



# HUME CITY COUNCIL **LIVE GREEN NEWS**

Hume's Sustainability Newsletter  
**Summer 2021**

 [hume.vic.gov.au/environment](https://hume.vic.gov.au/environment)

Cover image by Simon Best



## Join Hume's Enviro Champions

Registrations are now open for the next Enviro Champions training program, beginning in February 2021.

The Hume Enviro Champions program provides ten weeks of free training with the aim of building participants' capacity to develop, implement and evaluate community environmental projects. It's an opportunity to:

- follow your community and/or environmental passion
- meet like-minded people
- build self confidence
- make a difference in your community and environment
- learn new skills.

Since the program commenced in 2012, over 120 community members have completed the training. The Champions have participated in over 60 community-run projects that benefit our local communities and environment.

To find out more or to express interest in participating, check out the **Hume Enviro Champions - Hume City Council** webpage or contact Jo Burton, Environmental Community Development Officer, on 0455 091 999 or email [envirochampions@hume.vic.gov.au](mailto:envirochampions@hume.vic.gov.au).



## Hume Household Solar Roll Out

If you haven't yet taken advantage of State and Federal government rebates to have solar panels installed at home, now is the perfect time to do so.

To help make the process of installing solar easier, Council has partnered with the Yarra Energy Foundation (YEF) to deliver the Hume Household Solar Roll Out. YEF have gone through a competitive process to select accredited solar supplier, Green Home Green Planet, to offer good quality systems at a reasonable price for Hume residents.

The Victorian government is offering rebates of \$1,850 with interest free loans up to the same amount, to encourage Victorians to make the switch to renewable energy (see [solar.vic.gov.au](http://solar.vic.gov.au)). Through the Hume Household Solar Roll Out, many eligible Hume households will be able to install solar with little, or even no, out of pocket expense.

Most households can save hundreds of dollars per year on electricity bills by having solar installed now – the Victorian Government indicates savings of \$890 a year for the typical Victorian home. If you register for a free, no obligation quote you will be provided with an estimate of your annual savings.

Council is delivering this program to assist residents who are vulnerable to bill stress and to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Most of Victoria's electricity still comes from greenhouse-intensive brown coal, which is contributing to climate change. Switching to solar is a great way to reduce household emissions and save money as well.

To register for a free no obligation quote visit [humesolarprogram.org.au](http://humesolarprogram.org.au) or call YEF on 1300 866 634.

## Energy Savvy Upgrades Program

Are your energy bills causing you stress? Is it hard to keep your home cool in summer or warm in winter? Home upgrades can lower your energy costs and make your home more comfortable.

Hume City Council – in collaboration with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) – is offering financial support for home upgrades to eligible residents who are having difficulty meeting their energy costs.

DELWP and Council will provide up to \$1,000 for upgrades including insulation, draught proofing, heating and cooling upgrades, shading, lighting and hot water services.

Participants pay an initial \$100 for a tailored home assessment – usually valued at around \$495. If you decide to go ahead with some of the recommended upgrades, a further contribution of up to \$800 towards those you choose to do is required to access the full \$1000 support (depending on the cost of the work).

Places are limited so take advantage of this offer now by calling the delivery partner, **Draught Busters on 1300 130 364** to check your eligibility and find out more.

If you're interested in this program but concerned about the cost of the \$100 assessment, please contact Sushant Gurung, Household Energy Officer on 0447 772 429 to find out if you're eligible for the \$250 Power Saving Bonus and to get help claiming it.



## Bring Your Bills Day



Meet experts from the water, power and service sectors and receive free, confidential advice at Bring Your Bills Day.

If you have high energy or water bills, you may not be getting the best rates. You might be able to access reduced rates, concession prices or hardship payments.

Energy efficiency options could help you keep your home warm in winter and cool in summer without costing too much. You can also get advice and assistance on dealing with your energy or water retailer if you have an ongoing dispute.

**Broadmeadows Community Hub**  
**Thursday 11 March**  
**11am – 2pm**

To RSVP visit [humebybd.eventbrite.com.au](http://humebybd.eventbrite.com.au) or call Sushant Gurung, Household Energy Officer on 0447 772 429 for more information.

