HOBSONS BAY CITY COUNCIL

BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY 2024–34

May 2023

Acknowledgements

Council acknowledges and respects the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of these municipal lands and waterways and their unique ability to care for Country.

First Nations people have an unbroken custodianship of the land and waterways that extends back thousands of years. Their knowledge, understanding and relationship with Country are fundamental to the health of the environment and the success of any strategy to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Council recognises the First Nations' vast spiritual and sustainable relationship with this landscape, honouring Elders past, present and emerging leaders whose wisdom enriches us all.

This strategy commits Council to genuinely partnering with and engaging meaningfully with First Nations communities and expert representatives to learn and collaborate, to protect and enhance our natural environment.

CONTENTS

VISON

"Value and protect our unique biodiversity for current and future generations."

Amidst a highly urbanised and industrial area, the Hobsons Bay municipality harbours areas of significant biodiversity with unique ecological values. These range from internationally significant wetlands, critically endangered grasslands to interconnecting waterways and significant conservation reserves. Locally significant flora and fauna species exists within these ecosystems that contribute to the rich biodiversity of Hobsons Bay.

The vision highlights the appreciation of the distinct biodiversity found within Hobsons Bay, the importance of valuing its intrinsic worth and commitment to ongoing preservation for current and future communities. The goals outlined in the strategy provide the guiding framework for Council's actions throughout its implementation, aligning with the overarching vision to value and protect our unique biodiversity. Council strives to create a sustainable and resilient environment that safeguards biodiversity and fosters deeper connections between our community and environment.

Hobsons Bay City Council is committed to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, providing a long-term strategic vision outlining key actions to be undertaken.

GOALS

PROTECT

- Safeguarding biodiversity in Hobsons Bay to ensure the protection of rare and threatened species and ecosystems.
- Planning for the long-term management and protection of ecosystems in their entirety to preserve remaining areas of significant biodiversity.

RESTORE

- Prioritise restoration to areas where threatened species occur.
- Enhance biodiversity within Hobsons Bay, employing adaptive management techniques, comprehensive restorations and rehabilitation initiatives to improve ecosystem resilience and habitat corridors.

ENGAGE

- Actively foster connections to deliver positive outcomes for our community and unique biodiversity.
- Involve community, encourage participation and raise awareness about the importance of biodiversity.

COLLABORATE

- Foster collaborative networks and partnerships to enhance effectiveness of landscape scale biodiversity management through shared responsibilities to ensure survival of species and ecosystems.
- Foster deeper collaboration with Traditional Owners to connect culture and biodiversity, acknowledging the interconnectedness and relationship between cultural heritage, traditional practices and ecosystem health.

WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY AND *WHY IS BIODIVERSITY IMPORTANT?*

Biodiversity encompasses all components of the living world. 'Bio' meaning life and 'Diversity' meaning variability, refers to the variety of all living organisms.

It includes the differing life forms from flora, fauna and micro-organisms to the complex and interconnected ecological processes. It incorporates the diversity of species and their genetic variation as well as the array of ecosystems and habitats within which they live. Biodiversity contributes to the stability and resilience of ecosystems providing the foundation to healthy functioning environments.

Biodiversity plays an important role in offering a large range of ecosystem services to the community. It provides the provision of food, water and natural resources necessary to sustain life, regulates ecological processes and offers cultural values. Improved health and wellbeing of both individuals and communities has been linked with rich biodiverse spaces. Research indicating time spent in biodiverse spaces results in positive short and long-term health benefits. As biodiversity supports the health of ecosystems, provides critical habitats for species, contributes to ecosystem services and enhances the overall resilience and well-being of community, it is essential to protect and enhance.

BIODIVERSITY *IN HOBSONS BAY*

Hobsons Bay is situated within the Port Phillip and Westernport Regional Catchment, on the shores of Port Phillip Bay and within the Victorian Volcanic Plains bioregion.

