
5.2 REVIEW OF THE LOGAN ECOFORUM AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

REPORT OF: Health, Environment & Waste Manager

REPORT OVERVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Logan City Council is committed to community focused environmental engagement which is showcased through the Logan EcoForum and other community engagement activities. These activities build relationships, inspire innovation, motivate action and raise awareness of environmental conservation across the City of Logan.

Council resolved to undertake a review of the EcoForum to ensure our community engagement activities meet community expectations and provide a range of options for our diverse community to connect on environmental matters.

This review involved a community survey, benchmarking across other local governments and environmental organisations, research into new innovative environmental engagement activities, as well as obtaining feedback from a range of internal and external stakeholders.

Criteria: Direction - It requires Council to make a decision of a strategic nature; or Council has specifically requested it

CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY

Green and Renewable

RECOMMENDATIONS

IT IS RECOMMENDED:

That the suite of community environmental engagement activities, as detailed in the report of the Health, Environment and Waste Manager dated 18 May 2021, be endorsed.

REPORT DETAILS

INTERESTED PARTIES

- City of Logan community including visitors to the city;
- City of Logan residents and ratepayers;
- Schools, businesses and service providers;
- Environment and conservation groups;
- Councillors;
- Council staff.

PURPOSE OF REPORT/BACKGROUND

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the review of the City of Logan EcoForum and present options and opportunities to improve and enhance the delivery of Council's environmental engagement activities and services.

Background

Logan City Council has a proud history of positive community engagement around environmental issues within the city. This has included:

- delivery of an annual program of environmental events and activities delivering environmental workshops, children's activities, mountain hikes and guided walks;
- establishment and facilitation of focused environmental community groups such as the Logan Planning Scheme 2015 environment focus group and the Natural Environment Communication Forum held quarterly from 2009 until 2015;
- delivery of the Logan EcoForum in 2017 and 2019;
- delivery of Environmental Conservation Partnerships providing conservation and environmental extension and education services to the community since 1998;
- extensive community engagement through key projects including the Logan River Vision, City of Logan Koala Conservation Strategic Plan 2013 - 2023 and the Slacks Creek Catchment Recovery Plan;
- successful delivery of the City of Logan Waterways Summit held in 2011 leading to the development of the Logan Rivers and Wetlands Recovery Plan 2014 - 2024;
- successful broad community engagement throughout the preparation of the Logan and Albert River Visions; and
- annual hosting and delivery of the Logan Eco Action Festival (LEAF) - City of Logan's premier annual environmental event with approximately 10,000 residents and community members attending annually.

The key aims of the EcoForum and the broader suite of broader environmental engagement activities and services is to:

- provide a range of positive platforms for the community to engage and connect, and discuss and collaborate on environmental conservation in the City of Logan;
- showcase best practice and innovative environmental conservation ideas, methodologies and technologies; and
- promote, raise awareness and demonstrate Council's commitment to environmental conservation and management and the range of environmental projects and services delivered.

To further enhance our environmental engagement activities and services, a review of these services including the EcoForum has been undertaken. This review was conducted in conjunction with the Customer Experience and Community Engagement Branch to ensure a broad reach of the community was achieved and that effective and represented consultation was conducted.

The review also included consideration of the recent City Visioning surveys which highlighted high community interest in the natural environment.

Have your say - Environmental Engagement survey

The 'Have your say' community survey was conducted from 20 January to 21 February 2021 and was promoted via the monthly environmental electronic newsletter, Council's social media, inclusion in a media release, direct email to stakeholders, Council's intranet and internal staff emails.

The survey attracted 279 responses to 13 questions, survey results are contained in Attachment 1.

The community was asked a broad range of questions to give an understanding of their priorities, feedback and demographics.

Key feedback provided included:

- Ranking of priorities for environmental topics - 50% of respondents ranked habitat protection as first priority, with wildlife conservation, climate change and water quality ranking 2-4.
- 37% of respondents' preferred option for the future of community engagement around environmental topics was for the EcoForum to be delivered as part of the annual Logan Eco Action Festival (LEAF), 23% preferred an annual environmental engagement survey, 16% requested environmental engagement and education to be delivered via an online platform.
- 11% of respondents had previously attended an Eco Forum either in 2017 or 2019.
- 53% of youth (aged 10 – 25) respondents included a preference for an online forum/educational event in their responses.

City Vision surveys

Natural Environment comes up in a number of the other themes (not just in the environment theme) including Development, City Look and Feel and Recreation.

