GOULBURN
MURRAY
°CLIMATE ALLIANCE

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

OUR VISION

Our region is net carbon positive and prepared for the impacts of climate change.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

As chairperson of the Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance, I am pleased to present the GMCA's annual report.

This financial year has been one of unprecedented environmental challenges for GMCA members. Including significant flooding, our 3rd consecutive year of La Nina and forecast record drought and bushfire danger. It is a stark reminder of our mission as an organisation and the importance of the work we do for our members.

As detailed in this coming report, this year just gone has been one of the most productive and impactful in the storied history of this little organisation, which full credit is due to our Executive Officer, Carole Hammond who has provided a clear structure and guidance for the many projects and initiatives that the GMCA has driven or participated in for the benefit of our members.

I am pleased to report that one of our key projects mentioned in last year's annual report – the Sustainable Subdivisions shared ESD resource – was successfully executed and has received funding to be extended for another 12 months. This project has delivered direct value to eight member councils via ESD planning support.

The GMCA commenced environmental asset vulnerability assessments with 11 participating councils via our 'A Resilient Public Estate' program for which we received $200k in funding from Emergency Management Victoria. This program aims to understand how GMCA councils' assets such as building, open space, roads and drainage will be further impacted by a changing climate and as such, provides information to member councils to prioritise works to create climate resilience.

We were pleased to attend the most successful Victorian Greenhouse Alliance conference together with other regional alliances. The event consisted of over 300 attendees, keynote speakers, workshops, and discussions. It is a unique forum for sharing ideas, reflecting on projects across the sector. Topics included: Getting off gas, rural and regional industry transitions, tackling business emissions, carbon offsetting, land use planning, embedding climate change in council plans, the intersection of climate and health and much more.

This year, the GMCA was proud to provide comment on numerous State and Federal government initiatives on behalf of our members and in conjunction with other regional greenhouse alliances, we undertook Climate Leadership forums in Wangaratta for members and Consulted for, and researched a regional preferred panel of electrification suppliers for 'Recharging Goulburn Murray'.

Looking forward, the GMCA was successful in winning funding for 6 members through the State Governments Neighbourhood Battery Initiative designed to fund pilots, trials and demonstrations of neighbourhood-scale battery ownership and operational models. We have also recently partnered with the CSIRO to commence a region-wide Managed Aquifer Recharge Assessments to provide further information to our members to help bolster resilience.