Hobsons Bay has a rich natural environment, that includes remnant native grasslands, five waterways, significant wetlands and foreshore areas. The combination of significant biodiverse areas within a highly developed landscape is unique for a metropolitan Council. Council currently manages over 336 hectares of conservation area across 28 sites with considerable biodiversity values that encompass nationally and internationally significant ecosystems and species. Council also works closely with other government agencies who manage land within Hobsons Bay for its biodiversity value.

A map showing the location of biodiversity significant areas within Hobsons Bay is shown in *Figure 1* page 9.

Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC) modelled by the Victorian Government classify and describe the different vegetation types within Victoria. The primary vegetation types within Hobsons Bay are:

Plains Grasslands and Chenopod Shrublands
Found primarily in Laverton North Grasslands and Altona North, either side of the railway line, between Laverton Creek and Kororoit Creek.

Coastal Saltmarsh
Found primarily in Paisley Challis, Altona Coastal Park, Truganina Park, Truganina Swamp, Jawbone Flora and Fauna Reserve and Cheetham Wetlands.

Coastal Scrubs Grasslands and Woodlands
Found primarily around the Cheetham Wetlands, Laverton Creek, Sandy Point and Truganina Swamp.

Salt-tolerant and /or Succulent Shrublands
Found around Skeleton Creek, Laverton Creek, Kororoit Creek and Jawbone Nature Reserve and even a small amount along the Yarra River and Stony Creek.

Riparian Scrubs or Swampy Scrubs and Woodlands
Found primarily along Kororoit Creek, north of Kororoit Creek Road.

Wetlands
Found primarily around Cherry Lake and Kororoit Creek between Millers Road and Kororoit Creek Road.

Continued →

These diverse ecosystems of Hobsons Bay contain an abundance of flora and fauna including numerous threatened species requiring ongoing protection for survival. The presence of these threatened species highlights the ecological significance of the area.

Examples of threatened flora within Hobsons Bay include:

- Spiny Rice-flower *(Pimelea spinescens subsp. Spinescens)* *Critically Endangered*
- Sunshine Diuris *(Diuris fragrantissima)* *Critically Endangered*
- Emu-foot scurf pea *(Cullen tenax)* *Endangered*
- Coastal wirilda *(Acacia uncifolia)* *Endangered*

Examples of threatened fauna within Hobsons Bay include:

- Swift Parrot *(Lathamus discolor)* migratory *Critically Endangered*
- Eastern Curlew *(Numenius madagascariensis)* migratory *Critically Endangered*
- Bar-tailed Godwit *(Limosa lapponica)* migratory *Vulnerable*
- Golden Sun Moth *(Synemon plana)* *Vulnerable*
- Blue-billed Duck *(Oxyura australis)* *Vulnerable*
- Growling Grass Frog *(Litoria raniformis)* *Vulnerable*
- Striped legless lizard *(Delma impar)* *Vulnerable*

