

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

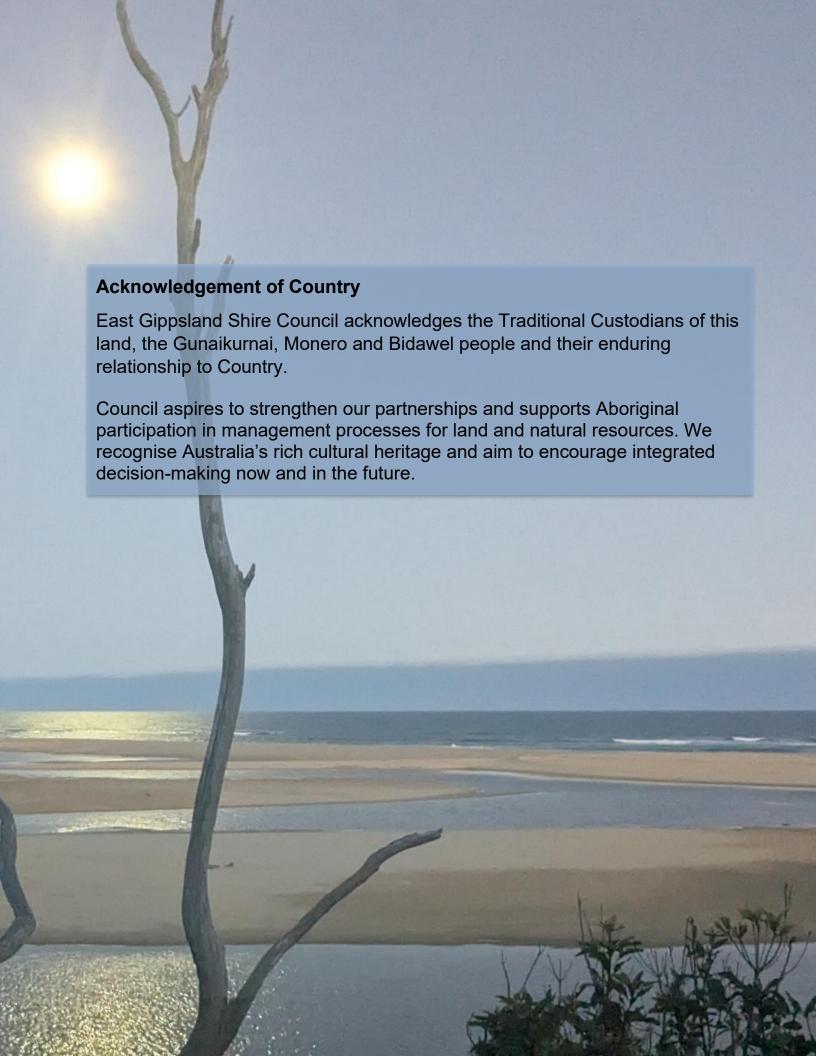






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OVERVIEW

About this Report

The Environmental Sustainability Annual Report monitors Council's progress in delivering the seven goals of the East Gippsland Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2022–2032 and the corresponding actions from the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan 2022–2026.

This report provides a snapshot of key achievements made by Council and its partners, acknowledging progress and celebrating milestones. It highlights Council's ongoing commitment to environmental sustainability and outlines how we are working collaboratively with the community and stakeholders to achieve our shared vision for a more sustainable East Gippsland.



East Gippsland Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2022-32

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy is Council's primary environmental policy, guiding efforts across all areas of Council to address climate change, protect biodiversity, manage land and water responsibly, and improve resource efficiency.

It defines Council's role in maintaining, protecting, and enhancing the region's natural environment over the next decade.

Four-Year Action Plan 2022-26

The accompanying Four-Year Action Plan sets out how Council will deliver the goals of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2022–2032.

Each action reflects Council's priorities and identifies opportunities for collaboration with the community and key stakeholders.

Targets aligned with each goal provide a framework for measuring progress and driving continuous improvement in environmental outcomes across the region.

