



CITY OF BALLARAT

Draft Biodiversity Strategy

Healing Country Together





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The City of Ballarat acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land we live and work on, the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung People, and recognises their continuing connection to the land and waterways.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

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Wurru-ki murrun (To talk about Nature)¹

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Comugeen budj-o thalikiyu kin bil beng ordi-ngadak. Ngarrwabil, boron, guli, bagurk. Comugeen budj-o bengadak ngarr-uk dja, ngubiyt, weagoon gobata gupma wurring-wurring baap beng-ordi-nganak, djarrima murrup-nhuk bengadak.

We deeply respect our people of the past. Elders, children, men, women. We deeply respect their knowledge of dja (Country), water, life, their care of the traditions and of each other, we stand with their spirit.

Gobata Wadawurrung balug jumbuk didalbil murrup-nhuk bundjil monomeeth beek-o weagoon. Mutjak-ak noogie n'uder durrallully.

Great spirit Bunjil told us to take care of the great life within the land. To only take what you need without selfishness².

Wadawurrung people are deeply connected to Dja (Country) and all of which belongs to Dja. We have relied upon Dja, Ngubitj (water) Murrn (nature), Weeagoon (living thing) such as animals and sacred Wiyn (fire) since time immemorial. Our Karringalabil (great creator spirit) Bunjil created everything on Wadawurrung Dja.

Wadawurrung ancestors honoured Murrn (nature) and Weeagoon all (living creatures) great and small, they knew everything has a role to play. The memories embedded in places like, Ballarat, are a reminder of the intangible cultural heritage such as creation stories which are very much alive for Wadawurrung people.

Wadawurrung people and their families are committed to Caring for Country as our ancestors did before us. We continue to nurture and heal Country and foster respectful and reciprocal relationships with all living creatures that call Ballarat home. Together, we strive to weave healing and restoration through the past, present, and future of Wadawurrung Dja and Wadawurrung people.



Wadawurrung Scar Tree

We acknowledge that biodiversity is not just a collection of species but a delicate web of relationships and interdependencies. Our traditional ecological knowledges such as Cultural fire practices and the care of our waterways emphasize the interconnectedness of all living beings and the environment, urging us to view nature not as a resource to be exploited but as a sacred, interconnected system that demands respect and care.

We extend an invitation, Koling wada ngitj to walk with us on a journey towards a healthier Country. Together, we can protect and strengthen biodiversity on Wadawurrung Country. This is a shared journey which supports a sustainable future where biodiversity thrives, and the delicate balance of our ecosystems are healed and protected for all generations to come.

Nyatne (Thank you).

¹ In accordance with CONSULTANCY AGREEMENT this Wurru-ki murrn (To talk about Nature) statement is to be used for the sole purpose of inclusion in the City of Ballarat Biodiversity Engagement Strategy and Ballarat Biodiversity Strategy. For inclusion of all/part of this statement in other publications, media or communications material, please seek written permission from Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation prior to use.

² Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) (2020), Paleert Tjaara Dja – Let's make Country good together 2020–2030: Wadawurrung Country Plan. Ballarat, Vic: Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation.



Yarn on Country, November 2023

Mayor's Message

We are proud to present to our community the first Ballarat Biodiversity Strategy – Healing Country Together.

This is also the first co-designed strategy we have delivered in partnership with Wadawurrung and alongside the Country Plans of the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owners. We thank them for walking with us on this important journey.

The Ballarat Biodiversity Strategy – Healing Country Together maps out a future for biodiversity across our municipality, outlining actions that will protect and strengthen our natural environment.

This strategy will help guide the management and protection of the municipality's unique landscapes and species.

We are all custodians of our municipality's unique biodiversity. Taking positive action today will shape a sustainable and brighter future for our tomorrow.

It is also imperative that the City of Ballarat lead by example.

We will instill improved sustainability practices into our organisation, raise greater awareness among our community and advocate for better outcomes for our natural environment.

In 2022, Council adopted the Biodiversity Vision and Commitment, paving the way for the development of the Biodiversity Strategy.

