

# POLICY

<b>Policy Name</b>	Sustainability Policy
<b>Policy Category</b>	Strategic
<b>Department / Officer</b>	Environment and Infrastructure/Director
<b>Date Adopted</b>	24 November 2008
<b>Date/s Reviewed</b>	25 May 2015, 28 May 2018
<b>Review Frequency</b>	Every Three Years
<b>Strategic Plan Reference</b>	Objective 1: Healthy Environments Objective 2: Attractive Lifestyle and inclusive community Objective 3: A thriving local economy Objective 4: Services and infrastructure supporting the community
<b>Attachments</b>	Nil

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## 1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- demonstrate Council's commitment to facilitating sustainable development and the protection of the environment, and to ensuring a proper balance within its community between economic, social, environmental and cultural considerations.
- increase understanding of the key considerations of sustainability
- provide guidance in the application of the principles of sustainability to Council decision making and activities.

## 2. Scope

This Policy is relevant to all decisions of Council and staff in the delivery of services and provision of facilities for the community.

## 3. Policy Statement (Summary)

Council, through the application of this Policy will seek to facilitate sustainability and the protection of the environment, and ensure a proper balance within its community between economic, social, environmental and cultural considerations.

## 4. Legislation and Compliance

While Council derives its principle powers from the Local Government Act 1999, there are a wide range of Acts of State and National legislation which assign roles, responsibilities and powers to Local Government in areas of sustainability.

Key legislation includes:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 (Cwth)
- Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988 (SA)
- Australian Heritage Council Act 2003 (Cwth)
- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cwth)
- National Environment Protection Council Act 1994 (Cwth)
- Climate Change and Greenhouse Emissions Reduction Act 2007 (Cwth)
- Coast Protection Act 1972 (SA)
- Development Act 1993 (SA)
- Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005 (SA)
- Fisheries Management Act 2007 (SA)
- Heritage Places Act 1993 (SA)
- Marine Parks Act 2007 (SA)
- National Environment Protection Council (South Australia) Act 1995 (SA)
- National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 (SA)
- Native Title (South Australia) Act 1994 (SA)
- Native Vegetation Act 1991 (SA)
- Natural Resources Management Act 2004 (SA)
- Public Health Act 2011 (SA)
- Water Resources Act 1997 (Partially repealed by Natural Resources Management Act 2004) (SA)
- Zero Waste SA Act 2004 (SA)

## 5. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following terms and definitions will be adopted:

**Environment** will be defined the same as in s528 of the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 Act to be:

- Ecosystems and their constituent parts, including people and communities;
- Natural and physical resources;
- The qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas; and
- The social, economic and cultural aspects of a thing mentioned in (a), (b) or (c)

This definition allows for the inclusion of a number of specific human factors as aspects of the environment, for example, the economic or social value of natural resources, humans and human communities where they are part of an ecosystem, and the cultural aspects of a place, either built or natural. It also allows for natural resources management to be considered as a 'sub-set' of environmental management.

**Sustainability** means balancing social, economic and environmental goals to maintain or improve the quality of life. To do this will require using environmental resources, finance and social capital in ways that maintain and, where possible, improves their value, capacity and integrity. Sustainability is an outcome of balanced management processes.

**Biodiversity** means the variety of all life forms: the different plants, animals and micro-organisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems they form. It is a concept that emphasises the inter-relatedness of the biological world. It is often considered at three levels: genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity.

**Community engagement** means the involvement of people, businesses and stakeholders in decision-making. There is a spectrum of ways in which we can involve people – from informing and consulting them, to collaborating and partnering with them.

**Natural resources** means all the resources that are produced by the Earth's natural processes including mineral deposits, fossil fuels, soil, air, water, plants and animals.

**Quality of life** means the level of enjoyment and fulfillment derived by humans from the life they live within their local economic, cultural, social and environmental conditions.

**Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)** means development that aims to meet the needs of society today, while conserving ecosystems<sup>1</sup> for the benefit of future generations.