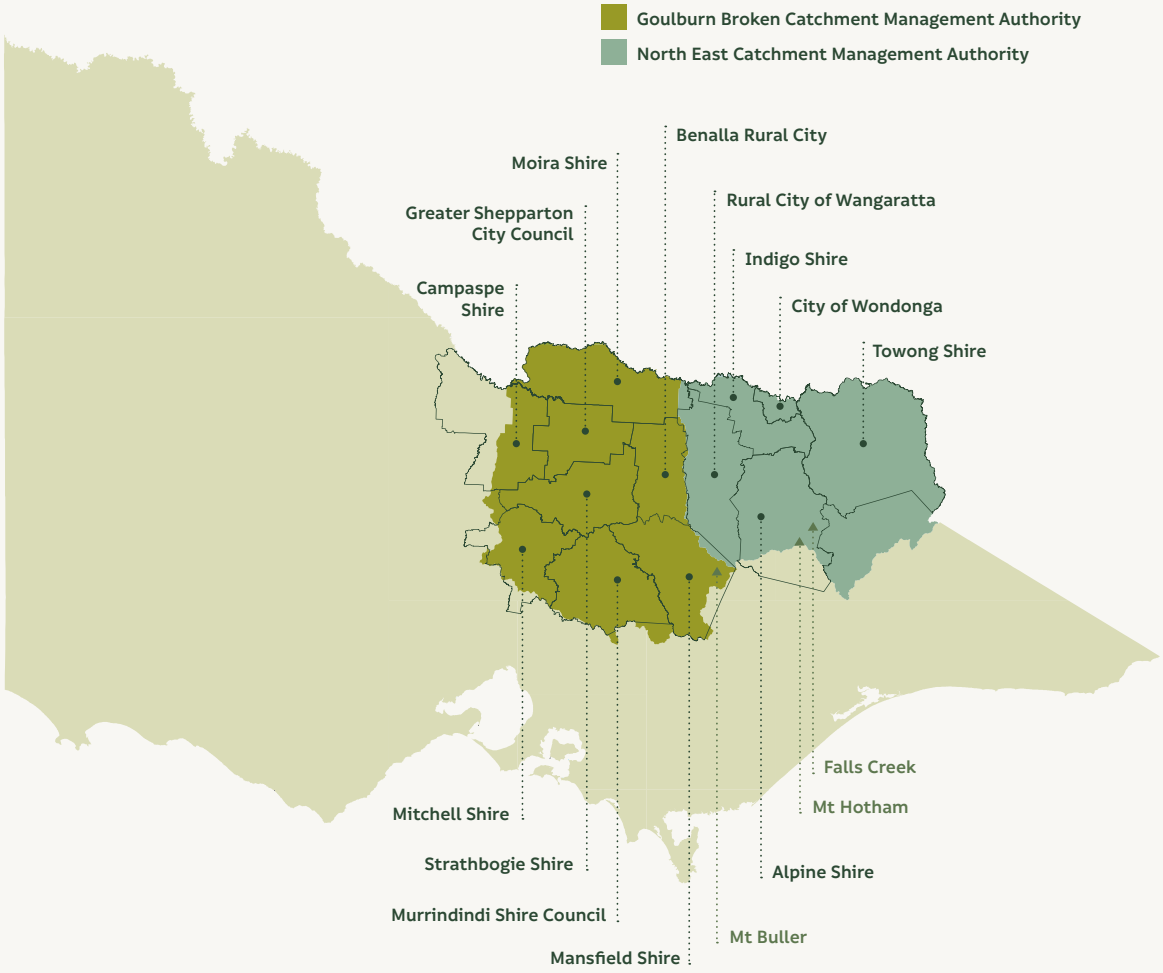
I am extremely proud of everything our organisation accomplishes with comparably tiny resources and it should be a point of pride for all of our members to play a small part in a huge impact for our region.

Cr Rohan Webb,
Mansfield Shire Council,
GMCA Chairperson

ABOUT

The Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance is a formal collaboration of 13 local government councils, two Catchment Management Authorities, Alpine Resorts Victoria, and an informal collaboration with DEECA Hume.

The Alliance has worked together for the last 16 years to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase climate change adaptation, build the capacity of our members across climate change action, and to advocate to governments on matters of climate significance within our purview.

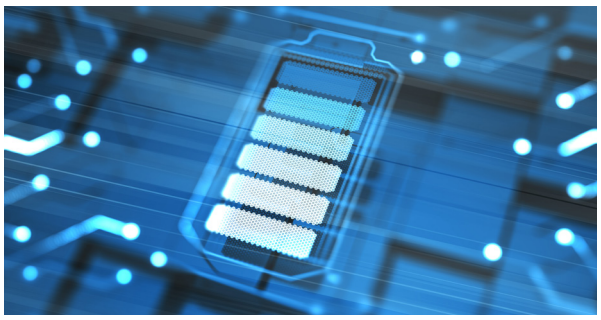


2022/23 PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

A RESILIENT PUBLIC ESTATE ASSET ASSESSMENTS WITH 11 PARTICIPATING COUNCILS

In 2023 the GMCA commenced A Resilient Public Estate, a large-scale climate-change adaptation project. The project acknowledges the enormous management responsibility of public assets that local government has, and the financial, social, and environmental impacts of climate change on these. Assets include roads, drainage, public buildings, open space and street trees, bridges, culverts and more. The project is developing a methodology that will produce case studies of vulnerable assets and how they might be made more resilient, as well as guidance on how this might be replicated by GMCA member councils.

Studies with council staff assessing the economic impact to councils and communities of drought, heatwaves, bushfire, flooding and storms on these assets are ongoing and will produce tools and internal capacity to continue assessments within each participating council. The consultant has developed open-source mapping software (QGIS Climate Viewer) to underpin the asset assessment as well as training on how this can be used. The training has also included opportunities for feedback from member councils, which has shaped the development of the software to better meet their needs.