The Biodiversity Strategy will align with the Council Plan 2021-2025 goal to 'develop policy guidance on biodiversity and natural resources management' and supports the Ballarat Strategy 2040.

We look forward to implementing the Biodiversity Strategy and achieving outcomes that will ensure we improve the way we care for and restore a healthy environment.

Cr Des Hudson
Mayor, City of Ballarat



Young child learning about nature

Introduction

Definition

Biodiversity encompasses all components of the living world — the number and variety of plants, animals and other living things, including fungi and micro-organisms, across our land, rivers and sky. It includes the diversity of their genetic information, the habitats and ecosystems within which they live, and their connections with other life forms and the natural world³.

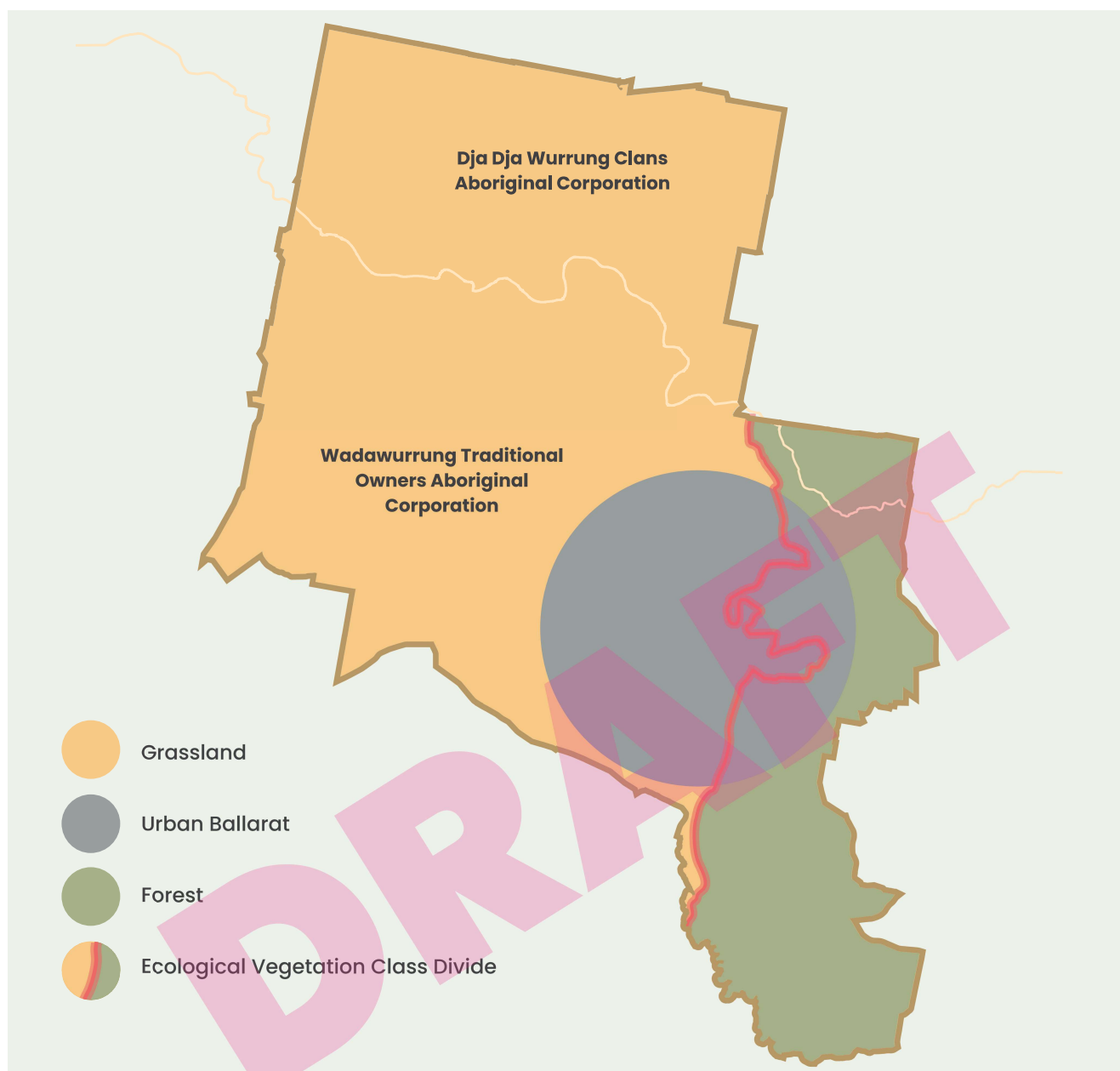
In 2022 the City of Ballarat and the community came together to discuss a future for biodiversity in Ballarat. From the feedback received, a community vision for the natural environment was formed with five focus areas: Urgency, Environmental Outcomes, Community, Development and Government. The community vision led to the development of the City of Ballarat Biodiversity Vision and Commitment, which was adopted by Council in November 2022, and which called for the development of a Biodiversity Strategy.

