



Regional Sustainability Alliance Ballarat

Review of City of Ballarat Environment Papers

- 2007 Environment Sustainability Strategy – Review of Strategies and Actions (Dec. 2013)
- Environment Sustainability Policy - Draft
- Carbon Emissions Reduction Management - Discussion Paper

1. Summary

On 18 February 2014, the Regional Sustainability Alliance Ballarat (RSAB) met to review documents relating to the City of Ballarat's approaches to carbon emissions and environmental performance, as per the Memorandum of Understanding signed in February 2014. The documents reviewed at this meeting were:

- 2007 Environment Sustainability Strategy – Review of Strategies and Actions (Dec. 2013)
- Environment Sustainability Policy - Draft
- Carbon Emissions Reduction Management - Discussion Paper

The RSAB Committee welcomed these papers and is supportive of CoB's development of policies and actions that will enhance the health and resilience of Ballarat's natural environment. The Committee congratulates the Council on the intent displayed in these documents and the progress achieved to date. The RSAB Committee believes the vision outlined in these documents can provide a solid platform for a broader commitment to developing a sustainability culture within Council.

While the RSAB acknowledges the progress made through the implementation of the 2007 Environment Sustainability Strategy, the Committee has made several recommendations to assist Council with the development of the City of Ballarat's planning for environmental sustainability. The recommendations listed below have been identified by the Committee as being priority actions for the City of Ballarat:

- i. Council to commit to the completion of the ESS 2012-14 actions (and prioritising of the actions not achieved as of Dec. 2013);
- ii. Council to develop practice notes that can be promoted to developers, designers and builders to encourage environmentally sensitive/sustainable design approaches and features be incorporated into development applications **before** planning permits are sought. Council is also encouraged to explore the development of an assessment tool/program similar to the Sustainable Development Assessment in the Planning Process (SDAPP);
- iii. Council leadership to create opportunities to develop organisational culture around sustainability principles and the effective application of the Triple Bottom Line approaches;
- iv. Council to integrate the findings of the Living Ballarat project into the best practice stormwater management and Water Sensitive Urban Design;
- v. Maintain and enhance Ballarat biodiversity – especially fauna

2. 2007 Environment Sustainability Strategy – Review of Strategies and Actions (Dec. 2013)

Action	Discussion	RSA Ballarat recommendations
7. Implementation of SDAPP	The attempt to take the Sustainable Design Assessment Program developed by Melbourne Metro Council and apply to City of Ballarat failed because of its need to be supported by a planning amendment. Concern that adequate resources have been committed to deliver outcomes over the next 12 months.	Recommendation that Council prepare practice notes that can be promoted to developers, designers and builders to influence design before planning permits sought. We see this as a priority.
2. and 4. (Sustainability Culture)	For a Triple Bottom Line (TBL) approach to be effectively embedded across all council business and culture, this must be driven and modelled by senior and middle management to be effective. If adopted by council, the ESS Policy will require training opportunities to be created in support of this approach. This training should be aimed at achieving social and economic outcomes for council, as well as supporting improved environmental performance.	Recommendation that TBL awareness training be implemented to improve its application to council reports and decisions is a priority.
46. and 47	Water Sensitive Urban Design and best practice storm water management has progressively been introduced, however the findings of Living Ballarat need to be integrated.	Must become a priority. Perhaps production of new practice notes and some engagement with development sector.
43	Preparation of water conservation plans for Council open space and community facilities.	Requires action as there is current investment in new irrigated sporting facilities.
34	The mandatory natural environment assessments are provided by consultants and the Statutory Planning Officers often do not validate findings with an onsite inspection.	Recommend that a process of onsite validation is implemented for natural environment assessments and impact statements.
8 and 9	Considerable work has been done in development of carbon management discussion paper and draft ESS Policy.	RSAB acknowledges the good work done and recommends adoption of these principles.
21-27	Council has made some progress however not all actions have been completed – particularly around planning and engagement.	RSAB highlights the need to focus on this area.
36	Look at what can be done in the short term without resorting to Planning Scheme Amendment and statutory regulations. Reflect on work already done.	Recommend the review and embedding of water, biodiversity and loss of flora & fauna in the next Planning Scheme.
Overall Comments	<p>What is the status of the items not actioned? Is there commitment by Council and administration to achieve the tasks that haven't been implemented? There is a need for Council to prioritise the remaining actions for 2014.</p>	

