

About the Wimmera Mallee Sustainability Alliance

26/8/19

Seven local governments joined the Wimmera Mallee Sustainability Alliance (WMSA) to improve sustainability in the Wimmera Mallee.

- Ararat Rural City Council, (also member of CVGA)
- Buloke Shire Council, (also member of CVGA)
- Hindmarsh Shire Council,
- Horsham Rural City Council
- Northern Grampians Shire Council
- West Wimmera Shire Council, and
- Yarriambiack Shire Council

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Submission S066
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The Alliance includes local and state government authorities and educational institutions, and community members:

- Dept of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)
- Sustainability Victoria (SV)
- Grampians Central West Waste and Resource Recovery Group (GCWWRRG)
- Wimmera Development Association (WDA)
- Federation University
- Wimmera Catchment Management Authority (WCMA)
- GWMWater

WMSA members are cooperating to address sustainability issues including:

- Improving energy efficiency;
- Minimising water use;
- Limiting waste production, and;
- Identifying areas of risk.

WMSA also cooperates with the Alliance of Alliances whose membership includes all Victorian Greenhouse and Sustainability Alliances, and WMSA is now fairly dependent on joining with their projects where suitable.

Basic funding is from Council members and volunteer time, but most funding is from grants for particular projects and is used to employ consultants and/or project workers.

What have we done so far?

Audited all member Councils and groups to show where energy use could be reduced, and recommended changes
Prepared a Wimmera–Mallee Sustainability Green Paper for community feedback, followed by a Sustainability White Paper and a Directions Statement

Supported member Councils in preparation of Sustainability and Environment Strategies

Held forums, workshops, and expos

Supported activities and programs from other groups, including education and biogas programs

Initiated the bioenergy hospital heating project which was finalised in Beaufort.

Applied for major and minor funding grants to help Councils, member organisations and our community

Initiated the 'Lighting the Regions' program which was joined by other Alliances and Councils and resulted in replacing street lights with LED globes across most of the western half of Victoria. This saves those Councils at least \$1M/yr and reduces energy use and greenhouse gas production. This program has since been taken up by Melbourne and other Councils and was recently extended to include highway lighting.

Supported Natimuk community energy project NCORE

Supported wind-farm and solar array applications and projects

Charging the regions; all WMSA councils except Hindmarsh are involved in this. Its a 100K study to investigate local gov public charging for EVs in regional and rural shires. With 43 partner councils, being led by CVGA.

Major road lighting; all WMSA councils involved, following on from lighting the regions. Ironbark have finished the design workshops with most councils and final report due soon.

Local Gov renewable energy PPA: 39 councils, a number of WMSA including Horsham and Hindmarsh are involved in this. Its about going to tender for a long term electricity contract for councils for renewable energy. Decisions for new councils by 9th August. Led by the alliances and Darebin city council, with MAV on board as the contracting agent.

What do we want to do?

Help make our environment and systems more sustainable so our community and future generations can all have an enjoyable and productive lifestyle

Coordinate Regional programs and projects to help our community cope with changing climate, by providing some equipment together with education to reduce energy, water use and waste production

Stimulate alternative energy production and distributed power supply

Help our community take up opportunities provided by changing policies and funding

Support community and other groups to implement programs such as

- energy savings and alternative energy
- biodiversity enhancement
- restore, repair, reuse and recycle

Contact the Wimmera Mallee Sustainability Alliance (WMSA)

Email: wmsa@wmsa.org.au

Facebook: [WMSA on Facebook](#)

Some salient information

Few other Council areas have an organisation like Wimmera Development Association (WDA), which manages projects for Wimmera Councils. All other Councils have formed Greenhouse or Sustainability Alliances for funded or collaborative project work similar to how WDA operates.

WDA was closely involved in the formation of WMSA, and is a member organisation of WMSA

WMSA is a member organisation of WDA.

WMSA originally involved all Council CEOs and Councillor representatives, but now mostly provides a meeting place for Councillors and environment/sustainability officers where we can discuss programs and potential projects, whereas WDA involves senior Council staff that can give approval for project investigation and/or implementation. WDA has a much stronger relationship with Councils and members than does WMSA, due to its long history and Council involvement.

Most Wimmera Southern Mallee Councils have small population and budget and can't afford extra expenditure such as the \$8000+ annual fee that most Alliances charge member Councils.

WMSA presently meets 4 times a year. WDA meets monthly.

WMSA does not employ any staff and has no structure for employment, and the previous Officer was employed through Hindmarsh Shire. WDA has a CEO, staff, and offices.

Further answers to Inquiry questions:-

1. WMSA responds to all information provided by Govt. departments and by other Alliances and sends out relevant information to all members. Councils have the opportunity to respond through WMSA or through other Alliances or WDA, or join separately with providers of the information. WMSA tries to coordinate all its Councils to respond to group offers, but generally our Councils with small population and rate income don't have time or funds or officers to support projects.
2. Many actions have been taken. Major responses are listed earlier. The many individual Council responses are not listed.
3. Government can support communities through funding project officers or facilitators of Greenhouse and Sustainability Alliances who would collect all information available, seek Council interest and support, set up relevant projects and help Councils fulfil these projects. Our small Councils do not have the funds or personnel time available to do this. Your Committee can easily see the ideas and work done by large, high-income Councils in high population areas and compare this with the results in low-population areas. A program similar to Landcare facilitator positions (for country Alliances) would help small population areas considerably to effectively fulfil actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and climate change mitigation. With a small amount of organisational support and financial help a much greater effect is possible, and we have seen this many times with other groups and programs.
4. The paid facilitator model is much more efficient and effective. And its easier to direct a facilitator paid by Government to fulfil Government objectives!

I'm sorry that I can't help much.

I am a voluntary Executive Officer for Wimmera-Mallee Sustainability Alliance and don't have the time or extended information available to put more into this. The main reasons for this situation are:-

1. Our Councils already pay into and use Wimmera Development Association for projects, thus limiting the available funds (or interest/involvement) for another project organisation – as outlined in information above
2. The amount of projects available for our Councils that need to be run outside Council staff has been very limited over more recent years, reducing the interest and ability for Councils to cooperate on 'extra' projects.

Yours Sincerely

Gil Hopkins


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