

# ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

## CLARE & GILBERT VALLEYS COUNCIL

Environmental Sustainability Policy

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Classification	
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Last Reviewed	
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Responsible Officer	Principal Planner
Council File Reference	
Applicable Legislation	Local Government Act 1999, Development Act 1993, Environmental Protection Act (1993), Natural Resource Management Act 2004, Zero Waste Act 2004, Native Vegetation Act 1991, Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999

### Background

The Council's Strategic Plan 2008-2012, endorsed in February 2008, provides the required direction to commit to the principles of sustainability across all of Council's operations.

The Strategic Plan 2008-2012 identifies environmental sustainability as a key outcome and states that Council will develop an Environmental Sustainability Policy.

An Environmental Sustainability Policy demonstrates and drives an organisation's commitment to improvement in environmental performance. It also provides the overall sense of direction and sets guiding principles for the setting of environmental objectives and targets.

## **1. The Purpose of the Policy**

**1.1** The purpose of this policy is to provide clear direction for Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council to incorporate environmental sustainability into all elements of its business. Incorporating sustainability is achieved by considering environmental, economic and social impacts concurrently.

**1.2** To ensure that Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council has an appropriate document to meet its functions and objectives, as outlined under the Local Government Act 1999, (Chapter 2 sections 7 and 8), in terms of considering ecologically sustainable development.<sup>1</sup>

**1.3** To protect and enhance the natural environment.

**1.4** To raise awareness of environmental sustainability and increase community participation.

### **Commitment and Aims**

Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council recognises its environmental obligations to present and future generations both locally and globally. Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council recognises the strategic importance of an Environmental Sustainability Policy to enhance the quality of the Council's activities and provide leadership in an area of major concern to the community.

Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council aims for environmental best practice and the integration of environmental responsibility in all aspects of the Council's work. This policy statement provides a framework for establishing:

- environmental objectives;
- ecological targets;
- action plans;
- procedures;
- review and evaluation mechanisms.

Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council recognises its statutory obligations as outlined within the following;

Local Government Act 1999

Development Act 1993

Environmental Protection Act (1993)

Natural Resource Management Act 2004

Zero Waste Act 2004

Native Vegetation Act 1991

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Federal)

1. South Australia Local Government Act 1999, Chapter 2 states;

- To manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment in an ecologically sustainable manner, and to improve amenity;
- Seek to facilitate sustainable development and the protection of the environment and to ensure a proper balance within its community between economic, social, environmental and cultural considerations; give due weight, in all its plans, policies and activities, to regional, State and national objectives and strategies concerning the economic, social, physical and environmental development and management of the community.

## **Implementation**

The Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council's Environmental Sustainability Policy provides the framework for the development of a 5 year Environmental Management Plan (EMP) in accordance with the international standards for environmental management systems AS/NZS ISO 14001:2004.

The EMP will be dynamic, with an annual cycle of review and budget allocation, which in turn will provide the mechanism for implementation of the Policy.

The Environmental Management Plan will:

- identify and prioritise objectives;
- establish targets;
- document individual actions and time frames to achieve ecological targets;
- allocate resources and responsibilities to enable realisation of the overall Plan;
- set performance indicators and mechanisms to monitor and report progress.

## **2. Policy statement**

**2.1** Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council's Elected Members and Staff are committed to managing, developing, protecting, restoring, enhancing and conserving the environment in an ecologically sustainable manner.

**2.2** Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council is committed to establishing, promoting and maintaining a culture of sustainability and environmental responsibility. This responsibility is jointly owned by the Elected Members, Council Staff and the Community.

**2.2** The Council and staff of Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council will work together with the community to consider and minimise the negative impacts of our activities on the environment and maximise our application of environmental best practice.

**2.3** Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council commits to undertake its business in an environmentally sustainable manner.

**2.4** Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council is committed to a 10% reduction in its Green House Gas Emissions by 2012 <sup>2</sup>.

**2.5** Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council will adopt, apply and implement the BATEA principles to further express its commitment to environmentally responsible activities throughout its operations. BATEA is defined as 'Best Available Technology Economically Available'. BATEA principles require that the best possible technology is utilised for a particular activity, such that the viability of the enterprise is not threatened <sup>3</sup>.

2. Clare and Gilbert Valleys Council, Strategic Plan 2008-2012 states;

- Council commits to a 10% reduction in Council's Carbon Footprint
- 3% annual reduction in energy use

3. <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/noise/vibguide0643mitigation.htm> (accessed 22/2/2010).

**2.6** Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council will adopt environmentally sound work practices within Council operations that reduce the consumption of natural resources and prevent pollution by:

- Reducing waste to landfill from Council buildings
- Purchasing goods made from recycled products or purchasing recyclable products.
- Reducing water consumption in Council properties, parks and reserves.
- Enhancing biodiversity on all Council managed land.

**2.7** Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council will strive to exceed the legislative requirements of environmental laws and regulations. This commitment to environmental sustainability will be specifically supported in all of Councils plans, strategies and services.

### **3. Principles**

**3.1** Councillors and Council staff will apply the principles of ecologically sustainable development when carrying out their duties, as required by the Local Government Act 1999 (Chapter 2, Section 7(e)).

**3.2** Council will lead the community by example; by implementing environmental sustainability within its structure and activities.

**3.3** Council will progressively and continually improve its environmental performance and outcomes.

**3.4** Council will set targets and objectives to achieve environmental sustainability. This will be done in Council's key corporate plans including the Strategic Plan, Business Plan, and any operational plans or strategies as is relevant.