3. Environment Sustainability Policy – Draft

1. Some concern at narrow scope of vision with focus on reducing resource consumption and waste production.
2. There was some discussion about whether this draft policy should be targeting a level of change that was achievable, or the level of change that is required to achieve a truly sustainable council (and society)
3. Possibly bolster the rationale /evidence for the policy by linking policy objectives with key findings from <i>Ballarat Imagines</i> responses and <i>Sustainability and Urban Well-Being</i> community consultations.
4. The integration of Social, Environmental and Risk management considerations needs to be reinforced in the Vision.
5. The Council template is hard to relate to external stakeholders and needs an easier to read version for website and distribution to stakeholders.
6. The Committee feels there needs to be a stronger narrative linking the Policy with the ESS and Carbon Management document. This could be strengthened by including some of the supporting/relevant paragraphs from the Carbon Management Discussion Paper and ESS. Hazen Cleary has already produced a Narrative / Background / Context document that has much of this info.
7. The decision by Council's executive (Leadership Team) was to refer the draft to RSAB and for Lauren Burch to workshop with the Management Group to produce feedback that will inform the version to be presented to Council.
8. Section 7.2 How will BCC achieve cultural change? What strategies are currently in place? What data is there to measure attitudes or staff? Social & Environmental Sustainability? Sustainability is everyone's responsibility – every Councillor and every Council employee needs a level of knowledge and commitment to policy objectives. Opportunity to build sustainability KPIs into job descriptions and employee induction program (just like Council does with OH&S and Legal obligations).
9. The targets set are considered achievable without significant \$ allocations above current commitments.
10. RSAB recommend to Council that this Policy form a basis for the next strategy and commence discussion that will support the policy from 2015-2020.
11. Vision Statement 2.2. The target to manage urban forests will be on track if there's a policy for this.
12. The potable water should be described as drinking water to bring into line with State policy
13. 2.3.2 This item should include incorporation of natural environment awareness training for relevant staff.
14. 2.3.5 This item should expand Council's environmental responsibilities to include monitoring / enforcing planning permit conditions.

4. Carbon Emissions Reduction Management- Discussion Paper

The RSAB Committee wishes to acknowledge the quality of the Carbon Emissions Reduction Management – Discussion Paper and recommend this for Council's consideration.

This is a comprehensive report that provides some good background information on the imperative for organisations to reduce their emissions of Greenhouse Gases, and a thorough and detailed description of many of the positive and proactive initiatives that could be implemented to reduce the City of Ballarat's carbon footprint. This report presents an extensive range of large and small opportunities for Council to reduce carbon emissions and provides some most useful information on not only the environmental benefits of reducing carbon emissions, but also the very real social benefits and financial savings that could be achieved through the implementation of these initiatives.

The RSAB Committee views some of the measures detailed in this report as being 'low hanging fruit' that may have minimal implementation costs and could be implemented in the short term.

The RSAB Committee recommends that this Discussion Paper be seriously considered and that Council identify which of the options described in the report should be prioritised for implementation and/or further examination.

RSAB Comments
1. Great Paper worthy of serious consideration.
2. Needs a way forward – this would constitute the recommended resolutions of Council in a summary report.
3. It raises questions – what are the key questions that need to be answered – that forms the context / content for the new Environment Sustainability Strategy.
4. Is the goal carbon reduction or sustainability (or both)? RSAB view that CoB identify carbon reduction priorities in the ESS and that gradual and persistent reductions should be committed to.
5. What other opportunities are there for Council to take responsibility of waste streams, eg. biochar projects, wood heating for pools, etc.