WON FUNDING FOR EIGHT MEMBERS THROUGH THE GREENHOUSE ALLIANCES NEIGHBOURHOOD BATTERY INITIATIVE

The ‘Regional Greenhouse Alliance Neighbourhood Battery Investigation Project’ was one of nine projects to be awarded funding through the Victorian Government’s Neighbourhood Battery Initiative – Round 3 announced by Minister D’Ambrosio in 2023.

The project, led by the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance, Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance, and Gippsland Alliance for Climate Action, in partnership with Indigo Power, is developing the business case for community battery sites in 22 local government and Alpine Resort areas throughout regional Victoria.

PARTNERED WITH CSIRO TO COMMENCE MANAGED AQUIFER RECHARGE COMMUNICATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

As part of A Resilient Public Estate, the impact of drought on both public open space assets and the community has been front of mind. GMCA partnered with CSIRO o build understanding and to co-design Managed Aquifer Recharge (MAR) projects with selected municipalities.

As part of this we have joined with a number of water agencies throughout the region, including North East Water, Goulburn Murray Water, as well as the Goulburn Broken and North East Integrated Water Management Forums.

UNDERTOOK CLIMATE LEADERSHIP FORUMS IN WANGARATTA FOR MEMBERS

This project delivered three single day Forums with a range of subject matter experts presenting to people in high level roles from across the Hume region. Across three sessions, we hosted 25 speakers, 38 attendees from 9 local governments and 6 associated organisations. Sessions delivered were:

Session 1: Friday 10th March
Advocacy, Sponsorship and Support in a Time of Climate Change

Session 2: Friday 24th March
What Is Resilience in the Face of Extreme Events?

Session 3: Friday 28th April
Governance, Legal and Risk: Implications of Climate Change

The forums were supported by Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance, North East Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and Rural City of Wangaratta, with funding from the Victorian Government (DEECA) and the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

"RECHARGING GOULBURN MURRAY" A REGIONAL PANEL OF ELECTRIFICATION SUPPLIERS

GMCA was funded by DEECA in the 2022-23 financial year to develop a tender for a renewables bulk buy to service the needs of its member communities.

GMCA employed a Project Officer, who brought together a Project Working Group (PWG), comprised of officers and managers from the participating member councils to oversee the development of what eventually became a renewables panel of preferred providers – Recharging Goulburn Murray. Relevant emissions reduction and complementary technologies to be included were identified, including:

- rooftop solar
- battery storage
- hot water heat pumps
- reverse cycle air conditioners
- induction cook tops.

These technologies can be combined into a consistent communications message centred around electrifying the home, and second, will be simpler to provide consistent pricing across the region. Recharging Goulburn Murray is now considering different modes of delivery before implementing.

SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED YEAR ONE OF OUR SHARED SUSTAINABLE SUBDIVISIONS ESD ADVISOR, AND RECEIVED FUNDING FOR A 12 MONTH EXTENSION

In 2022/23 GMCA and eight of it's local government members successfully applied to the Victorian Government's Regional Planning Hub to co-fund the Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance Shared ESD Planning Officer. In 2020/21 these councils undertook land use planning for developments totalling over $545 million, with this increasing in 2021/22. Some 235 new and amended subdivision permits were also processed in 2020/21 across this region, offering an extensive opportunity for local government to create not only reduced greenhouse gas emissions from developments, but improved outcomes for our newest communities.

GMCA led the way across Victoria, with two other shared ESD Planning Officer's being formed and funded to apply the Sustainable Subdivisions Framework. The councils supported in 2022-2023 by this shared role were:

- Alpine Shire Council
- Greater Shepparton City Council
- Indigo Shire Council
- Mitchell Shire Council
- Murrindindi Shire Council (auspice)
- Strathbogie Shire Council
- Towong Shire Council
- Wangaratta Rural City Council

The initiative has been a resounding success with subdivision applications, training and advice undertaken, and recently support for a second year supported. Some 15 SSF assessments were undertaken on live Council applications, ranging from small subdivisions, to development plans and a scheme amendment. This covered a total of 1,693 lots.

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