The Ballarat Biodiversity Strategy – Healing Country Together sets out how we will achieve our Biodiversity Vision Statement:

Championed by an actively engaged and informed community, the natural environment is protected, restored and connected for health and resilience.

Its focus is on providing a framework to assist the City of Ballarat in managing the environmental impacts from its service delivery and operations, setting directions to improve the health and resilience of the natural environment, and raising the community and corporate awareness of human impact on the natural environment. For those issues that fall outside the City of Ballarat's control, the City of Ballarat and Council has a role in influencing or advocating for better outcomes.

³ Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037*, Victorian State Government 2017



Visual representation of Caring for Country across Ballarat's three main regions

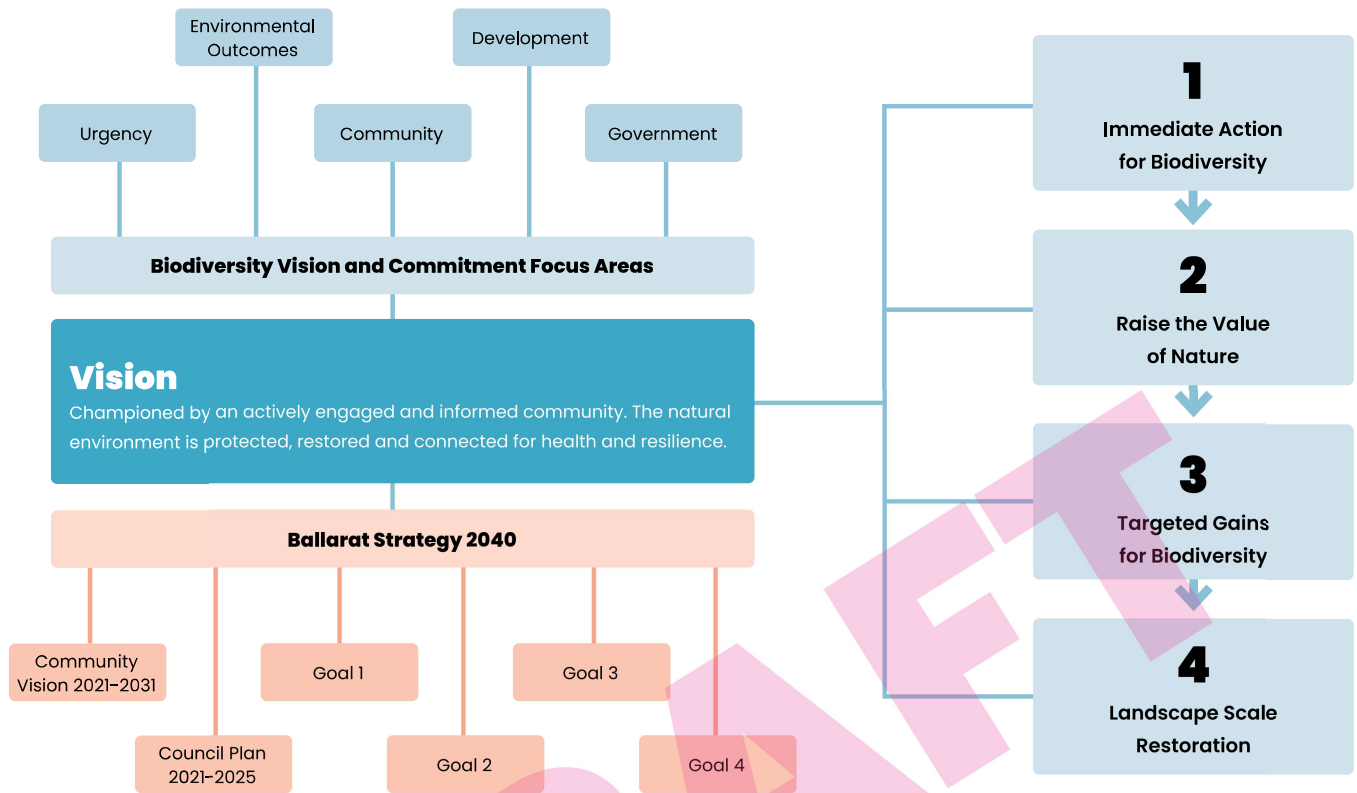
The municipality of Ballarat is 740 sq km:

- Approximately 60 per cent is farmland and wetlands on the Victorian Volcanic Plains to the west
- Approximately 20 per cent is bush, rural living and farmland on the Central Victorian Uplands to the east
- Approximately 20 per cent is urban Ballarat (including proposed growth areas, Miners Rest and Buninyong) located on both the Central Victorian Uplands and Victorian Volcanic Plains in the middle

Based on Ballarat's landscape, it can be grouped into three distinct regions: the Victorian Volcanic Plains (Grassland), the Central Victorian Uplands (Forest), and Urban Ballarat. The physical elements that make up these three regions are different; the Grassland is predominantly flat with ephemeral wetlands and waterways on larger agricultural properties, the Forest is hillier and characterised by a north-south bush through urban lifestyle blocks, and Urban Ballarat has channelised waterways, asphalt naturestrips and a landscape that prioritises humans. While biodiversity is a complex web of interactions, to be able to effectively communicate, manage and direct biodiversity efforts across the municipality, this simplified view will assist, as visualised above.

Based on the feedback received, the adopted Biodiversity Vision and Commitment, the background documents reviewed, and consideration of Ballarat's

unique landscape and current capacity, the strategy to improve Ballarat's biodiversity is based on the following:



Immediate Actions for Biodiversity

These focus on keeping and putting more plants in the ground now and raising the capacity of the City of Ballarat and the community to support biodiversity in the short term.

Raise the Value of Nature

Increasing everyone's value of the natural environment will help community groups, the City of Ballarat and Authorities improve biodiversity in the short to medium-term, helping to unlock appetite for bigger projects.

Targeted Gains for Biodiversity

Work needs to be conducted to build capacity within the City of Ballarat and to determine priority areas for protection and investment to see larger biodiversity gains in the medium to long-term.

Landscape Scale Restoration

To ensure biodiversity survives and thrives in the Ballarat region with climate change, landscape scale restoration has to be the long-term goal. This Strategy will lay the foundations for future strategies to achieve this goal (new hollow bearing trees are unable to be grown in a four year plan).



Actions

Feedback was collated, categorized into the Biodiversity Vision and Commitment focus areas, and prioritised to identify actionable opportunities to progress towards our Vision. We asked:

- What is the action?
- What are the outcomes we hope to achieve?
- How will we know if this is successful?

