

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

From the GMCA Chair Cr Webb

I am honoured and humbled to have been able to perform the role of Chair for the GMCA since late last year.

This time has not been without its challenges. The ever present pandemic and remote working has seen this group work in ways not seen before. It is an enormous credit to every member of the GMCA that we have adapted and carried on with our extremely important collaboration.

We are in the process of transition between the auspice of Shepparton to Murrundindi after renewal of the MoU with members for 4 years - testament to our great advocacy work and value that we deliver. I thank both Shepparton and Murrundindi in conjunction with the Alliance Committee in this space - its no easy task.

Our rebrand to Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance reflects our membership and the area we cover - a great milestone to cover such a significant portion of the state.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge our EO, Bronwyn Chapman for managing so many changing scenarios with great skill. It has made the role of Chair a great pleasure.

We can be proud of the things we have all achieved as a group this year - I firmly believe we can do far more together than we can apart, and I greatly look forward to the coming year.

Cr Rowan Webb

2020- 2021 highlights

- **Renewed the GMCA with a member MOU 2021-25**
- **Successfully transferred the auspice from Greater City of Shepparton to Shire of Murrundindi**
- **Moved to the name of Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance to reflect the expansion of the Alliance in the past 3 years from 7 members to 13 members.**
- **VECO (Victorian Energy Collaboration) commenced operation with 46 councils joining to purchase renewable energy from hydro and wind sources. This includes seven GMCA councils.**
- **Completed advance planning for a network of electric vehicle charge stations in the GMCA area.**

Who we are

The Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance (GMCA), promotes and supports action on climate change in the Goulburn Broken and North East regions of Victoria.

GMCA supports its members through project management, advocacy, securing funding and knowledge sharing to build capacity.

Our vision

Our communities actively responding to climate change to help build a positive future.



GMCA Members

Murrundindi Shire Council (auspice Council)

Alpine Shire Council

Benalla Rural City Council

Campaspe Shire Council

Greater Shepparton City Council

Indigo Shire Council

Mansfield Shire Council

Mitchell Shire Council

Moira Shire Council

Strathbogie Shire Council

Towong Shire Council

Wangaratta Rural City

City of Wodonga

Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority

North East Catchment Management Authority

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Hume)



GMCA Works With Other Alliances in Statewide Action

There are seven greenhouse alliances in Victoria, including 70 of 79 councils in collaborative greenhouse action. The benefits of this strong collaboration flowed to members from two key projects in 2020-21.

The remaining councils in Victoria are currently investigating the form of Alliance that will best assist action. The GMCA has worked with councils in south west Victoria and Gippsland to provide information and experience to these councils groups.

Victorian Alliances reduce future energy charges to councils

The Victorian Alliances made detailed submissions to the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) to reduce the prices proposed by electricity distribution companies for 2021-26. The AER ruled in favour of the submissions, which will assist councils across Victoria to avoid over \$10.7M in charges to operate and maintain streetlights over the next five years, plus a further \$19.8M out to 2046. Savings from the initiative exceed combined Alliance membership fees by a factor of 60. The benefits are not distributed evenly across distribution regions. For GMCA councils avoided costs over 2021-26 of \$876,000 and a further \$1.75m to 2046. The crucial point is that the proposed charges would have impacted Council's budgets considerably, and these funds remain available for community projects.

Further negotiations with Ausnet have resulted in a co-contribution model to replace outdated mercury vapour streetlights with LED lights. Ausnet will assist ten councils in the GMCA to replace around 1,600 lights between 2021-25 in an \$800,000 project.

Achieving renewable energy through the Victorian Energy Collaboration

The GMCA joined other Alliances to work intensively with lead council City of Darebin to develop and deliver procurement of 100% renewable energy on behalf of forty-six councils. Seven GMCA councils have converted to a 100% renewable electricity linked to two wind farms in western Victoria. The Victorian Energy Collaboration (VECO) is the largest ever emissions reduction project undertaken by local government in Australia.

The purchasing power of this collective project ensured significant cost savings for councils. It will see approximately half of the Victorian local government electricity sourced from renewables – also reducing greenhouse emissions equivalent to powering 48,000 homes with renewable energy or taking 90,000 cars off the road each year.





GMCA Renewed In Next Four Year Partnership

This year, on 1st July 2021, the GMCA enters its next four year MOU. The auspice of the Greater City of Shepparton in 2017-21 has built a strong foundation for the Alliance, with strong governance, stable finances and a record of regional achievement. In this period membership grew to 13 members, across the Goulburn Broken and North East regions of Victoria. In recognition of this expanded area, the Alliance changed its name from Goulburn Broken Greenhouse Alliance, its founding name in 2007. It enters this next MOU as the Goulburn Murray Climate Alliance.



Climate change impacts and action have been established as a mainstream concern for councils, embedded in legislation in the Local Government Act 2020, and the Climate Change Act. The climate concerns and aspirations of our communities will be expressed in the strategic plans developed by all our members in 2021 — Council Plans, Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans, Regional Catchment Strategies and the Hume Regional Adaptation Strategy. Auspiced by the Shire of Murrindindi in the next four year period, the GMCA Alliance will strengthen collaborative action to realise the opportunity arising from the synergies of these plans.



Building the Capacity of Members to Act on Climate Change

The GMCA continued its contribution to regional strategy and knowledge development.

- Enabling councils to participate in statewide training “Your Council and Climate Change” (DELWP)
- Bringing information to members with expert speakers in quarterly meetings to discuss governance responsibilities and strategic planning
- Linking members to development of regional strategies— GBCMA and NECMA Regional Catchment Strategies, and DELWP Hume Regional Adaptation Strategy

GMCA Advocating for Regional Issues

The GMCA provides a regional ‘voice’ in advocacy. This was an advantage in early 2020 when the GMCA assisted meetings in Shepparton and Wangaratta for GMCA members with the Victorian Parliamentary Environment and Planning Committee. The resulting report “Inquiry into tackling climate change in Victorian communities” was released in November 2020. The committee recognised the key role played by local government in community climate change action. It stated that “Victorian Greenhouse Alliances, of which almost all Victorian local governments are members, are a world leading example of collaboration for climate action”. Regional issues were recognised with a recommendation for project grant support for resource constrained councils. The significant contribution to the inquiry by the GMCA (then GBGA) was shown with 30 odd references in the report.

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Looking forward to 2021-22

In 2021-22 the GBGA will assist members with tools and information to achieve sustainability outcomes in several regional and statewide projects.

- Develop the GMCA Strategic Plan for 2022-26, reflecting adopted regional and council plans.
- Deliver ‘Naturally Cooler Towns’ - a project to enable greening projects consistent with projected future climates
- Continue the partnership achievements through quarterly meetings of the Alliance.
- Collaborating to establish a viable network of chargers to enable electric vehicle travel across the GMCA region and connect to regional Victoria
- Detailed planning with the 10 GMCA councils in the Ausnet area to plan upgrade of many streetlights with LED lights.
- Working with the Victorian Energy Collaboration VECO to enable other councils to join VECO and purchase renewable energy.

Contact Us

Give us a call, get online or email us for more information:

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Explore

Use the GBGA website to explore the many projects and resources of the alliance.



GOULBURN BROKEN GREENHOUSE ALLIANCE MEMBERS



Our communities actively responding to climate change to help build a positive future