Our aspirations drive the focus:

"By 2032, sustainable behaviour and decision making will be embedded into all aspects of how East Gippslanders live and work. East Gippsland's natural environment will be enhanced, connected and resilient, and East Gippsland will be recognised as a leader in regional climate change mitigation and adaptation."

Goal 1: Conservation of the natural environment and biodiversity

Why this goal is important

The first goal of the strategy focuses on the conservation of the natural environment and biodiversity. This goal is significant for the region because most of the land in the Shire is in public ownership.

East Gippsland's natural environment and biodiversity were severely impacted by major events over the past 10 years. From 2014 to 2019 East Gippsland experienced the worst drought on record. These conditions led to the Black Summer Bushfires that burnt more than 50 per cent of our shire. The extent of the biodiversity loss is not fully understood.

Key Achievements

Crooke St Wetland Construction

Council has completed a new wetland at 76 Crooke Street, East Bairnsdale, converting a former stormwater drain into a functional and attractive landscape. The wetland improves water quality by removing all gross pollutants and suspended solids, and significantly reducing phosphorus and nitrogen levels—key contributors to algal blooms in the Gippsland Lakes.

The project also enhances flood management, supports native habitat, and improves local amenity. It forms part of broader stormwater upgrades aligned with the East Bairnsdale / Lucknow Precinct Structure Plan.



Landholder Native Vegetation Management Plans

Council launched new landholder grants to enhance biodiversity on private properties across East Gippsland. Eligible landholders with properties over five hectares could access tailored native vegetation management plans to support conservation efforts.

This initiative builds landholder capacity to recognise and protect native vegetation, contributing to broader biodiversity outcomes. Participants receive expert guidance to:

- understand the ecological value of their land, and
- strengthen conservation-focused land management practices.

With increasing pressures from invasive species, extreme weather events—including the Black Summer bushfires—and changing land use, collaborative action is vital to protect East Gippsland's biodiversity for future generations.

Bairnsdale Wetlands Research Project

Council supported a research project, led by a Federation University student, who is exploring how the Bairnsdale community engages with local wetlands. The study will research how these spaces are used, valued, and could be improved.

Constructed wetlands use natural processes to treat urban runoff while creating habitat for native species. Each wetland is uniquely designed to suit its location.

Wetlands play a vital role in stormwater management and biodiversity, providing habitat for frogs, birds, reptiles, and insects. They also offer important social benefits, supporting recreation, education, and wellbeing.

The report with the findings is expected to be finalised and published prior to the end of the 2025 year.

This project is funded by the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee and supported by East Gippsland Shire Council.



Social media advertising the Landholder Native Vegetation Management Plans Program



Wetland area west of the Bairnsdale Aquatic and Recreation Centre (BARC)

Goal 2: Sustainable management of natural resources

Why this goal is important

This goal refers to the sustainable management of natural resources, such as more efficient use of water, energy and fuel for transport as well as sustainable use of land, soil and raw materials.

Efficiently managing our use of natural resources can have two effects:

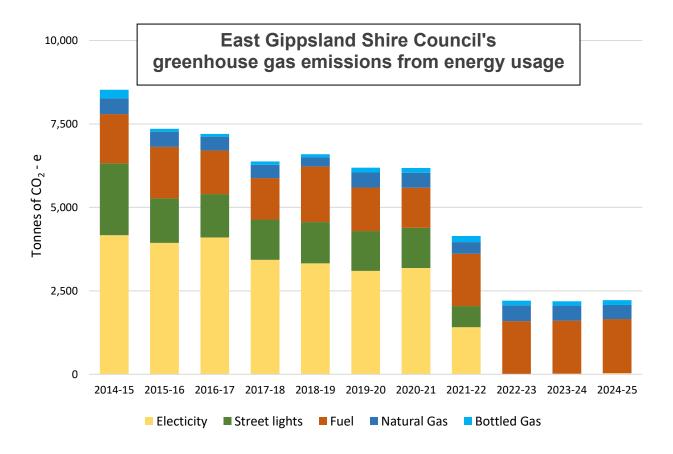
- Reduce carbon emissions into the atmosphere (mitigation)
- Lower the risk of the impacts from change (adaptation)

