

# Sustainability Policy

SP-POL-06

## 1. Introduction

Council has established a vision in the *Yass Valley Community Strategic Plan 2042* to “build and maintain sustainable communities while recognising and respecting the environment and First Nations people of this country”.

## 2. Policy Objectives

This policy seeks to:

- a. Establish short and medium term work priorities for the Sustainability Advisory Committee to improve the sustainability of Yass Valley consistent with a ‘framework assessment’ approach.
- b. Formalise policy development and service design practices within Council to ensure the proper early consideration of sustainability and climate change mitigation and adaptation in all decision making.
- c. Establish a longer-term research and engagement agenda for improving the sustainability of Yass Valley.

## 3. Policy Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors and Staff and is intended to integrate sustainable practice into Council’s decision making and operations to satisfy the vision articulated in the *Community Strategic Plan 2042* and ensure proper utilisation of the skills and expertise of Council’s Sustainability Advisory Committee.

## 4. Policy Provisions

Council’s Sustainability Advisory Committee has developed a *Sustainability Assessment Framework* against which it has assessed the current sustainability of the Yass Valley and Council to the extent that this is possible given available data. In following this approach, the *Sustainability Assessment Framework* has allowed the Committee to ascertain the areas where the gap in Council’s current efforts to support the sustainability of Yass Valley and be sustainable itself are most evident. It has also helped in the identification of where Council can best focus its attention in closing that gap, taking into account Council’s potential to act and its ability to influence outcomes.

**4.1** Four priority areas for action have been established based upon this analysis and the Committee’s Terms of Reference. They are:

PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION	
Food and Garden Organics Service (FOGO)	All NSW Councils are required by 2030 to establish a food and organics collection service. There are issues of design upon which the Sustainability Advisory Committee will provide advice and the Committee will also assist in identifying possible grant funding and in engaging and educating the community about the new service.
Electric Vehicles	EN2.1 of Council’s <i>Delivery Program</i> states that Council will investigate and implement the use of electric and low emission powered vehicles as part of its commercial and operational fleet. Council subsequently considered a policy on Electric Vehicles in June 2022 identifying the opportunities and obstacles in moving towards the procurement of a share of electric vehicles in its fleet and plant.  The Sustainability Advisory Committee will provide advice on how to overcome these obstacles and in the calculation of potential financial and emission savings through an accelerated shift to EVs and appropriate configuration of the EV fleet.
Engagement with other Advisory Committees and Bodies	The Terms of Reference of the Sustainability Advisory Committee include that it work to embed sustainability in Council policies, practices and services. The Terms also state that the Committee should engage and take advice from others

	to identify new and innovative ways of building sustainable practice across Yass Valley and within Council. Accordingly, the Committee will commence a formal program of active engagement with Council’s other Advisory Committees and relevant Council staff to ensure they understand the role and direction of the Committee and the intent of this policy.
Design of an approach to engaging the community on a possible future climate change action plan	Further to engaging with Council’s Advisory Committees and other bodies, the Sustainability Advisory Committee will design a process to develop a community-led (Council-supported) Climate Change Action Plan and, subject to approval, commence those engagement activities.

**4.2** Consistent with the Sustainability Advisory Committee’s Terms of Reference, and the objective of formalising the proper consideration of sustainability in policy development practices, the Committee will continue to develop and refine the benchmarks and measures within the *Sustainability Assessment Framework* and provide an updated assessment of the sustainability of Yass Valley and Council every 12 months.

**4.3** Council will also use the *Sustainability Assessment Framework* in their policy development and service design work and give proper consideration to the impact of their decisions upon the particular measures and benchmarks contained within the framework document.

**4.4** Council will also adopt the practice of early engagement of the Sustainability Advisory Committee in all relevant strategic discussions, policy development and service design work in order that sustainability is given consideration upfront in the design of all Council’s policies, plans and services. This will facilitate the embedding of financial, environmental, social and cultural sustainability into Council’s operation, ie through up-front and early engagement, as opposed to the end of the policy development process.

Finally, while progressing the above identified priority areas for action and taking an active role in policy, formulation, the Sustainability Advisory Committee will focus its longer-term research and engagement efforts, with a view to further reporting to Council on the potential value of particular initiatives and, where appropriate, integrating action upon them into Council’s planning processes.

## 5. Review

This policy will be revised following each general election of Council. The associated Sustainability Assessment Framework will be updated by the Sustainability Advisory Committee on an annual basis.

## 6. Legislative and Legal Framework

<b>Legislation Policies and procedures</b>	s8 <i>Local Government Act 1993</i>
	s1.3 <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i>
	s22 <i>Biosecurity Act 2015</i>
	s1.3 <i>Environmental Planning &amp; Assessment Act 1979</i>
	<i>Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</i>
	<i>Water Management Act 2000</i>
	<i>Waste Avoidance &amp; Resource Recovery Act 2001</i>
	<i>Environmental Protection &amp; Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (C’with)</i>
	Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework
	Yass Valley Community Strategic Plan 2042

## 7. Definitions

For the purposes of this revised Policy, the definition of sustainability as detailed in the *Community Strategic Plan 2042* is adopted by Council. Namely, that sustainability considers *social, environmental and economic connections, civic leadership, environmental health and economic prosperity to be maintained in the interests of meeting current and future needs.*

Consistent with NSW legislation and the previous *Environmental Sustainability Policy*, Council’s consideration of sustainability is also guided by:

- a. **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. In the application of the precautionary principle, public and private decisions should be guided by:
  - i. Careful evaluation to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment
  - ii. An assessment of the risk-weighted consequences of various options
- b. **Inter-generational equity** – namely, that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations.
- c. **Conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity** – namely, that conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity should be a fundamental consideration.
- d. **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.

In addition, Council and the Sustainability Advisory Committee will undertake improved community engagement in developing shared outcomes.

## 8. Responsibilities

Council and all staff undertaking decision making on behalf of Council are required to take into account the provisions of this policy.

This includes use of the *Sustainability Assessment Framework* in policy development and service design work and consideration of the impact of decisions upon the measures and benchmarks within the *Framework*. Also, that staff engage the Sustainability Advisory Committee early in all relevant strategic discussions, policy development and service design work in order that sustainability is given consideration upfront in the design of all Council’s policies, plans and services.

## 9. Approval History

Stage	Date	Comment	MagiQ Reference
Original/Review		Approved by	
Report to Council	12/6/2014	Res 122 & 131	
Report to Council	23/10/2019	Res 245	
Sustainability Advisory Committee Review	7/10/22		
Report to Council	23/02/23	Res 26	
Report to Council	25/05/2023	Res 105	596731
Adoption	24/08/2023	Res 162	

## 10. Ownership and Approval

Responsibility	Role
Author	
Owner	
Endorser	
Approver	Council