



COUNCIL POLICY

Corporate Sustainability Policy

POLICY NO	062
DEPARTMENT	ORGANISATIONAL SERVICES
PROGRAM	PROCUREMENT & PLANT

1.0 Scope

This policy informs decision-making and the development of all policy, strategy and actions as well as the delivery of Council's services and operations and the actions of contractors, volunteers, staff and Councillors alike.

Council's Key Strategic Priorities

Council's sustainability objectives aim to support Council's key strategic priorities which are:

- Community and Lifestyle
- Economic Development
- Environmental Sustainability
- Strategic Planning
- Infrastructure Services
- Commercial Services
- Organisational Excellence and Governance

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a framework for Council's ongoing commitment to Sustainability;
- Embed sustainability into the core functions and operations of the organisation on all levels;
- Explain Council's responsibility to comply with all applicable legislation and regulations relating to sustainability with a particular focus on the *The Local Government Act 2009 (LGA)*, *The Clean Energy Act 2011(CEA)*, *The Sustainable Planning Act 2009 (SPA)*, *The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC)* and the guiding principles of the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development 1992;
- To help MRC employees understand their role in achieving workplace sustainability and provide guidance for the application of sustainable workplace practice.

A commitment to Sustainability means:

- integrating environmental, economical, social and cultural considerations into the decision making processes and activities of Council;
- forming holistic measures for sustainable practice which balance community health and well-being, economic development and the protection and enhancement of the natural environment;
- Applying the principles of Ecological Sustainable Development and other relevant legislative requirements into the business of Council.

3.0 References

Relevant Legislation

- **Sustainable Planning Act 2009 (SPA)** (Ch1, Part2, S3, pgs.42-43),(Ch1, Part2, S5, pgs.43-44),(Ch1, Part3, S8 and S11);
- **Local Government Act 2009 (LGA)** (Ch1,S3, p.18),(Ch1, S4, p.19),(Ch2, S13, pgs.25-26),(Ch4, Part 3, S106, pgs.100-101);
- **The Clean Energy Act 2011(CEA)(TBA);**
- **The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC)** (Ch1, Part1, S3 and S3A, pgs.2-3);
- **National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development 1992;**
- **Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011;**
- **Environmental Protection Act 1994;**

Further Reading

- Mackay Regional Council's Risk Management Framework;
- Mackay Regional Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2014;
- MRC Procurement Policy (Pol-66.005);
- The Mackay Region Community Plan 2011-2031;
- Sustainable Work Practices Guide – Council Intranet;
- Other related Council Policies, Strategies and Action Plans as they are developed.

4.0 Definitions

To assist in interpretation the following definitions shall apply:

Biodiversity shall mean the diversity and interconnectedness of all life forms including plants, animals and micro-organisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems they form and comprises of:

- *Genetic diversity* (the variety of genes in any population)
- *Species diversity* (the variety of species)
- *Ecosystem diversity* (the variety of communities and ecosystems).

Biodiversity conservation shall mean protecting and enhancing biodiversity, natural areas and waterways.

Carbon Footprint shall mean 'the total set of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions caused by an organisation, event, product or person'.

CEA shall mean *The Clean Energy Act 2011*

Community shall mean consideration of the social and cultural consequences of decision making. This includes how people relate, work, live, socialise as a society as well as their beliefs and values.

Council shall mean all Departments of the MRC.

Ecological Footprint shall mean the 'measure of humanity's demand on nature'. It measures how much land and water area a human population requires to produce the resource it consumes and to absorb its carbon dioxide emissions and waste products.

Economic shall mean the broader considerations relating to the wealth of an area, the production or consumption of goods and services of a region, the business community and employment (in the context of this policy this is an external consideration).

Environment shall mean the Earth, made up of its natural features and resources and the ecosystems that sustain life and all life forms. It must be understood that everything on the planet is

interconnected and interdependent and the continuance of life on earth is reliant on maintaining healthy biodiversity and eco-system processes including the naturally evolved plants and animals, clean air, fresh water, climate, soil, minerals and energy.

Effective Governance shall mean implementing effective authoritative measures that provide guidance to users and assist Council with achieving its sustainability goals.

EPBC shall mean the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

ESD or Ecological Sustainable Development shall mean '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, are enhanced'.

Health and wellbeing shall mean developing a region where our people and communities enjoy physical, mental and social, cultural wellbeing.

Holistic shall mean analysing systems as a whole rather than as individual components - considering all factors.

LGA shall mean *The Local Government Act 2009*

MRC shall mean the Mackay Regional Council.

Organisational Excellence shall mean all employees will have a clear and shared understanding about what sustainability means and how they can apply it to their daily tasks. Management support, cross-program integration, corporate systems and new 'tools' will assist staff in their decision making.

Policy shall mean this Corporate Sustainability Policy

Precautionary Principle shall mean that lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing a measure to prevent degradation of the environment where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage.

SPA shall mean *Sustainable Planning Act 2009*

Sustainability (Broad definition) "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future Report, 1987)

Sustainability (Local definition) "The Mackay Region community will prosper socially and economically, while preserving the ability of our natural environment to support a good quality of life for current and future generations".

Sustainable places and urban form shall mean improving Mackay's built environment, especially the interactions between land use, transport and the environment.

Resource efficiency shall mean saving energy and water and reducing waste.