## Wombat sightings

Did you know that Hume's parks and reserves are home to lots of wildlife and if you keep your eyes open, you could spot something very special.



Local bird watcher Peter Mollison from Friends of Merri Creek, was enjoying an evening walk, when he spotted a curious wombat by its burrow in the grasslands of Bababi Marning (Cooper Street Grassland). Peter snapped a few shots of the furry marsupial as it wandered around the shrubbery.

This was an exciting sighting, as wombats are under threat from land development and roadside accidents. As a community, we need to ensure these furry creatures are respected and looked after.

If you snap some of Hume's wonderful wildlife and would like to share it, email [environment@hume.vic.gov.au](mailto:environment@hume.vic.gov.au).

If you see injured wildlife that needs rescuing please contact Wildlife Victoria immediately on 1300 094 535 or report it at [wildlifelife.vic.gov.au](http://wildlifelife.vic.gov.au).

## Return of the Growling Grass Frogs!

Following a significant upgrade of Frog Court wetland by Council in partnership with the Growling Grass Frog Trust, Melbourne Water and Yarra Valley Water, the endangered frog has returned to the wetland it once called home!

The latest installations of aquatic plants, rock beaching and improved water quality has improved habitat values for the Growling Grass Frog (GGF) and is also improving the quality of storm water discharged to Merri Creek from the upstream industrial catchment. The distinctive calls of the Growling Grass Frog were heard during a night survey conducted in November.

The wetland upgrade was the first to make use of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's (DELWP) Habitat Design Standards for the Growling Grass Frog. Ongoing ecological monitoring of the endangered species is planned at the site.



Frog Court, Craigieburn – image by Simon Best



Growling Grass Frog – image by Anna Lanigan



Latham's Snipe – image by Beverley Van Praagh

## Latham's Snipe

Hume's wetlands have become a summer destination for this long-distance migratory bird.

Latham's Snipe are a threatened migratory bird that spend Spring and Summer in Australia before heading back to Japan for their breeding season. With their long, curved bill, they feed on lots of different invertebrates as they wade through freshwater wetlands. Some birds have been tracked on their migration, taking three days to fly straight to Japan. Other birds take a more leisurely return, stopping off at wetlands along the northeast coast of Australia.

Anna Lanigan, a well-known local bird watcher, was quite lucky to spot Latham's Snipe in Roxburgh Park in 2014, with the birds' brown-speckled feathers camouflaging them in the dense reeds that they roost in during the day. To count them, they must be flushed from cover.

Beverley Van Praagh, a Hume resident, has also spotted them in Craigieburn, in 2018 and in early 2020. Last Spring, Beverley decided to seek them out, flushing 34 birds from a wetland along Aitken Creek. Ecologists consider anything above 18 birds to be a significant population. Council is very grateful that Beverley informed us about this important species inhabiting our local wetlands. A threatened plant, the River Swamp Wallaby-grass, is also found here.

With the help of community citizen scientists, Council will monitor these special birds and manage their wetland habitat appropriately. At some dusk surveys, the birds were observed leaving these wetlands to fly off to other feeding grounds at night – heading south-west on one occasion, then north-east on another – so it seems they are feeding at various places in Hume City. In November, as part of the national Latham's Snipe survey effort, 19 birds were flushed from this Craigieburn wetland. While the wetland has been drying out, the recent rainfall will hopefully enable the birds to stay for another month or two.

## Summer snake safety

While we are enjoying the summer sun, so are the snakes. In areas where snakes might live, it's important to wear long pants and covered shoes, and stay on paths.

What should you do when you encounter a snake in a public area or on your property?

- Stay calm, if you stand still the snake is less likely to hurt you
- Do not approach or attempt to catch/harm the snake
- When safe to do so, calmly move away from the snake to a safe distance and keep it under observation
- Keep children, pets and others away from the area where the snake was seen.

Although snake bites are rare and deaths from snake bites even rarer, it's important to know the protocols if you or someone you know happens to get bitten, as some snake bites can be venomous.

If you have been bitten by a snake, calling 000 immediately for emergency assistance and advice over the phone while an ambulance is dispatched.