Actions were selected based on their likely impact and the City of Ballarat's ability to implement or drive them. The Selected and refined Actions are as follows:

Strategic Direction	Goal	Action	Status	Start Year	Timeframe	Lead	Resources	Success
1 Immediate Action for Biodiversity	Goal 1: Working with Wadawurrung and Djaara to Care for Country	Action 1: Partner with Wadawurrung and Djaara's Natural Resource Management Teams for on-ground works, plant supply and project advice, supporting financial independence and self-determination through a Collaboration Agreement	Increase	1	Now	Ops / TOs / SEB	PB	A Collaboration Agreement is signed with Wadawurrung and the relationships between Wadawurrung/Djaara and CoB is growing, constructive and based on honesty and trust
		Action 2: Enabling Wadawurrung and Djaara to conduct cultural burns to Care for Country inline with their Healthy Country Plans and strategies	Increase	1	Now	Ops / TOs / SEB	OT / PB	We have started an ongoing program of cultural burns and ecological monitoring
	Goal 2: Existing native vegetation is protected and prioritised	Action 3: Explore all options before removing native or significant trees and vegetation for both public and private proposals/activities and optimise use of trees that are felled	Increase	1	Now	SEB / DF / I&E	OT	Gather examples and develop standard approach, making BAU
		Action 4: Develop practice notes and Ballarat based case studies for considering proposals to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation and educate planners and developers of best practice application of 'the Guidelines'	New	1	6 months	SEB / DF	OT	Practice notes and case studies produced with uplift in tree retention in proposals
	Goal 3: More plants are in the ground to restore more habitat	Action 5: Seek funding for an Officer to help coordinate delivery of the Biodiversity Strategy and City of Ballarat and community revegetation efforts	New	1	Now	SEB	FTE	Biodiversity Officer recruited
		Action 6: Develop a Naturestrip Guideline to support gardens that provide habitat and ecological corridors through Urban Ballarat	New	1	6 months	SEB	OT	Guidelines are developed, approved and being promoted
		Action 7: Investigating options for more indigenous native plant sales by increasing support to City of Ballarat Indigenous Plant Nursery and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Nursery, promoting Gardens for Wildlife Ballarat, Landcare and FoG's	Increase	1	1 year	SEB / Ops	OT / \$	Increase the amount of plants going in the ground by at least 50 per cent / 12,000
	Goal 4: Friends of Groups are supported to grow and do their amazing work	Action 8: Propose to Council the establishment of a Biodiversity Reference Group to provide advice on biodiversity matters in Ballarat, including advising on the Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management	New	1	1 year	SEB	OT / \$	Committee is established and operating
		Action 9: Facilitate or host 2 Friends Forums per year and participate in other community led events to support and promote FoG's to grow the environmental community	Increase	1	Now	SEB / FoG's	OT / \$	Two Friends Forums are hosted per year
		Action 10: Provide funding, training and materials (ie. mulch, tools, etc.) to support FoG's with their volunteer and advocacy efforts, including training opportunities for community leaders to achieve constructive engagement with City of Ballarat processes	New	1	6 months	SEB	OT / \$	FoG's feel supported and better able to conduct their activities
		Action 11: Develop and adopt a process to enable and better coordinate volunteers to do works on City of Ballarat land	New	1	6 months	SEB / Ops / FoG's	OT	FoG's and CoB communicate efficiently and effectively with works occurring in a coordinated way

Strategic Direction	Goal	Action	Status	Start Year	Timeframe	Lead	Resources	Success
2 Raise the Value of Nature	Goal 5: We all know more about the natural environment	Action 12: Seek funding for an Officer to develop and coordinate an environmental education and engagement program	New	2	6 months	W&E	FTE	Education and Engagement Officer recruited
		Action 13: Develop and refresh environmental education materials and make available online	Increase	1	6 months	SEB	OT	Environmental education materials are updated and online, easily accessible to the community
		Action 14: Develop corporate training on biodiversity and Caring for Country for all City of Ballarat staff and Councillors	New	2	1 year	SEB / P&C	OT / \$	Training is adopted and part of new starter and periodic refresher training
	Goal 6: We all engage with the natural environment more	Action 15: Encourage community engagement with the environment by running 2 x Nature Stewards Programs per year, sign three schools up to Resource Smart Schools program, and promote Green Scripts among health professionals	Increase	1	1 year +	SEB / CW	OT / \$\$	Programs are running and well attended
		Action 16: Support and increase environmental education and activities into existing community programs including for school holidays, and for priority groups such as for older people, culturally diverse and young people	Increase	2	2 years +	SEB / CW	OT / \$	Programs have more environmental material and activities, reaching members of the community that are not currently or have not traditionally been involved, with increasing community awareness, knowledge and stewardship
	Goal 7: We all actively care for and feel ownership of the natural environment	Action 17: Increase internal leadership and advocacy for the natural environment by including environmental stewardship in relevant City of Ballarat strategies and projects	Increase	1	2 years +	SEB / P&C	OT	Environmental/biodiversity impacts are considered at the start of projects with SEB consulted early for advice, with outcomes reflected throughout strategies and projects
		Action 18: Increase City of Ballarat presence in the community to discourage illegal vegetation removal, rubbish dumping and water contamination, while enforcing illegal actions when they occur	Increase	2	2 years +	SEB / I&E	OT	Decrease in illegal and environmentally damaging behaviours
		Action 19: Work with agencies and community to foster increased participation in citizen science (i.e. iNaturalist) to increase data capture around restoration efforts and wildlife sightings	Increase	2	2 years +	SEB / FoG's	OT / \$	100 per cent increase in data capture