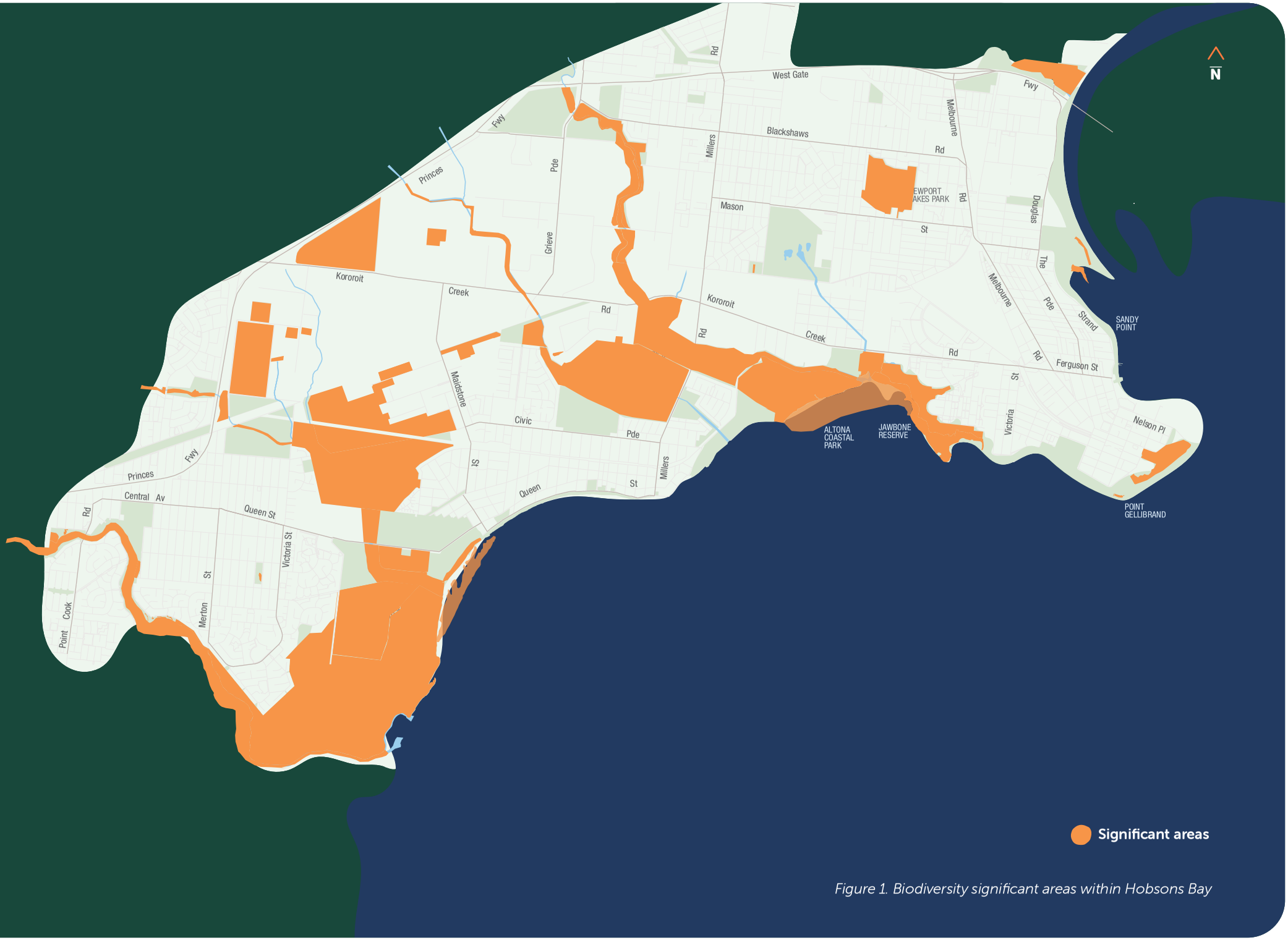

Figure 1. Biodiversity significant areas within Hobsons Bay

LEGISLATION

Legislative context for Biodiversity Protection

Federal

- *Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act* 1999

State

- *Wildlife Act* 1975
- *Environment & Protection Act* 1970
- *Planning & Environment Act* 1978
- *Flora & Fauna Guarantee Act* 1988
- *Catchment & Land Protection Act* 1994
- *Water Act* 2007
- *Climate Change Act* 2017

Local

- *Local Government Act* 2000
- Victorian Planning Provisions (Local Planning Policy Framework)
- State Environment Protection Policies (Waters of Victoria)

Strategies for Biodiversity Protection

Federal

- Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019–2030

State

- Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037
- Port Phillip & Western Port Regional Catchment Strategy
- Cultural Landscapes Strategy
- Water is Life – Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap

Local

- Biodiversity Strategy 2024–2034
- Urban Forest Strategy 2020
- Coastal & Marine Management Plan 2021
- Response to Climate Change Action Plan 2022–2030
- Open Space Strategy 2018–2028
- Waste & Litter Strategy 2018–2028

IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING BIODIVERSITY
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Community engagement

Fostering deeper relationships and empowering the wider community with knowledge and skills is pivotal for biodiversity protection and enhancement. Community engagement encourages involvement, increases awareness, collects local knowledge and promotes shared responsibility to preserve our biodiversity for current and future generations.