If someone else has been bitten by a snake, call an ambulance, don't move them (unless it is really necessary to make them safe), keep them calm and reassure them. Administer first aid – CPR if required or a pressure immobilisation bandage and splint. Don't wash, suck, cut or tourniquet the bite and don't chase the snake.

Visit [stjohnvic.com.au/news/snake-bite-first-aid-tips](http://stjohnvic.com.au/news/snake-bite-first-aid-tips) for further information.

Council has a snake relocation service for snakes on private property or in public areas where they may be a risk. Call Customer Service on 9205 2200 to find out more.



## Sustainable Subdivisions Framework

Hume Council has collaborated with 16 other Victorian councils and project partners to develop a brand-new tool to help us create more sustainable communities – the Sustainable Subdivisions Framework.

Council oversees the design and implementation of new housing and industrial estates. The layout of roads, infrastructure and open spaces can only be designed and established once, as this has a permanent impact on the land. So it's important to take a long term view and consider environmental impacts and the impact of climate change.

The Sustainable Subdivisions Framework identifies seven categories that can assist in creating environmentally sustainable subdivisions:

- Site Layout and Liveability
- Streets and Public Realm
- Energy
- Ecology
- Integrated Water Management (IWM)
- Urban Heat
- Circular Economy (Materials and Waste).

For further information visit [casbe.org.au/resources/sustainable-subdivisions-resources](https://casbe.org.au/resources/sustainable-subdivisions-resources).

## Keep both your fruit and wildlife safe

There's nothing like fresh fruit from your own garden, and it can be challenging to safely keep birds and other wildlife from helping themselves.

It is common for households with fruit trees to protect their precious crop from birds using nets. If you can poke your finger through the net however, it is not safe for wildlife. Native birds and animals, especially flying foxes, can get trapped in nets and experience serious injuries and die.

New regulations are coming into effect in 2021 to ban the use of dangerous nets with large holes – so if you have some at home please dispose of them and upgrade to the new safer version.

For more information visit [agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria/pocta-act-1986](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria/pocta-act-1986).



## Helping residents give waste a second life

Did you know you can book a hard waste service even if you rent your home?

All residents living in the Hume City Council area can get:

- up to one-six cubic meter collection, or
- two-three cubic metre collections from home.

We've made some recent updates to the **hard waste collection service** to ensure the timely removal of residential hard waste from the front of your property, with a renewed focus on the recovery and reuse of items. Some improvements are:

- the implementation of an online booking system to allow 24/7 booking availability
- the introduction of an SMS alert system to remind you of your collection

- better recovery of materials through the recycling of additional products including couches, white goods and e-waste.

As the warm days continue, we encourage you to also find creative and fun ways to avoid items ending up in landfill. You could:

- learn to make your own recycled sculpture garden
- post your upcycled vintage items online
- host a garage sale BBQ and meet your neighbours.

Visit [hume.vic.gov.au/waste](https://hume.vic.gov.au/waste) to find out more about Council's waste services in Hume.

## Hume's Sustainability Report

The Sustainability Report summarises the key sustainable actions and environmental outcomes in Hume City, undertaken by Council and the community in 2018/19. Here are some of our key findings.

### Hume residents rate the importance of the environment

- The number of Hume residents that indicate sustainability is important continued to increase with an impressive 92.6 per cent of respondents in 2018/19 indicating environmental sustainability was important or very important to them.

### Hume households, businesses and community organisations install more solar

- In 2018/19, over 2,240 small-scale solar systems (systems up to 99 kW that are eligible for the Small Technology Certificate rebate) were installed on houses, businesses and community sites in Hume City. This was almost double the number of systems installed in 2017/18, increasing the total number of installations by 20 per cent and bringing the total number of installs since 2001 to 13,720.
- Eight residents benefited from the new Environmental Scholarship – introduced by Council in 2018/19 – to undertake courses in permaculture design, soil health, habitat conservation and land management, research into sustainable tourism, and behaviour change design (see **Environmental Scholarships – Hume City Council**).
- In 2018/19, there were 2,254 community participations in 50 nature-related events. This included 14 workshops, attended by 725 people interested in popular topics such as bird watching, citizen science, and gardening with native plants. At 17 Greening events, 605 people helped to plant 8,918 seedlings along Hume creeks and in parks and reserves.