Key Achievements

Historical greenhouse gas emission – Tonnes of CO₂ equivalent

	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23
Scope 1			
Natural Gas	419	451	477
Bottled Gas	145	131	138
Fuel	1,621	1,591	1,586
Landfill	11,287	10,009	10,603
Scope 2			
Electricity	35	16	5
Total scope 1 and 2	13,507	12,198	12,809
Scope 3			
Water use	279	207	184
Contractor fuel use	622	654	No data
Electricity production and distribution	4	1	17
Natural gas production and transport	32	35	35
Bottled gas production and transport	49	43	32
Fuel extraction, production and transport	399	392	373
Accommodation	Not available	14	12
Business Travel	1	1	1
Cleaning and Chemicals	Not available	167	229
Construction materials	Not available	35	44
Food	Not available	27	49
ICT service and equipment	Not available	525	511
Machinery and vehicles	Not available	944	356
Office equipment and supplies	Not available	61	85
Postage, courier and freight	Not available	65	69
Professional services	Not available	582	533
Total scope 3	1,386	3,753	2,530
Total	14,893	15,951	15,339

^{*} The majority of scope 3 data sources are still being processed.



EV Chargers in Buchan and Mallacoota

Council installed two new public electric vehicle charging stations in Buchan and Mallacoota. Buchan has a 24kW DC electric vehicle charging station, installed as part of recent streetscape upgrades. With a dedicated EV parking bay, supporting both residents and visitors. This station is expected to boost tourism and support the growing number of EV drivers exploring the region.



Mallacoota has also welcomed a new 50kW DC charger on Greer Street, complete with dedicated parking and a unique design featuring artwork by local artist Libby Greig. The charger offers fast, convenient access for EV users and adds a creative touch to the town's infrastructure.



Lakes Entrance Integrated Water Management plan

Council is partnering with East Gippsland Water to develop an Integrated Water Management (IWM) plan for Lakes Entrance and surrounding areas.

The IWM approach considers how land use, environmental and cultural values influence the natural water cycle, with actions to be prioritised to improve water outcomes for the region.

Three workshops, two in person and one online, have been held with local agencies to guide the plan's development.

Community input has also played a key role, with an engagement survey receiving 70 responses. Feedback highlighted strong interest in water quality, environmental health, and sustainable planning, and will help ensure the plan reflects local values and priorities.

The project is supported by \$50,000 in funding from DEECA's Water and Catchments Group.



Lakes Entrance IWM Workshop held with other government agencies in August



Council's First Electric Lawnmower

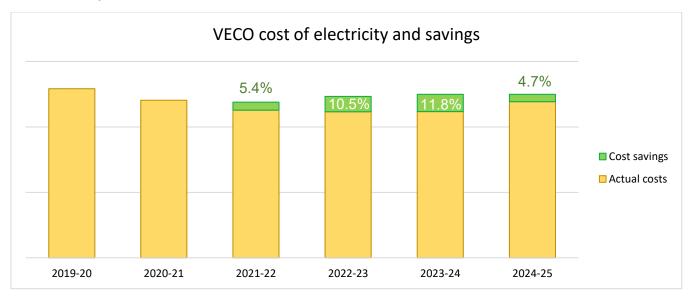
Council purchased an electric ride-on mower as part of its mowing program. Powered by 100% renewable energy through the VECO agreement, the mower produces zero emissions and operates without diesel.

In addition to environmental benefits, the mower is expected to deliver operational savings through reduced fuel and maintenance costs.