Hobson Bay is fortunate to have an engaged community passionate about biodiversity protection, with nine dedicated community groups actively involved in ecosystem restoration and protection. These community groups have made significant contributions to biodiversity conservation in Hobsons Bay, collectively enhancing knowledge through information sessions and fauna surveys as well as habitat and ecosystem resilience through restoration and maintenance events.

Broadening municipal wide biodiversity engagement will lead to;

- Wider range of stakeholders engaged
- Stronger commitment to biodiversity protection
- Resilient connected biodiversity landscapes
- Targeted corridors for biodiversity enhancement
- Engaged private landowners and land managers for collaborative improvement.

Utilising the collective power of community participation to increase local knowledge, improve areas of significant biodiversity and gather valuable data on species will develop a culture of biodiversity stewardship.

Cultural connection and collaboration

Biodiversity is deeply intertwined with cultural identities and traditions. Recognising and fostering a deeper appreciation of the connection between Traditional Owners and biodiversity within Hobsons Bay allows for the preservation of cultural practices linked to biodiversity. Further developing relationships with the Traditional Owners will enable them to incorporate cultural practices and perspectives for a more holistic approach to biodiversity enhancement.

Pest species

There are several pest species that pose a risk to native flora, fauna and ecosystems within Hobsons Bay. Pest plants are extremely resilient, out-compete indigenous flora and spread easily via wind, water, machinery and through human and animal movement. Pest animals are highly mobile, have few natural predators and have high rates of reproduction, resulting in high population numbers and increased competition for food and shelter. They include foxes, cats, rabbits and Common Mynas. Hobsons Bay has an established Pest Animal Management Plan and incorporate adaptive management techniques to prioritise, reduce and mitigate the negative impacts of invasive pest species. Engaging external land managers and private landowners will broaden the reach and impact of pest species control measures for a comprehensive coordinated approach to protect biodiversity and ecological integrity. Collaboration at a municipal wide scale for pest species can effectively address challenges across the landscape.

Continued →

To minimise the effect of domestic animals on the population of native fauna, stronger controls need to be implemented where there are known domestic animal issues affecting areas of significant biodiversity. Cats have contributed to the extinction of more than 20 Australian mammals. Responsible pet ownership, containment and education to best support the welfare of pets and native fauna will reduce disease spread, accidents and amount of killed wildlife.

Protecting biodiversity corridors and remnant vegetation

Industrial development and urban densification pose significant challenges and increased pressure on biodiversity and ecosystem connectivity. Fragmentation, habitat degradation and destruction of biodiversity increase pressure on species survival. Additionally soil compaction, introduction of pest species, pollution and increased artificial lighting detrimentally impact biodiversity as a result of development. Understanding and implementing measures to mitigate these impacts is critical to the ongoing survival of species and coexistence between urban and natural environments.

Hobsons Bay is a highly developed municipality with majority of remaining remnant grasslands that support critically endangered species located within undeveloped industrial areas. The biodiversity value of these grasslands is highly significant containing species of national, state and local significance. Protecting and properly managing the grasslands on these private properties is vital in safeguarding their existence for current and future generations. Hobsons Bay currently manages 12.06 hectares of plains grasslands. Since 2016 172ha of high value plains grasslands have been cleared for developments with approximately 178.41 hectares of known plains grassland areas remaining on privately owned land. In response to the continued loss of plains grassland within privately owned land Council will seek to introduce new planning controls such as an Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) into the Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme that will ensure biodiversity values are considered as part of the planning permit process.

This new control would exist alongside state and federal legislation to support the retention of high value grassland areas and enable stronger protections for biodiversity corridors and remaining critically endangered plains grassland habitat. A map showing the candidate ESO areas within Hobsons Bay is shown in *Figure 2* page 19.

