



Asphalt after being crushed into road base

LANDY FIELD - RECYCLED RUBBER FOR ATHLETICS TRACK

Supporting the circular economy from truck to track. In 2024, upgrades at Landy Field incorporated the use of 57 tonnes of recycled crumbed rubber sourced from used truck tyres to construct the base rubber mat on the athletics track. This is equivalent to nearly 2,000 truck tyres.



Recycled crumbed rubber used on Landy Field athletics track upgrade and resurfacing

GOAL FOUR: PROTECT, ENHANCE AND RESTORE OUR REGION'S BIODIVERSITY

Our region's natural environment is critical to biodiversity, ecosystem health and community wellbeing, yet it's in decline and requires urgent action. As a major land manager and planning authority, we play a key role in protecting and restoring habitats while partnering with community and stakeholders to strengthen biodiversity outcomes across the region.

IMPROVING BIODIVERSITY, HABITAT AND COMMUNITY AMENITY

Green Links – Waurn Ponds Creek, Barwon and Moorabool Rivers

Between 2025-26, the City secured over \$1.3 million in external funding to deliver priority on-ground biodiversity projects across the Geelong region.

This included \$478,000 through two state-funded Green Links projects: Round 1 - the Waurn Ponds Creek Restoration Project led by the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA) and Round 2 - the Moorabool and Barwon Rivers Restoration Project led by the City.

These projects are delivering a coordinated, landscape-scale program of riparian restoration across the Waurn Ponds Creek, Barwon River, including Sparrovale Wetlands, and Moorabool River systems. To support the successful delivery of both projects, collaboration with project partners was critical. Project partners included, the CCMA, the Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation, Deakin University and Golden Plains Shire.

Both projects focus on reconnecting fragmented habitats, improving ecological function and enhancing biodiversity outcomes within increasingly urbanising catchments. Across the two projects, more than 45 hectares are being treated through pest plant removal, pest animal management and protection of remnant vegetation. In addition to this, approximately 50,000 indigenous plants are being established to restore native vegetation communities and strengthen habitat connectivity.

Together, the projects will deliver significant biodiversity benefits by improving habitat for threatened and priority species, including Growling Grass Frog, Yarra Pygmy Perch, koala and platypus. They will also strengthen ecological connections to key systems such as the Barwon River floodplain and adjacent Ramsar wetlands and be supported by ongoing community and Traditional Owner involvement.



Revegetation along Waurn Ponds Creek

Armstrong Creek Waterway Revegetation

The establishment of new reserves in Mt Duneed and Armstrong Creek demonstrates how biodiversity outcomes are being embedded in urban development early in the planning stages of such developments.

Planning for the Armstrong Creek waterway, which flows through both areas has prioritised habitat protection and restoration within a rapidly developing landscape. With the growth areas being delivered in stages, each phase is applying evolving approaches to revegetation and habitat creation. Lessons from earlier phases have been embedded into later stages, resulting in improved biodiversity and amenity outcomes and more resilient landscapes.



Mt Duneed revegetation activities along the Armstrong Creek

NAGOYA-GEELONG PARTNERSHIP

The Nagoya–Geelong Partnership is a formal international collaboration between the City of Greater Geelong and the City of Nagoya, established in 2007 through a wetlands affiliation agreement. It focuses on protecting internationally significant wetlands in both regions, which support migratory bird species travelling between Japan and Australia.

The bi-annual Nagoya–Geelong Wetlands Partnership Conference was held in March 2026 as part of the official Nagoya delegation visit to Geelong. The program included a civic welcome at Geelong City Hall, an official meeting between the City of Nagoya and the City of Greater Geelong, and a series of site visits and field-based activities focused on wetland management, coastal environments, and environmental education.



Key locations included Sparrovale Wetlands, Swan Bay, Queenscliff Harbour, the Marine and Freshwater Discovery Centre, Barwon Heads and the You Yangs. The visit also provided valuable opportunities for student engagement, cultural exchange, and knowledge sharing on wetland protection and management practices, further strengthening the long-standing partnership between Nagoya and Geelong.

Nagoya students visit Swan Bay as part of the 2026 visit

GOAL FIVE: ACHIEVE BETTER INTEGRATED WATER MANAGEMENT THROUGH PLANNING AND DESIGN

We need to manage our water resources wisely, securing a sustainable water supply for the ongoing health of our community and our environment.

Integrated water management (IWM) is a collaborative approach to managing all water resources - including drinking water, sewerage, waterways, floodplains, drainage and stormwater networks. It involves working with all relevant stakeholders to plan and deliver improved water management processes.

BARWON INTEGRATED WATER MANAGEMENT FORUM

The Integrated Water Management Forum, led by Barwon Water, brings together government, water, catchment and local government sectors to coordinate decisions, share resources, and maximise investment for water resilience and liveability in the Barwon region.

Through strong collaboration, the forum has secured over \$50 million in funding and delivered key projects such as stormwater upgrades, recycled water initiatives, and urban greening across multiple municipalities. Recently, it has also coordinated \$1.5 million in new project submissions, with outcomes expected in 2026.

The forum is now entering a new phase, with refreshed executive-level representation and leadership to strengthen strategic alignment and investment outcomes. It will meet twice yearly and focus on setting regional priorities, updating its terms of reference, and improving collaboration with industry.

The City has provided \$10,000 to support a 3-year Regional IWM Officer and Technical Working Group to further enhance water security, climate resilience, and delivery of IWM projects across the region.

CONSTRUCTED WATERWAYS – IWM IN ACTION

Constructed waterways play an important role in stormwater management in new urban developments. These systems collect and slow runoff, removing litter, sediment and other pollutants. In the Armstrong Creek Growth Area, a network of constructed waterways directs stormwater to Sparrovale Wetlands that provides further treatment and storage, helping protect the internationally significant wetlands of Lake Connnewarre.

The constructed waterway located in the Banksia Estate in Armstrong Creek is a recent project that demonstrates IWM in action.



Waurin Ponds constructed waterway – Hams Rd



Banksia Estate constructed waterway – Armstrong Creek

CREAMERY ROAD PRECINCT STRUCTURE PLAN - IWM INITIATIVES

The Creamery Road Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) in the North Western Geelong Growth Area incorporates integrated water management (IWM) as a core design element, supporting sustainable urban growth while protecting downstream waterways. The PSP adopts a water-sensitive urban design (WSUD) approach to manage stormwater, improve water quality and respond to flood risk across the catchment.

Key measures include constructed wetlands, bio-retention systems and retarding basins to treat and slow stormwater before it enters Cowies Creek and the broader Barwon River system. These systems reduce pollutants, manage peak flows and support environmental values, helping to protect receiving waterways.

Stormwater infrastructure is integrated within the open space network, with waterways and drainage corridors designed as multifunctional assets that provide flood storage and habitat for the nationally threatened Growling Grass Frog. This supports landscape connectivity, urban cooling and improved community amenity, while ensuring development is appropriately located outside high-risk flood areas.

The PSP also incorporates the use of recycled water to service new dwellings, reducing demand on potable water supplies and improving long-term water efficiency across the precinct.

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