



Elections are critical and powerful times to advocate for the environment, species and natural areas.

- Local Government Area (LGA) Elections will be held in October across Victoria to elect Councillors to city and shire councils. Through September and October, LGA candidates will be campaigning to win votes. They are therefore interested in meeting with the community to discuss sensitive and important issues in their LGA.
- Election results will be declared in mid-November. The new Council will prepare a Council Plan for the next four years, and a Council Budget. These documents will be prepared over about six months, so will be in use by about June or July 2025.
- If actions are not in the Council Plan or Budget, it is very difficult to get support. So, this is a critical period to lobby for actions for the environment and biodiversity to be included in the Council Plan and Council Budget within your LGA.

What can you do in your LGA for the environment at election time and beyond?

1. Meet with LGA candidates:

- *ask them questions about their interest in the environment, and what they understand about the LGA*
- *provide information about the local natural environment in your LGA*
- *ask them to make commitments about the natural environment (focus on a maximum of 3 issues only)*
- *inform your members and the community about your meetings with Councillor Candidates; provide a summary of the meeting and take photos of the meeting to share on social media*
- *if the candidate is elected, work with them to achieve positive change*

2. Provide feedback to develop the Council Plan and Council Budget:

- *be aware of the community feedback tools used by your LGA, e.g. public consultations seeking submissions*
- *know the deadlines for feedback to these documents - don't miss the deadline!*
- *speak at Council Meetings to raise awareness of environmental issues and the need to support Environment Friends Groups, including the need for Council support in the Council Plan, Council Budget*

3. Encourage your members and the community to advocate for the environment to your LGA

- *share this information with your members and the community*
- *encourage your members and the community to meet with LGA candidates, provide feedback for the Council Plan & Council Budget, or speak at Council Meetings*
- *regularly remind your members and the community of these advocacy actions through your various communication tools*

To support your advocacy at LGA level, we have prepared the attached table, which is focussed on two critical issues - human health and planetary health.

Human health is an issue that impacts all people, and it is intricately connected to the natural environment and planetary health. Planetary health is an appraisal of Earth's capability to perform the natural functions to support all life, including humans. However, planetary health is threatened by biodiversity loss and ecosystem decline, climate change, emerging diseases and pollution.

The attached table is set up in 4 levels:

1. Issue: *human health & planetary health*
2. Rationale: *to explain the importance of the issues*
3. Objective: *goals to achieve the rationale*
4. Possible actions: *ideas for specific actions to achieve the objective*

The information in this document will support years of advocacy
Choose a few issues at a time, and negotiate with Councillors and Council Officers to build rapport and get some wins.



| Issue | Rationale | Key Objective | Possible Actions |
|---------------------|--|---|---|
| Human Health | Nature has significant benefits to human health & wellbeing | Provide quality green & open space for all people within easy access to homes, workplaces & learning places (inclusion & diversity, all ages, abilities, cultures, communities) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that open space is available within walking distance (200m) of all residences and workplaces • Install paths and amenities in parks and open space that provide access to individuals of varying age and ability |
| | | Develop ways for people to have access to nature in more places across the LGA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create areas across the LGA that are filled with nature, e.g. indigenous nature-strips and median strips • Install and maintain gardens & planter boxes in shopping & corporate precincts |
| | | Encourage people to actively engage with nature through gardening and volunteering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Environment Friends Groups (EFGs) within the LGA • Invest in schemes to facilitate gardening for residents, e.g. Gardens for Wildlife, education programs |
| | Volunteering has significant benefits to human health, wellbeing & community | Support Environment Friends Groups (EFGs) to operate in an effective & efficient manner within the LGA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that records the relationship between the EFG & LGA, and clearly reports roles, responsibilities & boundaries • Invest in EFGs through grants (e.g. for insurance and tools) and training (e.g. management, governance, finance skills) |
| | | Value the contribution of EFGs to improve the natural capital of the LGA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite EFGs to contribute to strategies and plans to protect and enhance the biodiversity within the LGA through genuine collaboration • Provide in-kind support to EFGs for workspace on Council land, e.g. meeting places, storage facilities to store equipment (e.g. tools) • Foster community stewardship of natural places and spaces |
| | Planetary health is critical to human health | Tackle the threats of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution across the LGA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise that all humans have the right to a healthy environment and planet • See various actions below under the 'Planetary Health' section |