A summary of the community feedback regarding the natural environment includes:

- nature is visible throughout the city and the community knows how to protect it;
- a call for better planning to balance population increase and development with the natural environment;
- well protected green corridors preserve biodiversity and integrate the natural and built environment is highly valued; and
- the community enjoy having local places to enjoy, parklands and gardens/greenspace.

Updated Suite of Community Environmental Engagement Activities

Based on these extensive community surveys and further research, an updated suite of environmentally focussed community engagement activities is proposed. These are:

1. Deliver an annual City of Logan EcoForum in conjunction with the Logan Eco Action Festival (commencing from 2022). The format of the EcoForum will predominantly showcase new innovations and technologies in relation to environmental sustainability, with opportunities for interactive panel/audience discussions as requested through the feedback results.
2. Continue to deliver and enhance the annual Logan Eco Action Festival showcasing environmental sustainability and the environmental initiatives and programs delivered by Council.
3. Conduct an annual community environmental survey regarding topical environmental issues, policies, projects and/or plans providing the community an opportunity to inform and influence Council's decisions on these matters.
4. Continue the delivery of a range of environmental events, activities, workshops and services, and investigate opportunities to increase Council's on-line presence promoting environmental sustainability projects, environmental education and environmental events.

ANY PREVIOUS COUNCIL DECISIONS

This review was requested by Council at its meeting on 20/10/2020, Minute No.139/2020:

"That the Health, Environment & Waste Manager, in conjunction with the Customer Experience and Community Engagement Manager, be requested to undertake a review of Council's EcoForum and prepare a report to a future Planning, Economic Development and Environment Committee meeting investigating options for engaging with the community on environmental matters."

The Logan Eco Forum was originally approved by Council at its meeting of 18 October 2016, Minute No 249/2016:

“That the Environment & Sustainability Manager be delegated authority to deliver the inaugural City of Logan Environmental Forum during the fourth quarter of the 2016/2017 financial year.”

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The proposed enhanced and topical environmentally focussed community engagement activities will be funded through the Health, Environment and Waste Branch's annual recurrent budget with funds sourced from the Environmental Levy.

No additional funding is requested.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The proposed suite of activities and services are based on extensive community consultation and build on our current service delivery levels.

The enhanced and more focused Logan EcoForum and other environmental engagement activities will be showcased through increased and more targeted marketing and promotion. The annual survey will ensure EcoForum topics and event themes are engaging and relevant to the Logan community. By delivering the EcoForum at the popular Logan Eco Action Festival will further enhance participation and reach with a broader and more diverse community base.

LEGAL/POLICY

Council's Eco Forum and environmental engagement activities link directly to Council's adopted Corporate Plan 2017-2022: Green and Renewable priorities (GR1.2, 2.2 and 2.3).

A pro-active environmental engagement program facilitates environmental stewardship, education, community capacity-building, protection and enhancement of our natural environment and supports river recovery, waterway and waterbody rehabilitation and enhancement.

COMMUNITY AND OTHER CONSULTATION

Extensive community and industry consultation has been undertaken as part of this review including:

- Community feedback obtained through the 2017 and 2019 Logan EcoForum satisfaction surveys;
- Community feedback obtained through the 'Have Your Say' Environmental Engagement survey conducted from 20 January 2021 to 21 February 2021;
- Benchmarking with other Councils delivering environmental engagement activities; and
- Utilising community feedback obtained through the City Visioning campaign

In addition to the external consultation the following internal stakeholders have been consulted and generally support the outcome of this review:

- Customer Experience and Community Engagement Branch;
- Marketing and Events Branch;
- Parks Branch; and
- Health, Environment and Waste Branch.

CONCLUSION

Following the review of Council's EcoForum and environmental engagement activities, which included a community survey, the following program of annual environmental engagement activities are proposed to best deliver on the community's feedback for the City of Logan:

- an annual City of Logan EcoForum delivered in conjunction with the Logan Eco Action Festival;
- the Logan Eco Action Festival;
- an annual environmental focused community survey; and
- a range of environmental events, activities, workshops and services with an increased on-line presence of environmental focused projects, education and events.

It is proposed that this enhanced suite of environmental engagement activities be delivered utilising recurrent budget sourced from the Environmental Levy Reserve.

ATTACHMENTS TABLE

Number	Attachment Title
Attachment 1	Have your say - Environmental Engagement Activity Survey Results