

5.8. CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY GENERAL POLICY

REPORT AUTHOR(S): Nicola Learmond, Sustainability Officer
GENERAL MANAGER: Nicholas Wellwood, General Manager Operations
DEPARTMENT: Sustainable Communities

RECOMMENDATION

That Council adopts the Corporate Sustainability General Policy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Corporate Sustainability General Policy, included as Attachment A, commits Council to six Environmental Sustainable Principles. The policy applies to all Council employees, the operations of Council and Council decisions.

BACKGROUND

The Douglas Shire has a unique natural environment, it is the only place in the world with two adjoining World Heritage listed areas: the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics. It is therefore imperative that Council considers and actively minimises the impact of Council operations on the natural environment. Council has committed to measure the impact of Council operations on the environment by calculating an annual carbon footprint. A carbon footprint baseline is currently being determined and in due course will be provided to Council for consideration.

The Corporate Sustainability General Policy forms part of Council's wider Sustainability Framework. The Sustainability Framework includes activities within Council and the activities of the Shire's communities and businesses. An overview of the Sustainability Framework has been depicted by Chart A.

Chart A – Sustainability Framework Overview



Some of the identified activities (for example, the Reef Guardian Council and revegetation work) are well established or currently in progress; whilst other activities are anticipated to be rolled out during 2017/18 and 2018/19 financial years.

The Corporate Sustainability Policy gives a high level overview of Council's environmental commitments and priorities. The actions to achieve these will be addressed in the Corporate and Community Sustainability Strategies.

COMMENT

The intent of The Policy is to continue to embed environmental sustainable principles into Council's operations and decision making. The policy commits Council to six Environmental Sustainable Principles, which are:

1. Preserve and restore the natural environment
2. Utilise resources efficiently
3. Protect and enhance biodiversity
4. Monitor and reduce Council's environmental footprint
5. Strengthen Council's resilience to climate change
6. Display strong environmental leadership to the community

The Policy aligns with the principles of the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (1992) and other relevant environmental legislation and principles.

The National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development was adopted by all levels of Australian Government in 1992. The goal of the National Strategy is to 'improve the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends'. It is widely accepted that by following an ecologically sustainable path of development that the likelihood of serious environment impacts arising from economic activity will be reduced.

PROPOSAL

That Council adopts the Corporate Sustainability General Policy.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The six Environmental Sustainable Principles outlined within the Policy will be embedded into Council's operations using existing resources. Any additional activities identified in the subsequent Corporate or Community Sustainability Strategies will be resourced appropriately within the relevant Operational Plan.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- Economic:** Council will commit to utilising resources efficiently which over time should be of economic benefit to Council. Financial implications remain a part of Council's decision making considerations and operations but the environmental sustainability implications must be taken into account in line with the Policy.
- Environmental:** The adoption of The Policy will commit Council to six Environmental Sustainable Principles which aim to protect and preserve the natural environment.
- Social:** Council will commit to displaying strong environmental leadership to the communities within Douglas, with an overall aim improve the total quality of life, both now and in the future.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:

Theme 3 - Improve Environmental Performance

3.2.1 - Identify and invest in energy reduction initiatives in Council-owned facilities and in the delivery of services.

3.2.2 - Investigate opportunities for efficiencies in water use including the use of recycled water.

Operational Plan 2015-2016 Actions:

3.1.2 - Development of the Sustainability Strategy incorporating targets for reducing Council's carbon footprint.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Advocate	Supporting communities and groups by advocating for certain actions from other organisations (usually other levels of government)
Fully-Responsible	Funding the full cost of a program or activity

CONSULTATION

Internal: Consultation has taken place with the Executive Leadership Team and the Leaders Team (Team Leaders group within Council).

External: Nil

ATTACHMENTS

1. Corporate Sustainability General Policy **[5.8.1]**



CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY GENERAL POLICY

Intent The intent of this policy is to continue to embed environmental sustainable principles into Council's operations. Environmental sustainability is the third pillar of the Triple Bottom Line, which also includes social/cultural and economic sustainability. Council intends to focus on environmental sustainability in this policy.

Council commits to six Environmental Sustainable Principles, which are:

1. Preserve and restore the natural environment
2. Utilise resources efficiently
3. Protect and enhance biodiversity
4. Monitor and reduce Council's environmental footprint
5. Strengthen Council's resilience to climate change
6. Display strong environmental leadership

This policy recognises Council's commitment to the protection of the natural environment and the importance of developing and integrating suitable sustainable environmental practices across Council operations. It aligns with the principles of the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (1992) and other relevant environmental legislation.

The key areas of focus for the delivery of this policy are:

- Events primarily initiated and/or funded by Council
- Capital works projects
- Infrastructure and maintenance
- Procurement
- Resource management
- Water and waste water operations

Scope This policy is applicable to all of Council and its employees in all decisions and activities.

REFERENCE

Relevant Legislation:

- Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011
- Sustainable Planning Act 2009
- Biodiversity Act 2004
- Environmental Protection Act 1994
- National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development – adopted by all levels of the Australian Government in 1992.

Other Principles:

- Intergenerational Equity –The present generation has a guardian duty to protect the natural environment for future generations, as each generation has the right to inherit the same resources enjoyed by previous generations.
- Life Cycle Cost Analysis – The financial, environmental and social costs associated with an asset or resource throughout the entirety of its life. This includes the costs associated with raw materials, production, transport, operating costs and disposal.
- Polluter Pays Principle – The costs associated with environmental pollution, including containment, abatement and avoidance, should be borne by the party who caused the pollution.
- The Precautionary Principle – When an activity may lead to morally unacceptable harm, for example the destruction of the natural environment, action should be taken to avoid or diminish that harm even when the scientific evidence has a degree of uncertainty.
- Triple Bottom Line – A sustainability framework which takes into account social/cultural and environmental performance in addition to financial/economic performance.
- Waste Hierarchy – A guide for prioritising waste management practices with the objective of achieving optimal environmental outcomes. The most preferable option is to avoid producing the waste, this is followed by reduce, reuse, recycle, recover, treat and disposal.

PROVISIONS

Council commits to applying the six Environmental Sustainable Principles to its operations and decision making, while delivering efficient and cost-effective services to the community.

Processes

Council will embed the Environmental Sustainable Principles into Council operations through the following actions:

1. Comply with and aspire to exceed the requirements of relevant environmental legislation, policy and standards to continually improve Council's environmental sustainability performance.
2. Give purchase preference to goods and services which provide value for money outcomes to Council and consider re-useable, recycled and/or environmentally friendly products in accordance with Council's Procurement Policy.
3. Identify and roll out suitable energy efficiency initiatives across Council operations.
4. Endeavour to reduce the amount of waste generated by Council operations and increase the percentage of waste re-used and/or recycled in accordance with the Waste Hierarchy.
5. Endeavour to increase the amount of recycled water used for irrigation, industry and other appropriate purposes within the Shire.
6. Endeavour to protect and restore biodiversity through targeted weed management, tree planting, seed propagation and pest/animal control.
7. Regularly monitor Council's carbon emission performance and report outcomes to senior management, community and relevant government agencies.
8. Endeavour to reduce Council's carbon footprint by improving environmental performance by setting measurable objectives and targets.
9. Plan and prepare for natural events and the associated environmental impacts.
10. Integrate the environmental sustainable principles into management frameworks to ensure environmental sustainability is a core part of Council's strategic planning and operations.

This Policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council

Manager Responsible for Review:

Manager Sustainable Communities

**ORIGINALLY ADOPTED:
DUE FOR REVISION: 2020
REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:**

DRAFT