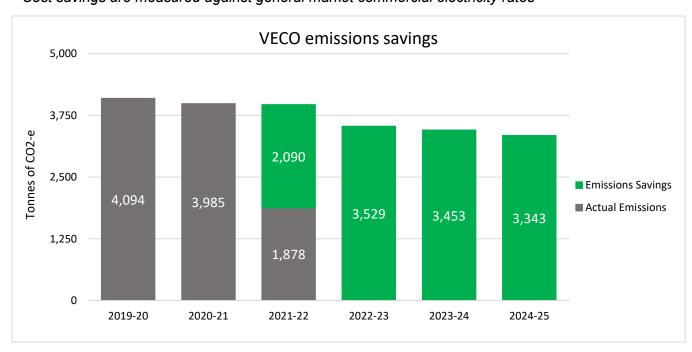
VECO progressive savings

Council commenced its Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO) power purchase agreement in December 2021, securing discounted electricity rates and sourced from 100% renewable energy. Since the agreement began, Council has saved nearly \$250,000 and reduced greenhouse gas emissions by over 12,000 tonnes.

This initiative aligns with Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2022–2032, which outlines a commitment to managing climate change impacts, achieving sustainable resource use, and living within the capacity of the local environment. By participating in VECO Council not only reduces carbon footprint but is also contributing to a broader shift toward clean energy across the region.



* Cost savings are measured against general market commercial electricity rates



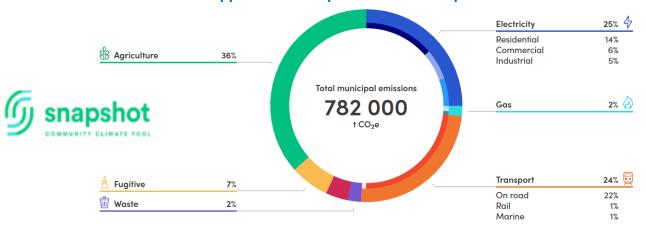
Goal 3: Community participation in climate response

Why this goal is important

This goal specifically focuses on the extent to which the whole community (local businesses, community organisations, individuals, and Traditional Owners) undertake and participate in the climate response.

This includes considering their awareness, the tools they need for action, and the level of ownership and leadership they demonstrate to drive change. As the impact of a changing climate emerges, there is an urgent call for both individual and collective efforts to prioritise the sustainability of our environment.

East Gippsland municipal emissions snapshot 2022-23



The emissions data here is sourced from SnapShot, a website developed by Ironbark Sustainability and Beyond Zero Emissions. Snapshot is underpinned by a common international framework, the Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventories (GPC Protocol). Snapshot data, methodology and calculations have been independently verified as aligned with the GPC and with best practice industry standards for community emissions profile development in Australia.

Source	Sector	Emissions (tonnes of CO ₂ equivalent) 2018-19 2022-23	
Electricity	Residential	141,000	107,000
Liectricity			· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
	Commercial	65,000	47,000
	Industrial	54,000	42,000
Gas	Residential	8,000	8,000
	Industrial	5,000	5,000
Transport	On road	178,000	181,000
	Rail	1,000	1,000
	Marine	6,000	7,000
Waste		16,000	17,000
IPPU (Refrigerants)		28,000	30,000
Fugitive		25,000	51,000
Agriculture		280,000	286,000
Land Use		2,000	2,000
Total emissio	ns	807,000	782,000

Key Achievements

Council Reopened Grants Program

Council recommenced it's Community
Grants Program which supports local
groups and organisations in delivering
projects that respond to community needs
and priorities. These grants empower
communities to take an active role in
shaping positive outcomes across East
Gippsland.

The successful applicants in 2024 included several projects awarded under the environment stream for their alignment with Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy:

- East Gippsland Rail Trail
 Committee of Management Inc. –
 biodiversity and cultural awareness interpretive signage \$15,000
- Paynesville Landcare Coastcare Group Inc. – preliminary planning for the Dinni Birraark Walk through Jones Road Reserve, including environmental and cultural heritage assessment – \$14,508
- Bairnsdale Recycling Enterprise Inc. (The Tip Shop) – hydraulic lift for mattress and polystyrene recycling – \$10,000

Other notable projects, while not funded under the environment stream, are expected to deliver positive environmental outcomes includes:

- Rotary Club of Bairnsdale Sunrise – concept designs for cycling education infrastructure – \$20,000
- Paynesville Neighbourhood
 Centre raised garden beds for a
 community garden \$10,000
- Gelantipy Landcare Group native plant and shrub propagation bedding system – \$1,895

Home Energy Efficiency Kits

Council is making it easier for residents to improve energy efficiency at home, with new Home Energy Efficiency Kits now available to borrow from local libraries.