5.0 Background

This policy recognises Mackay Regional Council's commitment to the continual improvement of sustainability within the organisation. Council is actively building and strengthening a culture of sustainability so that the key principles and elements of sustainability become embedded into our organisation and way of thinking every day. Council recognises its sustainability obligations set out in the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, LGA, CEA, SPA, and EPBC and is striving to ingrain decision-making processes that establish practices across the organisation to protect and enhance the natural environment, promote economic prosperity and support community diversity and cultures today and into the future. MRC acknowledges that the process we use to

make decisions, and the ways we consult in that process, are important, as well as the decisions themselves.

6.0 Policy Statement

Council will continually act to foster a culture of sustainability and innovatively improve our overall sustainability performance thereby reducing our carbon footprint and minimising the risks associated with climate change.

Council will endeavor to:

- Practice resource efficiency
- Respond to the risks associated with climate change
- Maintain and enhance the natural environment
- Reduce the organisation's ecological footprint
- Demonstrate leadership in sustainability and inspire the Mackay regional community
- Implement these measures while maximising community expectations and minimising cost impact on the rate payer

Council will focus on these key areas for the delivery of this policy:

- Resource efficiency
- Sustainable places and urban form
- Biodiversity conservation
- Health and wellbeing
- Organisational Excellence and Effective Governance

Council will achieve it's goals for sustainability through the following actions:

1. Comply with and aspire to exceed the requirements of relevant legislation, policy and standards to continually improve our sustainability performance;
2. Using current best practice, develop and implement a strategically integrated sustainability framework consisting of innovative plans, strategies, programs and regulatory policy to assist Council in achieving improved environmental and sustainability outcomes;
3. Encourage all forms of development within the region seek to achieve ecological sustainability and encourage compliance with principles and practices of ESD;
4. Work in partnership with the Mackay community and organisations to protect and enhance the region's areas of environmental significance to maintain the biodiversity and viability of ecosystems and achieve sustainability outcomes;
5. Regularly monitor our carbon emissions performance through a third party and report outcomes to senior management, community and relevant government agencies;
6. Endeavour to reduce our carbon footprint by improving our environmental performance through setting measurable objectives and targets which consider the effects of climate change;
7. Build the capacity to integrate holistic sustainability considerations into all levels and functions of the organisation to ensure our employees, suppliers, volunteers and contractors are aware of their sustainability responsibilities and are able to make informed decisions relevant to their work role;
8. Adopt and promote resource and energy efficiency, waste reduction and recycling programs;

9. Promote and encourage improved transport facilities and patronage; facilitate a safe and accessible walking/cycling environment and encourage other low energy forms of transport in the region;
10. Aim to provide a diversity of strategically planned public open spaces, parks, streetscapes and pathways that foster improved community health, neighbourhood connectivity, recreation and other activities of everyday life;
11. Give purchase preference to goods and services which provide value for money outcomes to Council and consider socially responsible suppliers and re-useable, recycled and/or environmentally friendly products in accordance with Councils procurement policy (Pol-66.005);
12. Integrate sustainability principles into existing internal management frameworks to ensure sustainability performance improvement is a core part of Councils strategic and operational management;
13. Incorporate community, environmental and economic considerations in decision making and take into account both a short-term and long-term perspective;
14. Demonstrate leadership, accountability, transparency and financial responsibility in all decision-making;
15. Enhance community knowledge including education and awareness raising of sustainability issues and empower them with the ability and confidence to participate and build community resilience;
16. Systematically review internal policies, ESD performance, processes and practises to further build the organisation's capacity to deliver ongoing triple bottom line performance improvement within its own operations.

7.0 Principles of Sustainability

Sustainability is a principle to influence our decisions to maintain and enhance our quality of life now and in the future. It requires a holistically integrated deliberation of economic, environmental and community factors. To move in a sustainable direction, our decisions and actions have to recognise the interdependent relationship between these factors and act in a way that capitalises on the opportunities for innovation in achieving a sustainable future for all. When focusing on aspirational targets for sustainability it is important to understand sustainability as being a set of principles and processes rather than an end point to be achieved. Put simply, sustainability is a comprehensive way of looking at things, not just an add-on to our usual list of considerations.

The following principles build on and update our existing commitment to the principles in the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development and should be considered and used as a guide in all of our decisions and actions.

Inter -generational equity – Requires the present generation to ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment are maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations.

Intra-generational equity – Requires all people within the present generation to have equal rights to benefit from the use of natural resources and from the enjoyment of a clean and healthy environment.

The Precautionary Principle – To act cautiously when there is a risk of serious or irreversible impacts on the environment or the community. We should avoid causing serious or irreversible damage and not use uncertainty as a reason to not protect the environment or community.

Think Global Act Local - Recognises the 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.

Community Engagement - Decisions and actions should provide for broad community involvement on issues which affect them. Effective and inclusive community engagement should be encouraged to facilitate the understanding of sustainability and promote collective responsibility.

Integrated decision making – To integrate present and future economic, environmental, social, cultural considerations when making decisions and acknowledge the interdependency between these sectors.

Internalisation of external environmental costs -

- Polluter pays principle - where those who generate pollution and waste should bear the cost of containment, avoidance and abatement;
- Life Cycle Assessment - where the users of goods and services should pay prices based on the full life cycle of the costs of providing goods and services including the use of natural resources and assets and the ultimate disposal of any waste,
- Incentives - 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.

Conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity - Conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration - aim to build the relationship between the community and the natural environment to maintain long term integrity of these systems

8.0 Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed when any of the following occur:

1. The related documents are amended or replaced;
2. Other circumstances as determined by a Departmental Director in Council

Notwithstanding the above, this policy is to be reviewed at intervals of no more than two years.