

FILE NO: PSC2015-03964

TITLE: ENVIRONMENT POLICY

POLICY OWNER: STRATEGY AND ENVIRONMENT SECTION MANAGER

1. PURPOSE:

1.1 Port Stephens Council is committed to achieving its vision statement of "a great lifestyle in a treasured environment" so that current and future generations can enjoy, and benefit from, a healthy natural environment. This Policy outlines Council's commitment to the environment by providing leadership and direction for improved environmental performance.

2. CONTEXT/BACKGROUND:

2.1 Port Stephens is a diverse region, comprised of natural features including bushland, rivers, wetlands and coastal areas. A healthy natural environment is critical to the people of Port Stephens as it provides essential environmental services such as clean air, clean water and healthy soils. In turn this supports ecological, cultural, recreational, economic and aesthetic values.

2.2 Local government plays an important role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment in order to achieve Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD). Specifically, the charter for NSW Councils reinforces Council's role "to properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of the area for which it is responsible, in a manner that is consistent with and promotes the principles of ecologically sustainable development".

2.3 The natural environment is a complex and interdependent system making it challenging to accurately quantify and assess impacts. The principles of ESD are therefore embedded in the Local Government Act 1993 which states that "ecologically sustainable development requires the effective integration of economic and environmental considerations in decision-making processes". The principles are incorporated within local government decision-making processes including planning, regulation, administration and operations.

2.4 The four principles underpinning ESD are:

1. Precautionary principle
2. Intergenerational equity
3. Conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity
4. Improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms

2.5 The integration of social, environmental and economic factors are also required through the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework to enable holistic and sustainable planning for the future (LGNSW Interim Policy Statements: Planning and Environment).

3. SCOPE:

3.1 This Policy provides direction for Council's overall approach to its environmental performance.

3.2 Environmental performance refers to the environmental results that are achieved through Council's management and control of the environmental aspects of its systems, policies, processes, procedures, services and activities (ISO14001:2015). Environmental performance can be improved when beneficial environmental impacts are increased and adverse environmental impacts and risks are reduced.

3.3 Whilst Council's approach to environmental risk is influenced by this Policy, Council's Integrated Risk Management Policy provides the overall direction on Council's systematic management of risk. Therefore, these two policies should be considered together.

4. DEFINITIONS:

4.1 An outline of the key definitions of terms included in the policy.

Biological Diversity and Ecological Integrity	The variety of life forms, the different plants, animals and microorganisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems they form.
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Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)	Effective integration of economic and environmental considerations in decision-making processes.
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Improved Valuation, Pricing and Incentive Mechanisms	Environmental factors should be included in the valuation of assets and services.
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Intergenerational Equity	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.
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Precautionary Principle 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.

5. POLICY STATEMENT:

- 5.1 Council ensures a healthy natural environment is maintained for the wellbeing of the Port Stephens community.
- 5.2 Council is committed to empowering its employees to assume accountability and responsibility for the continuous improvement of its environmental performance by creating and promoting a culture of participation and by providing a robust process for monitor and review.
- 5.3 Council is committed to the four principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development.
- 5.4 Council meets all its statutory responsibilities under environmental legislation.

6. POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- 6.1 Strategy and Environment Section is responsible for monitoring, reviewing and providing advice on the Policy.
- 6.2 Implementation of and compliance with the Environment Policy is the responsibility of all staff, with the Senior Leadership Team responsible for ensuring the Policy is implemented throughout the organisation.

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS:

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| 7.1 Local Government Act 1993 | 7.7 Heritage Policy |
| 7.2 Port Stephens Council Community Strategic Plan | 7.8 Integrated Risk Management Policy |
| 7.3 Asset Management Policy | 7.9 On-Site Sewage Management Policy |
| 7.4 Commercial Operators Policy | 7.10 Pricing Policy |
| 7.5 Compliance Policy | 7.11 Procurement Policy |
| 7.6 Economic Development Policy | 7.12 Property Investment Policy |
| | 7.13 Social Impact Policy |

CONTROLLED DOCUMENT INFORMATION:

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Process owner	Strategy and Environment Section Manager		
Author	Environmental Strategist		
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Adoption date	March 2016		

VERSION HISTORY:

Version	Date	Author	Details	Minute No.
1.0	8 March 2016	Environmental Strategist / Environmental Management System Officer	Original Policy	051
2.0	26 June 2018	Environmental Strategist	Policy adapted to new Policy Template. No Amendments.	178