Each kit includes a user-friendly instruction guide to help households conduct a basic energy audit and identify opportunities to reduce energy use and costs. The kits contain practical tools such as a thermometer, power-mate energy monitor, thermal imaging camera, and a water-flow measuring cup.

These resources empower community members to better understand how energy is used in their homes and take simple, effective steps toward reducing consumption.



Home energy efficiency kits available at Council libraries

Community Engagement and Events

Council continues to actively engage with communities across East Gippsland through local events, outreach activities, and information sessions. These opportunities allow Council to share updates on key projects and services, gather community feedback, and support local initiatives that strengthen connection and wellbeing.

Throughout the year, Council participated in a range of events, where they hosted stalls focused on waste and recycling education. These events included:

- Bairnsdale Show November 2024
- Omeo Show –November 2024
- Orbost Show March 2025
- East Gippsland Field Days April 2025

These events reflect Council's commitment to being present in the community, promoting local projects, and providing accessible information and services.



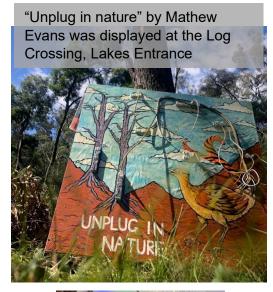
Sustainability Officer) engage with

community on waste and recycling

The Exchange Place

A collaboration between RMIT University and Council, with funding from Emergency Recovery Victoria, this project has brought together First Nations' knowledge holders, sustainability experts, and local creatives to spark meaningful discussions.

Through a series of interactive workshops, participants explored climate challenges, shared lived experiences, and contributed insights that inspired a collection of stunning artworks. These pieces reflect the themes of dialogue, resilience, and environmental responsibility, offering a creative and thought-provoking perspective on the future of our region.





"Temporal Drift" by Sasha Kruse was set up in Lakes Entrance

Goal 4: Respect and alignment with the rights of Traditional Owner Groups

Why this goal is important

East Gippsland Shire Council recognises the importance of Traditional Owners in delivering sustainability outcomes for the community and important biodiversity values. Traditional Owner groups as custodians of traditional customs and land management techniques are interlinked with every other goal within this Strategy.

Key Achievements

First Nations Emergency Management Partnerships

Community Emergency Management Plans (CEMPs) have been prepared with 10 First Nations communities and organisations. In addition, five Emergency Management Partnership Days were held in collaboration with these groups.

Both initiatives are strengthening awareness and capacity across Council and community, particularly in relation to land management knowledge. They also support improved collaboration between communities and agencies to work more safely and effectively before, during, and after emergencies.

Development of a new Reconciliation Action Plan

Council advanced its commitment to reconciliation and Aboriginal engagement through the submission of its draft Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) to Reconciliation Australia. The RAP, supported by a dedicated working group, outlines a vision of being "Culturally Safe and Treaty Ready" and aims to embed cultural safety and strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The RAP will have a dedicated focus on environmental management, with specific deliverables around managing and supporting natural resource management goals between Council and First Nations.



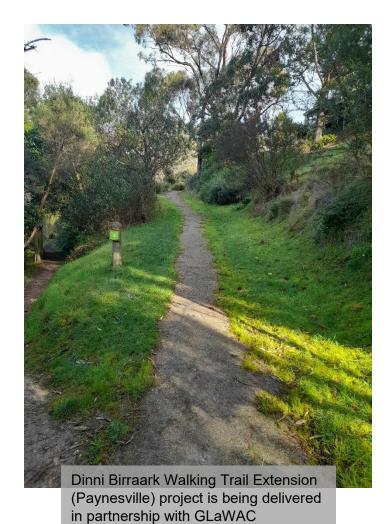
Partnership with Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust

Council also continued to deliver essential services at Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, partnered with GLaWAC on planning and infrastructure projects, and supported cultural events such as NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week, including the Elders Lunch. These efforts reflect Council's ongoing commitment to respectful, strategic, and inclusive engagement.