An ESO is a tool used to protect areas of environmental importance. An ESO triggers a planning permit for development applications, land use change, vegetation removal and subdivision.

While federal and state legislation are essential for protecting native grasslands at a broader level, protecting native grasslands with local planning scheme controls such as an ESO can offer additional benefits by providing tailored protection, addressing site-specific concerns, involving the community and ensuring long-term conservation of these valuable ecosystems.

Under local, state and federal legislation an offset may be required as part of a permit to clear native vegetation. The offset is a site that is protected in perpetuity. It protects the same vegetation types or species that are being removed from the development site.

Offsets have the most value when:

- they are large enough to support the ongoing existence of the species found on the site
- the site connects to an existing area of biodiversity significance and so improves
- connectivity or makes the overall area of value larger the threats from neighbouring properties, such as weed species, is small

This can mean a lack of genetic diversity for plants to regenerate in the long term or an area too small for animals to forage. In some cases, where these conditions cannot be met inside the municipality, it may be better for an offset to be located outside of the municipality. Where these conditions can be met inside the municipality it is preferable that the offset be located within the municipality. An offset policy that addresses these issues would provide greater direction over where and when an offset should be located within the municipality or located elsewhere.

Climate change

The global climate is changing and poses a significant threat to biodiversity both locally and internationally. Climate change risks that will impact biodiversity in Hobsons Bay include coastal flooding and sea level rise, heatwaves, intense rainfall events, an overall increase in temperature coinciding with an overall decrease in rainfall. Impacts within urban environments can be accelerated due to urban heat island effects. Council has a number of strategies and plans to mitigate impacts of climate change on biodiversity in addition to conservation management that focuses on specifically improving resilience and ecosystem health.

BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY *ACTION PLAN*

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Council will deliver this strategy from 2024–34.

To maximise impact Council will regularly review emerging threats and opportunities and monitor new innovative approaches for biodiversity management. A comprehensive review at the five-year mark will measure progress, identify achievements and determine areas where refocusing or enhancement may be required to ensure continued success in preserving and enhancing the biodiversity of Hobsons Bay.

Actions will be overseen by a Steering Group with progress reported through Hobsons Bay City Council Annual Report and on Council's website. Assessments will be undertaken to review actions and measure outcomes on a periodic basis.

The actions support Council's vision to value and protect our unique biodiversity in Hobsons Bay.

Some actions will require a financial investment by Council. These actions will be reconfirmed through Council's annual budget processes to ensure that the investment also results in future cost savings and risk mitigation for Council and community.

Each action will be within Council's control, measurable, impactful, deliverable, and financially responsible, ensuring a focused and responsible approach to biodiversity preservation.

GOAL

PROTECT

Objective

- Prevent local extinction of indigenous flora and fauna and ecosystems.
- Retain remaining intact remnant grasslands and areas of significant biodiversity.
- Reduce light pollution impacts on areas with significant biodiversity.
- Strengthen the Planning Scheme to achieve better biodiversity outcomes

Outcome

Council conservation reserves and areas of significant biodiversity have ongoing protection