**Ecological** means the interdependence of living organisms in an environment.

**The Act** relates to the Local Government Act 1999.

## 6. Policy Content

### 6.1 Sustainability Principles

To determine if a decision or action is likely to make a positive contribution to sustainability, Council and its staff need a basic understanding of the key considerations or criteria of sustainability. The following principles build on the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup>. They provide a set of core issues for consideration and broad objectives to be pursued as part of Council's decisions. Council's decisions and actions should aim to:

- Integrate long and short-term economic, natural environmental and community considerations. Decisions need to consider the linkages between economic, environmental and communities dimensions, and take account of impacts that may occur over several years.
- Provide for equity within and between generations. Ensure that everyone and every community have enough for a decent life and opportunities to seek improvements. We should not simply use up all available natural resources. Instead, we should commit to ensuring that all community members have equitable access to resources now, and into the future.
- Enhance and maintain biodiversity and natural environmental systems. Natural systems, and the plants and animals that inhabit them, have important benefits to the community. We need to build a relationship between people and the environment that will maintain the long-term integrity of these systems.
- Act cautiously when there is a risk of serious or irreversible impacts on the environment or the community. This is the 'precautionary principle'. We should avoid causing serious or irreversible damage and not use uncertainty as a reason to not protect the environment or community.
- Recognise dimensions beyond our border while concentrating on issues we can influence. Environment and development issues operate on a global scale. Our local actions should connect with regional, national and global scale activities and directions. For example, although we cannot single-handedly stop climate change, we can demonstrate leadership by taking actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as part of a global effort.

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<sup>1</sup> Ecosystem is defined as the dynamic complex of organisms and their non-living environment, interacting as a functional unit. (Adapted from the Australian Natural Heritage Charter 2<sup>nd</sup> edition)

<sup>2</sup> The National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development ([NSE-SD](#)) provides broad strategic directions and framework for governments to direct policy and decision-making. The Strategy facilitates a coordinated and co-operative approach to ecologically sustainable development (ESD) and encourages long-term benefits for Australia over short-term gains.

- Provide for broad public involvement on issues that affect the community. We need to engage individuals, communities, stakeholders and businesses and adopt more open deliberations to build an understanding of sustainability and promote collective responsibility.

## 6.2 Application of Sustainability Principles

As reinforced in its Community Plan, Council is committed to providing leadership in sustainability through the development and maintenance of healthy natural environmental, social, cultural and economic values within the community.

Council will place sustainability at the forefront of decision making by assessing the natural environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts of decisions and practices through the following actions:

- Council will, (unless it is otherwise statutorily necessary), agree on definitions of relevant terms and terminology and where possible will seek to adopt terms and terminology from existing state and national statutes, policies and strategies.
- In order to provide the knowledge and skills in applying and implementing Sustainability principals across the whole of Council's activities and operations, the Council will develop and implement induction and training programs for staff and Council members.
- Council will endeavour to undertake its activities taking into account the principles of sustainability in order to maintain or improve the social, natural environmental and economic values in the design of Council facilities and the delivery of Council services.
- Council will develop and apply a method for the principles of Sustainability to be applied to the decision-making processes of elected members and staff by incorporating sustainability within report and budget preparation processes.
- Council staff will be empowered through consultation and feedback to contribute to the development of new or improved systems and ways of carrying out their day-to-day activities to enable work place practices to better contribute towards achieving Sustainability.
- Council will endeavour to develop and apply methods that demonstrate how its activities have contributed to the social, natural environment or economic outcomes consistent with Council's Community Plan, the South Australian Strategic Plan and the principles of Sustainability.

At appropriate times the Council will amend as necessary, existing policies, or develop new policies, to enable them to make better contributions towards achieving Sustainability.

## 7. Risk Management

Council is required under the Local Government Act 1999, Chapter 2, Section 6 to provide and co-ordinate various public services and facilities and to develop its community and resources in a socially just and ecologically sustainable manner.

The Local Government Act 1999, Chapter 2 Section 7, provides that the functions of a Council include 'To manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment in an ecologically sustainable manner'.

## 8. Implementation/Delegations

The Chief Executive Officer is delegated authority to implement this Policy and to sub-delegate to other officers under Section 101 of the Local Government Act.

## 9. Related Documents

- Community Plan 2036
- Environmental Management Plan
- Development Plan
- Resilient Hills and Coasts – Regional Climate Adaption Plan
- Long Term Financial Plan
- Asset Management Plans
- Local Government Act 1999, Chapter 2, The System of Local Government,
  - Principal Role of Council
  - Function of Council
  - Objectives of a Council
- Local Government Act 1999, Chapter 8, Administrative and Financial Accountability, Part 1 Strategic Management Plans,
  - Strategic Management Plans
  - Budgets

## 10. Availability of Policy

This policy is available on Council's website at [www.victor.sa.gov.au](http://www.victor.sa.gov.au). It may also be inspected or purchased at the Principal Office of the Council at 1 Bay Road, Victor Harbor.