| Issue | Rationale | Key Objective | Possible Actions |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| <p>Planetary Health</p> | <p>Biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution are extreme threats to planetary health and human health</p> | <p>Protect and enhance biodiversity & connectivity across the LGA and surrounds</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ more council staff to coordinate and manage projects and programs to protect and restore the natural environment • Ensure the Council Plan and budget include investment in maintenance, e.g. weeding, infill planting, maintaining litter traps • Value natural waterways in the LGA (e.g. rivers, creeks, lakes) by enacting strategies to enhance biodiversity, connectivity and water quality of the waterways • Plant out council and crown land with indigenous plantings to improve connectivity and develop more habitat, e.g. around parklands and sports ovals, nature-strips • Add habitat elements to vegetated areas to provide shelter and protection for wildlife, e.g. rocks, logs, nest boxes, possum dreys, insect hotels • Collaborate with residents to transform nature-strips into 'strips of nature' by investing in a strategy, plants, and training to transform and maintain the nature-strips. • Develop streetscapes of biodiversity and connectivity, e.g. indigenous nature-strips, planter boxes in shopping & corporate precincts • Establish & support programs to improve biodiversity and connectivity on residential and corporate land, e.g. Gardens for Wildlife, 'Nature-strips: little strips of nature' • Form collaborative alliances with EFGs in the LGA to harness the power of grass roots action and build community • Foster community stewardship of natural places and spaces • Collaborate with adjacent LGAs to connect nature across LGA boundaries • Educate the community about the need to contain cats to properties, e.g. Safe Cats Safe Wildlife initiative • Enact and enforce cat curfews across the LGA to limit wildlife deaths and injuries • Support residents to contain their cats to their properties through support schemes and rebates, e.g. for cat enclosures • Educate the community about the need to restrain dogs from natural areas, including waterways, to protect wildlife and biodiversity |



| Issue | Rationale | Key Objective | Possible Actions |
|------------------|--|--|---|
| Planetary Health | Biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution are extreme threats to planetary health and human health | Mitigate the detriments of climate change across the LGA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the heat sink effect of hard surfaces such as bitumen, concrete, brick & metal, by using plants, e.g. evergreen street trees for shade, vertical gardens, roof-top gardens • Develop urban forest and street tree strategies to maximise tree numbers to benefit from the cooling capacity of plants from shading, reflecting heat and releasing moisture (i.e. the process of transpiration) • Protect the shade-producing benefits of trees across the LGA by preventing established trees from being cut down (except with council approval) • Support residents to access clean, renewable energy, e.g. Darebin Council Solar Saver scheme |
| | | Reduce the detriments of pollution across the LGA | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install litter traps in waterways and regularly maintain these traps to ensure effective function • Phase out single-use plastics across the LGA • Act to limit the detriments of artificial light on animals and other species across the LGA, e.g. shielded fixtures to direct light, motion sensors and timers, lower the brightness of outdoor lights, use globes that emit warmer colours (yellow, orange, red, green). • Create local laws to prevent the use of all fireworks in the LGA to prevent noise, light and chemical pollutants from fireworks • Educate the community about the detriments of all types of pollution; light, noise, plastic, chemicals |
| | Governance and planning decisions have severe impacts on human health, planetary health and biodiversity | Make planning decisions using planetary health, biodiversity and climate actions as prime guiding principles with genuine care and consideration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use biodiversity-sensitive principles in planning and design, e.g. BSUD • Limit and manage water run-off from new and existing development, e.g. WSUD • Prevent or limit the use of harmful materials in building, e.g. artificial grass • Set sacrosanct goals for no loss of green space |
| | | Govern the LGA using planetary health, biodiversity & climate actions as prime guiding principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that Council Plans and Budgets genuinely value biodiversity and address climate and pollution issues • Develop robust procurement and budgeting policies across the LGA to support planetary health through apt, ethical purchases that limit detriments to human health, planetary health, climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and ecosystem destruction. • Operate under planet-friendly policies and ethical governance, e.g. Ethical Social Governance (ESG) approach |