Strategic Direction	Goal	Action	Status	Start Year	Timeframe	Lead	Resources	Success
3 Targeted Gains for Biodiversity	Goal 8: We have clear guidance on where to prioritise and direct investment in rehabilitation efforts	Action 20: Develop a baseline of what environmental assets Ballarat has through an Assets and Connections Study	New	1	1 year	SEB	OT / \$\$\$	Study is completed
		Action 21: Utilise local community, CoB Officer and Traditional Owner knowledge, expertise, skills and resources to identify priority locations for ecological restoration	Increase	2	2 years +	SEB / Ops	OT	Priority area mapping is produced and broadly agreed
		Action 22: Use citizen science and community knowledge to identify wildlife road crossings and invest resources to trial at least two pilot crossings in the next three years to improve safety for wildlife	New	2	2 years +	SEB / I&E	OT / \$\$	Two wildlife road crossings are installed and a noticeable reduction in incidents is observed
		Action 23: Utilise Public Open Space contributions and grants to acquire and purchase land of strategic environmental importance	New	2	1 year	SEB / D&G	OT / SS	Strategically important land is acquired contributing to an increase in the size and connection of ecological areas
	Goal 9: Strong working relationships with authorities and land managers	Action 24: Develop Officer-to-Officer relationships with authorities (and Federation University) by collaborating on projects together, sharing office space to foster active sharing of information and resources, and participate in forums to capitalise on program partnerships and grant opportunities	Increase	2	1 year	SEB / Ops	OT / PB	Officers are readily contactable, actively collaborating and working towards shared goals
	Goal 10: Pest animals and weeds are managed in an integrated manner	Action 25: Develop an Integrated Weed Management Strategy and take targeted action on weeds, acknowledging our position at the top of three catchments	Renew	2	1-2 years	Ops / SEB	OT / \$\$	New Integrated Weed Management Strategy is being implemented
		Action 26: Develop an Integrated Pest Animal Management Strategy and work with landholders to manage and control pest animals	Renew	3	1-2 years	Ops / SEB	OT / \$\$	New Integrated Pest Animal Management Strategy is being implemented
	Goal 11: Waterways and wetlands are prioritised for restoration	Action 27: Support community, authorities and industry partners to monitor water quality in Ballarat's waterways and report periodically in the City of Ballarat State of the Environment Report	Increase	1	1 year +	SEB / Ops	OT / \$	Water quality is reported and improving
		Action 28: Investigate resourcing models and partnerships that provide support and incentives to landholders who have waterways and wetlands on their property or adjacent leases to protect and restore sensitive riparian zones	New	2	2 years +	SEB / Ops	OT / \$ / Grants	Increase in the amount of land fenced and being restored along waterways and wetlands on private land