**Ecologically Sustainable Development** is defined according to Australia's National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development 1992.

'using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased'.

**3.5** Policy and management decisions of the Council will be undertaken with regard to environmental, as well as social and economic considerations and impacts.

**3.6** The cost and impact of indirect environmental effects will be considered in decision making.

**Ecologically Sustainable Development** can be achieved through the implementation of the following principles and programs:

- **The precautionary principle;** namely, that if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.
- **Intergenerational equity;** Each generation has the right to inherit the same diversity in natural and cultural resources enjoyed by previous generations and to have equitable access to the use and benefits of these resources. At the same time, the present generation is a custodian of the planet for future generations, obliged to conserve this legacy so that future generations may also enjoy these same rights.
- **Conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity;** namely, that conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration,

source: <http://www.environment.gov.au>

**3.8** Council will report on its environmental programs to the Community. This reporting will include regular monitoring, assessment and reporting of social, environmental and economic indicators.

- **Improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms;** namely, that environmental factors should be included in the valuation of assets and services, such as:
  - (i) polluter pays—that is, those who generate pollution and waste should bear the cost of containment, avoidance or abatement.
  - (ii) the users of goods and services should pay prices based on the full life cycle of costs of providing goods and services, including the use of natural resources and assets and the ultimate disposal of any waste.
  - (iii) environmental goals, having been established, should be pursued in the most cost effective way, by establishing incentive structures, including market mechanisms, that enable those best placed to maximise benefits or minimise costs to develop their own solutions and responses to environmental problems.

source: <http://www.environment.gov.au>

**3.9** All Council contracts and tenders shall include environmental criteria. All contractors and suppliers shall be made aware of Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council's environmental commitment and provide evidence of their ability to comply with this commitment when responding to tenders.

**3.10** Achieving environmental sustainability is one of Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council staff's core behaviours and is included in the staff induction sessions and appropriate training sessions.

**3.11** All new Council buildings and facilities, parks, gardens and community lands will be developed in line with sustainability principles and incorporate good environmental performance. This includes consideration of energy, green house gas emissions, materials, waste and water at the design stage.

**3.12** Council will work with and assist its community to:

- Prevent pollution of the environment;
- Conserve and use energy, water and natural resources wisely and responsibly;
- Comply with the requirements of environmental laws and regulations and Council's plans and policies, as a minimum;
- Strive for best practice environmental management; and
- Support environmental programs implemented by the Council.

## **POLICY OBJECTIVES:**

To increase the use of renewable energy, sustainable use of water and raise awareness of the need for sustainability in everyday lives and in everything we do. Council aims to reduce the Council's and the community's ecological footprint.

Council aims to achieve this through; Educating, assisting and providing information to the community in achieving ecological sustainable development.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Staff will identify ways for Council to reduce its Green House Gas Emissions through such measures as:

- Undertaking benchmarking study of consumption of energy and related Green House Gas Emissions throughout its operations.
- Undertaking core business activities and provision of services to the Clare & Gilbert Valleys Community in an ecologically sustainable manner.

## **WATER**

- Council will promote sustainable water use and foster innovative options for supplies of water, including stormwater reuse and recycled water.
- Council will minimise wastage of water and limit potential sources of pollution to storm water.
- Council will continue to improve the condition of water reserves and where appropriate develop additional wetlands for storm water cycling.

## **BIODIVERSITY**

- Protecting the biodiversity of the region by promoting and implementing sustainable land management practices.
- Minimising native plant and animal species decline through limiting the removal or, damage to, indigenous vegetation.
- Recognising the environmental value of native roadside vegetation and committing to its conservation wherever practicable.
- Encouraging the community to assist in the protection and enhancement of the Council region and the region's biodiversity through the development and maintenance of public roads, by landholders, community groups and individuals.
- Advise the relevant agency in relation to the control of proclaimed plants on private property and manage proclaimed plants on land under Council's care and control, or ownership, including the appropriate removal.

## **WASTE**

- Reducing waste through waste minimisation practices and effective resource recovery practices.
- Reduce the amount of waste being taken to landfill, through recycling systems and green waste disposal.
- Encourage the reduction of illegal dumping through education and signage and where adequate evidence is obtained that illegal dumping has occurred that prosecution will occur.

## **ENERGY**

- Support the appropriate development of renewable energy.
- Improve the energy efficiency of buildings – commercial, industrial and residential.

## **5. Authorisation**

Council adopted this policy on 19/04/2010

This policy is due to be reviewed on the 19/04/2014

## **6. Who is responsible for implementing this policy?**

All Council staff are required to consider the environmental, economic and social outcomes of their work. Responsibility for implementation of this Environmental Sustainability Policy rests with the Elected Members of The Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council, Council Staff and the Community.

- Reviewing and updating the policy is the responsibility of the Principal Planner.
- Promoting the policy among staff to ensure it is implemented throughout Council; and
- Ensuring that new staff are informed of the policy during induction.

## **7. Legislation and references**

*AS/NZS ISO 14004:2004 Environmental Management Systems – General Guidelines on Principles, Systems and Support Techniques.*

*QAS, Auditing the ISO 14001 Specification The Environmental Systems Auditor.*

South Australian Local Government Act 1999

Warringa Council, Environmental Policy

University of NSW, Environmental Policy.