Action	Timeframe	Funding
Conduct an assessment of native grasslands and habitat value in industrial areas of Hobsons Bay where significant and critically endangered grasslands may remain.	2024	Within individual project budget
Strengthen protections for native grassland areas within the Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme by introducing an Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO) that triggers the requirement for a planning permit.	2024–25	Within individual project budget Strategic Planning annual budget
Adopt the Hobsons Bay Native Vegetation Offset Guidelines toguide offsets in development applications.	2024	Established operational budget
Employ a Parks Enforcement Officer to ensure biodiversity and trees are protected in accordance with legislative requirements.	2025	Timing subject to budget allocation
Develop a mandatory reporting procedure of all privately managed offset sites within Hobsons Bay.	2024–25	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget Established operational budget
Proactively monitor diversity, including compliance with planning permit conditions relating to biodiversity and investigate potential illegal removal of native vegetation. e.g. Removal of native vegetation.	Commence 2024	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget
Reduce the impacts of coastal erosion in areas of significant biodiversity. Prevent impacts of erosion at Sandy Point.		Scalable - subject to annual budget allocation / partnership funding
Reinstate hydrological cycles of Ghania filum habitat to assist long-term survival of the Altona Skipper Butterfly.	Commence 2024	Scalable - subject to annual budget allocation / partnership funding
Collaborate with Pollution Prevention Taskforce through Waterways of the West to monitor and prevent pollutants entering significant wetlands. Prioritise significant migratory and wading bird habitat to enhance pollution control measures	Ongoing	Established operational budget
Undertake an assessment into light pollution for biodiversity significant areas focusing on corridors and estuaries to determine extent of impact and sensitive lighting solutions.	2024–25	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget
Ensure National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife are considered for all developments adjacent to biodiversity significant areas and incorporated into Council policy.	Ongoing	Established operational budget
Advocate to Federal and State governments for establishment of protected areas for critically endangered ecosystems.	Ongoing	Established operational budget

GOAL

RESTORE

Objective

- Pest species threat is reduced in areas of significant biodiversity.
- Overall increase in biodiversity, ecosystems and habitats by 2027.
- Increased native vegetation plantings to create interconnected habitat corridors.

Outcome

There is a net increase in biodiversity, connective habitat and species resilience. Pest species impact mitigated in areas of highest biodiversity value.

Action	Timeframe	Funding
Implement the Pest Animal Management Plan and continue core pest species control across Council managed Conservation Reserves.	Ongoing	Established Pest Animal Management budget
Implement stronger controls where there are known domestic animal issues affecting areas of significant biodiversity. Domestic Animal Management Plan 2021-25, reviewed at four year intervals.	Review 2024–25 Implement 2026 DAMP	Within individual project budget
Increase landscape wide fox management throughout industrial precincts.	Trial 2025	Established Pest Animal Management budget
Develop a GIS layer of biodiversity values on public land.	Commence 2024	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget
Undertake flora and fauna surveys to develop baseline data within Council to establish trends in species occurrence/abundance and understand ongoing conservation management.	Commence 2025	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget
Undertake ecological burns to improve biodiversity.	Ongoing	Established operational budget
Prioritise tree planting using locally indigenous species near biodiversity significant areas and corridors, including industrial and residential zones, following the guidelines outlined in the Urban Forest Strategy.	Ongoing	Established Urban Forest Strategy budget
Investigate opportunity to re-introduce fauna. - enhance fauna habitat by increasing rock and vegetation cover, installing fences for habitat and predator protections and ectablish approval requirements for fauna translocation. and installing fences for habitat and to provide protection from predators and establish approval requirements for fauna translocation.	Commence 2027	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget

GOAL

ENGAGE

Objective

- A comprehensive review of all engagement activities is conducted across conservation to ensure maximum value for biodiversity and community.
- Habitat Gardens in Hobsons Bay program is expanded to encompass targeted areas and establish ecosystem corridors.
- More community members value, understand and participate in biodiversity activities by 2027.
- A landscape wide monitoring program for Hobsons Bays fauna is developed and established.

Outcome

An empowered community that understands, values and actively participates in biodiversity enhancement, fostering a sense of responsibility and stewardship