Strategic Direction

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Landscape Scale
Restoration

Strategic Direction	Goal	Action	Status	Start Year	Timeframe	Lead	Resources	Success
Landscape Scale Restoration	Goal 12: Wildlife can travel between Ballarat Botanic Gardens, Lake Burrumbeet and Woosookarung Regional Park via green corridors	Action 29: Support implementation of the Urban Forest Action Plan and Ballarat Open Space Strategy, including seeking opportunities to replace hard surfaces with vegetation to create habitat and support wildlife in Urban Ballarat	Increase	1	Now	D&G / I&E / SEB	OT	Increase in the amount of vegetated streetscapes in Urban Ballarat with greater variety of observed wildlife
		Action 30: Map priority wildlife corridors across urban Ballarat in City of Ballarat's digital mapping system to identify targeted land acquisitions and locations for incorporating wildlife corridors and crossings into design considerations	New	2	2 years	D&G / I&E / SEB	OT / \$\$	Mapping is utilised by CoB staff and influences day to day operation and projects withing CoB
	Goal 13: Bialinks in the municipality are protected, restored and connected to biolinks outside of the municipality	Action 31: Support strategies identified in Clause 21.03 (and elsewhere) in the Ballarat Planning Scheme, gathering information to bring forward the further strategic work identified at Clause 21.03-3	New	3	2-3 years	DF / SEB	OT / \$\$\$	Further strategic work identified at Clause 21.03-3 is commenced, including a Planning Scheme Amendment if deemed appropriate
		Action 32: Investigate options to partner with authorities, Federation University, Traditional Owners and neighbouring Councils to map and restore priority landscape level biolinks, and advocate for State and Federal Government support through legislative change and funding	New	4	2-3 years	CoB / DEECA / Hepburn / Golden Plains / Moorabool / Parks Victoria / CHW	OT / \$\$\$	Integrated landscape restoration approach is developed to direct efforts and funding

TOs = Traditional Owners

FoG's = Friends of Groups

SEB = Sustainable Environment Ballarat

I&E - Infrastructure and Environment

OT = Officer Time, as part of FTE's role

PB = Project Budget, incorporated in the cost of the project

FTE = Full-time Employee, Band 5, 6 or 7

SS = Site Specific, which includes Public Open Space monetary and land contributions, Grants, and \$-\$\$\$

Ops = Operations

D&G = Development and Growth

DF = Development Facilitation

CW = Community Wellbeing

P&C = People and Culture

Grants = Grant applications, which includes co-contributions \$-\$\$\$

\$ = <\$30k

\$ = \$30k - \$100k

\$\$\$ = >\$100k

Monitoring, reporting and evaluation

Monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the Ballarat Biodiversity Strategy over time will help us build knowledge about the City of Ballarat's environment, remain accountable to our commitments, and assess our progress towards meeting our Vision. The City of Ballarat's approach for evaluating the success of this Strategy is outlined below:

Monitoring:

Where possible, progress towards meeting objectives and completing actions will be measured in a quantitative manner. The City of Ballarat is working to determine baseline data related to the natural environment, either directly by compiling its own records or indirectly from sourcing external data. This is the first step in facilitating quantitative monitoring of progress implementation. Additionally, it is intended that quantitative measurements and environmental indicators will be explored and determined in the development of more specific plans proposed in this Strategy. Progress towards meeting objectives and completing actions will also be assessed in a qualitative manner, mostly through internal and external reviews and assessments.

Evaluation:

How well is the City of Ballarat demonstrating leadership in environmental stewardship?

Evaluation will be through an internal assessment process, and possibly through an annual survey.

How well is the City of Ballarat and the community working together towards our shared Vision?