Other projects

Council continued to roll out the Aboriginal and Cultural Awareness Program supported by GLAWAC and GEGAC. In addition, four leadership-focused cultural awareness training sessions were delivered. Council is working to develop additional programs for staff that are located more remotely.

GLaWAC has been partnered with to deliver local projects. This includes work to complete the playground upgrade at Hoddinott Reserve and to freshen up surrounding public facilities in the area. Further landscaping developments and opportunities within the reserve are being investigated in collaboration with GLaWAC.





Goal 5: Supports sustainable economic growth and new job opportunities

Why this goal is important

East Gippsland is recognised as an important agricultural district of state and national importance. Both socially and economically, East Gippsland recognises itself as a region that produces high-quality produce or 'food and fibre'.

An integral aspect of achieving this objective involves the expansion of sustainability services to enhance the existing industries' capacity for sustainability. The evolving climate and shifting policies and guidelines also present new opportunities for businesses to either relocate to or develop within East Gippsland.

Key Achievements

Energy efficiency in agriculture forum

Council has partnered with Far East Victoria to host an Energy Efficiency in Agriculture Day at the new Gippsland Agriculture Centre housed at the aerodrome in Bengworden. Guest speakers from Wilandra, an organic farm in the region, showcased the actions they have undertaken to save energy and costs.

This follows from a successful day in Orbost in July where attendees learnt about renewable energy in agriculture from locals trialing renewables on farms. Adaptation actions on local farms were also highlighted, which resulted in time and productivity savings.



Business Renewables Buying Group 2025

East Gippsland businesses received a chance to explore renewable energy purchasing through a free webinar.

We joined with councils across Victoria to assist businesses to purchase renewable energy, to save money and cut their emissions.

Hosted by the Business Renewables Buying Group this session covered the advantages of collectively buying renewable electricity, rather than going to market individually.

Participants gained insights into the Victorian energy market, learnt about the benefits of long-term renewable energy contracts, and received support to navigate the group procurement process.



Eco Tourism Workshop: Building Positive Impact in East Gippsland

Council partnered with eco-tourism sustainability consultant 7 Generations Tourism to deliver a transformative workshop aimed at empowering local tourism and hospitality businesses to integrate sustainability into their operations. This initiative formed a key component of East Gippsland's commitment to achieving ECO Destination Certification.

The workshop provided participants with practical strategies to embed sustainable practices, helping them future-proof their businesses, enhance competitiveness, and respond to the growing demand for responsible travel experiences.

To support long-term change, ten businesses received tailored mentoring, enabling them to set short-, medium-, and long-term sustainability goals.

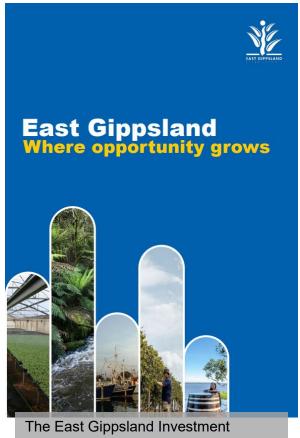


Generations Tourism

East Gippsland Investment Prospectus: Driving Sustainable Growth

Council developed the new East Gippsland Investment Prospectus as a strategic marketing tool to position the region as investment-ready, highlighting its competitive advantages and strong commitment to sustainability. The Prospectus presents a clear, professional narrative that promotes East Gippsland as a dynamic, forward-looking region aligned with Council's vision for sustainable growth and prosperity.

It identifies priority sectors including renewable energy, food and fibre, ecotourism, and green innovation, showcasing opportunities for investors to participate in projects that deliver economic returns while supporting the clean energy transition, creating local jobs, and building resilient supply chains.