There were 18 environmental education engagements with 12 schools, where 924 students learnt about various aspects of Hume's biodiversity.

- In March 2019, Hume City Council resolved to purchase 100 per cent carbon-neutral, renewable energy when current electricity contracts are next renewed. This will include all electricity use for Council buildings, appliances and public lighting and is projected to reduce Council's GHG emissions by around 27 per cent or 17,500 tCO<sub>2</sub>e a year (equivalent to removing 4,385 average Australian cars from the road per year).

The Sustainability Report is a great overview of Council and community achievements, but it doesn't gloss over the challenges either.

Read the full report at [hume.vic.gov.au/sustainabilityreport](https://hume.vic.gov.au/sustainabilityreport).



Blue-green algae in Spavin Lake – image by Stephanie Nicholls

## Spavin Lake algal bloom

Western Water has informed Council of a blue-green algal bloom at Spavin Lake in Sunbury.

People and animals should avoid contact with the water at Spavin Lake until advised it is safe.

If you do come into contact with the water, remove wet clothing and wash/rinse off any affected area if necessary. If any health-related symptoms are present, consult a doctor and avoid further exposure. Algal blooms can last as long as there are favourable conditions, including warmth, sunlight and low flow rates. Blooms can last from weeks to months and it is difficult to predict when they will clear.

Follow our website or **Hume City Council's Facebook** for updates.



## Deepen your connection with nature!

Interested in finding out how to attract wildlife to your garden, improve the health of your plants and veggies, get involved in community sustainability projects and make a difference?

We run free events and programs all throughout the year so you can learn and share your knowledge, meet like minded people and be proactive in making Hume a better place, whether it's by learning how to provide habitat in your backyard, or helping our precious local environment.

Find out more at **Healthy Soil in a Wildlife Garden – Hume City Council** and register, tune in, or sign up for workshops, webinars and more.

## Reconciliation Mosaics Trail

The Reconciliation Mosaics Trail is an inspiring new addition to Hume's growing public art collection.

The Reconciliation Mosaics Trail began its life as a series of hands-on Masterclasses several years ago led by Indigenous artist Karen Lovett with community artist Libby McKinnon. Class participants worked side by side, placing each small glass tile into a black and white template – slowly bringing each panel to life over several hours as they shared stories and food.

You can watch the video and/or explore the trails across the City using the Reconciliation Trail Map.

More info: **Reconciliation Mosaics Trail - Hume City Council**.



## Review: *Big weather (and how to survive it)*

An insight into the experiences of first responders, emergency service workers and local communities during extreme weather events.

*Big weather (and how to survive it)* is a three-part documentary hosted by ABC's Craig Reucassel (*War on Waste, Fight for Planet A, The Chaser*).

Australia is already experiencing significant climate impacts including last summer's devastating fires, drought, recent storms in northern NSW, coastal erosion, high winds, floods and typhoons in tropical Queensland. Many local communities in affected areas are empowering themselves to prepare, survive and recover.

This documentary series addresses the complexities of climate change impacts, while encouraging us to know our neighbours, to plan together and strengthen our communities to support each other through difficult weather events. Watch the documentary on [iview.abc.net.au/show/big-weather-and-how-to-survive-it](http://iview.abc.net.au/show/big-weather-and-how-to-survive-it).



Hume City Council recognises the rich Aboriginal heritage within the municipality and acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, which includes the Gunung-Willam-Balluk clan, as the Traditional Custodians of this land. Council embraces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander living cultures as a vital part of Australia's identity and recognises, celebrates and pays respect to the existing family members of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and to Elders past, present and future.

To help save paper, let us know if you would like to receive Live Green News by email only. Feedback and contributions are welcome and can be emailed to [environment@hume.vic.gov.au](mailto:environment@hume.vic.gov.au) or call 9205 2200.

 [hume.vic.gov.au/environment](http://hume.vic.gov.au/environment)

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