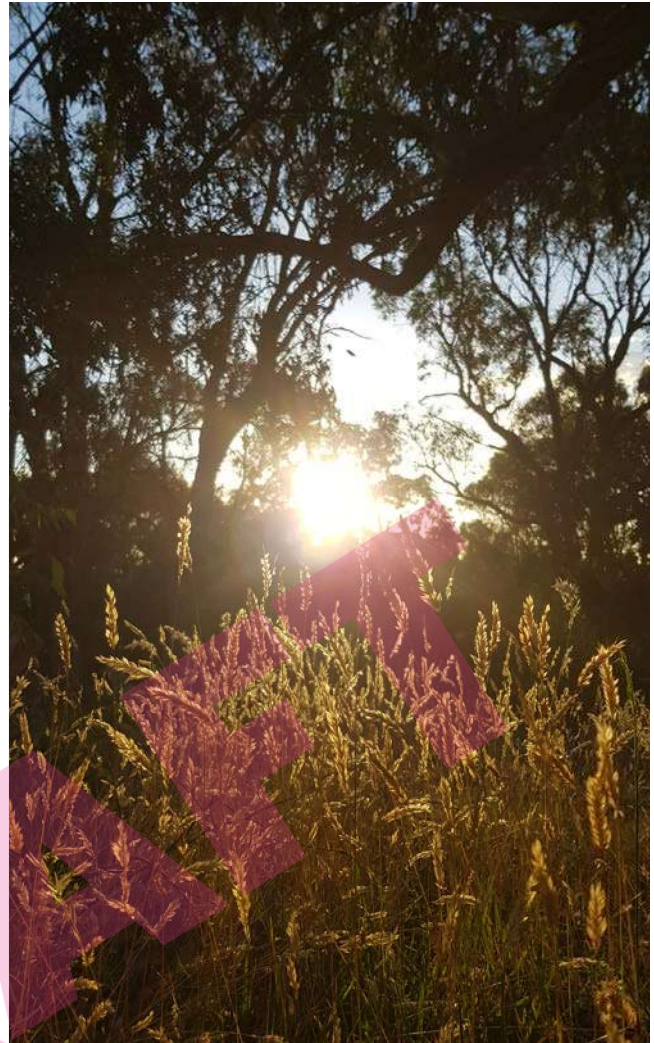
Evaluation will be through discussions with community networks or asking for feedback from the community, and possibly through an annual survey.

How well is the City of Ballarat and agencies collaborating to progress environmental outcomes?

Evaluation will be through discussions with relevant staff in key stakeholder agencies (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Parks Victoria, Corangamite Catchment Management Authority and Central Highlands Water as a minimum).

How well is the City of Ballarat partnering with Traditional Owners to support their vision and aspirations for Healing Country?

Evaluation will be through an internal assessment process and asking Wadawurrung and Djaara.



Summer afternoon in Ballarat

Reporting:

The findings from the monitoring and evaluation, including a summary of actions completed/progressed, and an analysis of findings (for example why or why not a particular approach succeeded or failed in delivering the intended result) will be reported to Council on an annual basis, and be made publicly available. This annual report will also note any changes to the broader legislative and policy context governing the implementation of the Strategy.

Improvement:

Recommendations for amending any aspects of the Strategy to maintain its currency and relevance and to improve its effectiveness in delivering environmental outcomes will be identified and included in the annual report to Council and implemented as soon as practical.



Mullawallah Wetlands in full inundation

Background Documents

Several state, regional and local level reports have helped inform the current state of biodiversity within Ballarat and the surrounding region, with sound recommendations to address biodiversity loss. The following reports have been reviewed in preparation for writing this Strategy, although there are many more:

- Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037
- Paleert Tjaara Dja – Wadawurrung Country Plan 2020 – 2030
- Dhehkunya Dja – Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan 2014 – 2034
- Ballarat Biodiversity Action Plan 2016
- Threatened species action plan 2022 - 2032
- Grampians Region Climate Adaptation Strategy
- State of the Forests 2018
- State of the Environment Biodiversity Update 2021
- Conservation Action Plan for the VVP
- Living Corridors Action Plan 2020
- Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management
- Ballarat East Local Area Plan
- Woowookarung Regional Park: Strategic Directions Plan September 2018
- Corangamite Regional Catchment Strategy
- Glenelg Hopkins Regional Catchment Strategy
- North Central Regional Catchment Strategy

More detailed information is available in the supporting document – **Background Documents**.

Acknowledgements

The City of Ballarat would like to acknowledge and thank all the community members who gave up their time to contribute to workshops, surveys, meetings and conversations that have led to this document. Your tireless efforts and incredible passion are immensely appreciated, and we hope to continue building a constructive relationship for the benefit of the environment.