Prospectus front cover

Goal 6: Growth in the circular economy

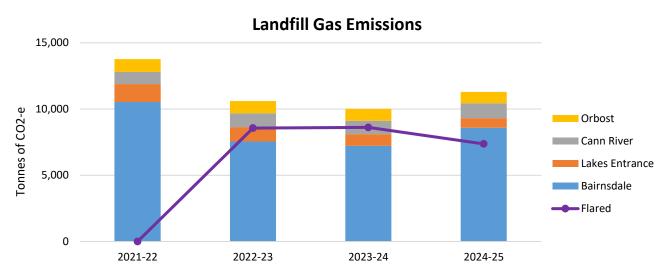
Why this goal is important

Goal 6 is about fostering the growth of the circular economy. The circular economy replaces the traditional make, use, and dispose of philosophy of consumption with the idea of recycle and reuse.

In a circular economy, natural resources are kept in use for as long as possible, creating new economic opportunities while conserving resources and reducing emissions and waste.

Reducing overall waste is the first step. Growth in the circular economy depends on technologies that enable materials and products to be reused, repurposed, or recycled.

Key Achievements



Managing landfill gas

Council's largest emission source comes from landfill gas. Strategies to address reducing these emissions are outlined in the recently developed Emissions Reduction Plan.

The graph above shows the progress of Council's landfill gas emissions, which shows a large decline in 2022-23 due to the installation of methane gas flares at Bairnsdale and Lakes Entrance.

he increase in emissions for 2024–25 is due to methane generation from Cell 4 at Bairnsdale Landfill, which opened the previous year. Additionally, the flares are becoming less effective.

Planning a new Organics Composting Facility

Council is progressing with plans to construct a new organics composting facility adjacent to the Bairnsdale Landfill on Johnstons Road, Forge Creek. A community information session was held in March to provide an overview of the planning permit application, with experts available to discuss key aspects of the proposal.

The facility will enable the separation of organic waste, such as food scraps and garden trimmings, from general waste, allowing it to be composted into nutrient-rich soil. This process diverts waste from landfill and helps reduce methane emissions.

Reusable Product Rebate

Council is encouraging residents to reduce waste with the Reusable Product Rebate program. The program is available to all East Gippsland residents and can be used toward the purchase of reusable items including:

- Reusable nappies
- reusable period products, and
- compost bins and worm farms.

These products assist residents to reduce single use and food waste from going to landfill. The rebate is worth up to \$40 per household for each category per year. There have been approximately 75 applications since the program commencement in 2023.

Supporting the circular economy

Council secured a \$37,000 Circular Economy Organics Fund grant from the Victorian Government, through Sustainability Victoria, to advance the Optimising Kerbside Organics project.

Delivered in partnership with East Gippsland Water, the initiative trialed the composting of green waste and biosolids, producing a range of high-quality compost blends for use in Council parks and facilities.

This project demonstrates Council's commitment to circular economy principles by transforming organic waste into a valuable resource, reducing landfill, and improving soil health across the region.





Goal 7: Community resilience to increasing climate risk and natural disasters

Why this goal is important

Goal 7 focuses on the resilience of East Gippsland communities in responding to and recovering from climate-related disruptions and extreme events. Given the vulnerability of East Gippsland to climate change and natural disasters, preparing for climate change now is critical to reduce the impacts on our people, infrastructure, economy and natural environment. This will allow our communities and visitors to continue to live, visit and work in East Gippsland into the future

Key Achievements

Climate Risk Assessment Tool

Council is undertaking a detailed climate risk assessment and developing an online tool to help identify and manage physical risks from climate change and extreme weather events. These risks relate to critical infrastructure and community assets. The initiative aims to strengthen resilience by informing adaptation strategies and supporting decision-making that protects essential services and communities.

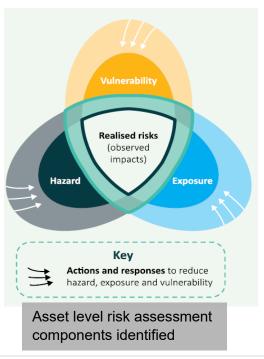
The online tool will enable asset managers to understand current and future climate risks under various emissions scenarios. The climate risk assessment will also provide insights into potential climate impacts on services that support community wellbeing and sustainability.