Action	Timeframe	Funding
Assess and enhance existing conservation engagement programs to provide a diverse range of ongoing educational and hand-on experiences to promote active participation and deeper connection to biodiversity. Evaluate effectiveness and impact of conservation engagement activities in regard to biodiversity enhancement and community involvement.	2024–25	Established operational budget
Implement and promote community- led citizen science programs to actively engage residents and landowners in monitoring biodiversity and identifying emerging threats.	Develop 2024 Commence 2025	Established operational budget
Develop community guidelines for ethical nature-based experiences ensuring the protection of significant biodiversity.	2024–25	Established operational budget
Expand the municipal wide Habitat Gardens in Hobsons Bay program to targeted areas for greater ecosystem connectivity. Staged expansion to include significant biodiversity corridors and industrial areas.	Commence 2025	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget
Construct infrastructure and boardwalks in Altona Coastal Park and Truganina Park to minimise disturbance to biodiversity significant areas while enhancing accessibility for visitors.	Ongoing	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget
Establish a municipal wide biodiversity corridor enhancement and protection program that incorporates all remaining significant ecosystems. Create an environmental and tourism asset for this corridor. "Embark on a Biodiversity Journey: Explore our vibrant coastlines, waterways and grasslands"	Commence 2026	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget

GOAL

COLLABORATE

Objective

- Collaborate with the Traditional Owners to connect culture and biodiversity.
- Traditional owners are empowered to engage in cultural land management practices.
- Increased contribution to protect biodiversity and connect ecosystems within privately owned areas by 2027.

Outcome

Collaboration with Traditional Owners in cultural land management practices that enhance biodiversity and cultural connections.

Collaboration with industry and private land managers to implement targeted landscape-scale pest species control,increase connectivity through habitat corridors and enhance significant grasslands throughout the municipality.

Action	Timeframe	Funding
Collaborate with Traditional Owners to foster a deeper connection to Indigenous Cultural Heritage and biodiversity. Develop opportunities for integration of indigenous land management practices and cultural practices for biodiversity enhancement, implementing at least two joint initiatives per year.	Commence 2024	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget
Provide support to industry and private landowners to implement landscape scale pest species control and habitat connectivity.	Commence 2024	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget
Develop an incentive program for industry and private landowners to encourage pest species control and habitat connectivity.	Commence 2025	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget
Strengthen habitat in Hobsons Bay open space areas utilising indigenous plantings, prioritising biodiversity corridors.	Ongoing	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget
Collaborate with Agriculture Victoria's Biosecurity team to manage potential new invasive species and establish procedures for containment.	Ongoing	Established operational budget
Support Hobsons Bay Wetland Centre through establishment, engagement and citizen science programs.	Ongoing	Annual Biodiversity Strategy budget Established operational budget

APPENDIX

Council's management of over 336 hectares of conservation areas across 28 sites is displayed in the table below highlighting the current commitment to preserving and enhancing biodiversity for the benefit of the local environment and community.

Conservation Areas managed by Hobsons Bay	Size in hectares
Altona Coastal Park	55
Altona Coastal Park - seagrass bed	33
Bladin St	0.64
Blue Bells Grassland	0.26
Carinza Ave	1.78
Cherry Lake ornamental pond bushland	0.36
Claredon Crt	0.08
Clement Reserve	0.25
Cyril Curtain Wetland	0.34
Doreen's Grassland	3.25
Doug Grant Foreshore	0.9
Emu-foot Grassland	1
Federation Trail	0.92
Horsburgh Drive Grassland	4.38
Kororoit Creek	25.4
Laverton Storm Water Harvesting wetland and grassland	3.76
Maidstone Street Grassland	6.15
Markham Way	0.29
McCormack Park	0.31
Newport Lakes	33
Paisley-Challis Wetlands	7.79
Rifle Range Reserve	25.68
Sandy Point	2
Sandy Spit	25.16
The Buffer Mounds and wetlands	9.6
The Spit	1.62
Truganina Explosives Reserve	15.44
Truganina Park	79.57

Figure 2. Candidate ESO areas

"Value and protect our unique biodiversity for current and future generations."

HOBSONS BAY CITY COUNCIL

HOBSONS BAY
CITY COUNCIL

115 Civic Parade, Altona
PO Box 21, Altona 3018
Phone 1300 179 944
NRS phone 133 677 and quote 1300 179 944
Email customerservice@hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au

www.twitter.com/HobsonsBayCC
www.facebook.com/HobsonsBayCityCouncil
www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au

HOBSONS BAY LANGUAGE LINE

9932 1212

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