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A project methodology has been developed, and preliminary engagement with key stakeholders has been completed. The risk assessment is now being undertake. Both the assessment methods and the online interface framework have been shaped by stakeholder input. These have been verified as fit for purpose and are expected to significantly enhance the capacity to proactively plan for and collaboratively manage climate risks.



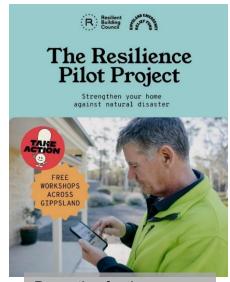
Council Contributes to Climate Ready Communities Forum

Council's Emergency Management and Sustainability teams participated in the 'Climate Ready Communities' forum held in Bairnsdale in November. Organised by the East Gippsland Climate Action Network (EGCAN), the event brought together speakers to explore key issues related to climate change and community wellbeing. Topics included climate impacts, emergency response, health and wellbeing, community resilience, the role of local government, and legal and insurance considerations. Council's contribution highlighted the importance of collaboration in preparing communities for a changing climate.

The forum, titled Why Care? Why Prepare?, focused on lessons learned from recent climate-related emergencies and practical steps communities can take to enhance their preparedness. Experts from local government, emergency services, DEECA, the insurance sector, and health professionals shared insights on mitigating risks and building resilience. Council representatives emphasised the need for integrated planning and community-led adaptation strategies, reinforcing the value of partnerships in strengthening physical and psychological resilience across East Gippsland.

Building Climate Resilience in Gippsland Communities

Council supported the Resilience Pilot Project, a regional initiative helping homeowners prepare for bushfires, storms, and other natural disasters. Delivered in partnership with the Resilient **Building Council** (RBC) and Gippsland **Emergency Relief** Fund (GERF), the project offered free workshops across Gippsland, including East Gippsland.



Promotion for the Resilience Pilot Project

These workshops guided participants through RBC's bushfire resilience assessment app – a home self-assessment allowing people to assess their home and measure how well it would perform in a bushfire event. Attendees received practical, cost-effective advice to strengthen their homes and improve safety, with potential benefits such as insurance or mortgage discounts.



New Emergency Dashboard Launched

Council has launched a new Emergency Dashboard to provide the community with centralised access to real-time emergency information and resources. Developed in partnership with QIT Plus, the platform supports residents and visitors before, during, and after emergency events.

The dashboard brings together live updates on Vic Emergency warnings, weather conditions, road closures, power outages, river heights, and other key information from lead agencies. It also links to local hazard mitigation plans, preparedness resources, and municipal and district-level emergency planning documents.

This initiative strengthens community resilience by improving access to timely, place-based information during critical events.

Council to enhance flood resilience of Omeo's Livingstone Park

Council completed flood mitigation works in Omeo's Livingstone Park to address recent flood damage and improve the park's long-term resilience. These works have strengthened the park's natural flood defences and restored safe access, while enhancing biodiversity and better protecting Livingstone Creek. The works include:

- Rock chutes and a safer rock crossing;
- Stabilised creek banks; and
- New native plantings to boost flood resilience

The plan includes significant replanting to boost biodiversity and maintain the park's character. Funded by Council and Emergency Recovery Victoria, the project reflects a commitment to building climate resilience and preserving valued community spaces for future generations





Flood resilience works at Livingstone Park, Omeo

Contact us

Contact Centre: (03) 5153 9500 National Relay Service: 133 677

East Gippsland Shire Council, PO Box 1618 Bairnsdale 3875 Australia

Web eastgippsland.vic.gov.au Email feedback@egipps.vic.gov.au Fax (03) 5153 9576

In person

Bairnsdale: 273 Main Street

Lakes Entrance: 18 Mechanics Street

Mallacoota: 70 Maurice Avenue

Omeo: 179 Day Avenue Orbost: 1 Ruskin Street

Paynesville: 55 The Esplanade

Outreach Centres

Bendoc Outreach Centre - 18 Dowling Street
Buchan Resource Centre - 6 Centre Road
Cann River Community Centre - Princes Highway