



Environmental Strategy

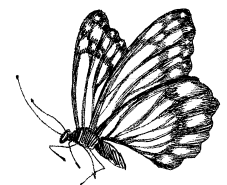
2026 – 2030





Contents

Chair’s message	2
Executive summary	3
About SMCT	4
Our commitment to environmental sustainability	5
Our achievements	7
Introducing our Environmental Strategy	8
Biodiversity	9
Sustainable resource use	11
Energy use	13
Waste and resource recovery	14
Emissions	15
Climate resilience	17
Our sustainable future	19



Acknowledgement of Country

The Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (SMCT) respectfully acknowledges the Bunurong Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our beautiful grounds are located and pay respect to Elders past and present.

We recognise and respect First Nations culture, beliefs and connection to Country with traditions and customs that have existed for over 60,000 years, and we are privileged to share the lands we live on and work with. SMCT is committed to working alongside First Nations peoples and communities in the delivery of our Environmental Strategy.



Chair's message

I am proud to present the *Environmental Strategy 2026–30* for the Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (SMCT). This strategy sets a clear direction for the next five years. It will guide how we respond to environmental and climate-related challenges, while continuing to create memorial spaces that honour tradition, support diverse community needs and protect the natural environment.

SMCT cares for places that are deeply important to the communities we serve. We work in close partnership with Traditional Custodians and local, cultural and faith communities to ensure their needs are understood and respected, while balancing these with the long-term care of our sites.

Our commitment to environmental sustainability has delivered exceptional results to date. In our inaugural Environmental Strategy 2022–25, SMCT exceeded all environmental targets, including a 55.2 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, 100 per cent renewable energy use, a 35.5 percent reduction in waste to landfill, and improved biodiversity across our sites. These results show that cemeteries can meet their perpetual care responsibilities while also leading in environmental performance. They are the product of teams working closely together with industry and community to innovate and collaborate in this space.

This approach allows us to adopt new approaches to environmental sustainability, in partnership with community. For example, Project Cultivate, an innovative idea to improve biodiversity through revegetation of older cemeteries using indigenous plants has been embraced nationally by industry, local government and of course our very own Melbourne General Cemetery community and beyond.

Together, we create better. Through strong partnerships and responsible decision-making, we are building a resilient and environmentally sustainable future for all.

Dr Vanda Fortunato
Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust Chair



Executive summary

SMCT manages 374 hectares of public land and waterways across 11 cemeteries and memorial parks in metropolitan Melbourne and the Bass Coast. We hold a unique responsibility and commitment to protect and enhance these spaces for generations to come.

Our commitment goes beyond maintaining places of remembrance. We aim to transform our cemeteries into vibrant, sustainable landscapes that nurture biodiversity, restore natural habitats, and create spaces where communities and ecosystems thrive together. This is not just about meeting expectations – it’s about leading the sector in environmental stewardship.

A foundation for change

Through our first Environmental Strategy (2022–25), we established a baseline for excellence, consolidating years of work SMCT had done across all its business areas. Initiatives were brought together under one strategy, with the goal of meeting or exceeding the Victorian Government’s targets for emissions reduction, renewable energy, waste and resource recovery, and biodiversity.

We are proud of our success, with achievements that include:

- Initiating a world-standard Environmental Management System to help us track our progress, identify gaps, and work more collaboratively with stakeholders in the future.
- Reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by more than 55%, far surpassing our original goal.
- A 35% decrease in waste to landfill, alongside a 125% increase in food and organic materials recovery.
- Use of 100% renewable electricity across all sites, with a sixfold increase in renewable energy use since 2021.
- Planting more than half a million native plants through biodiversity initiatives – restoring habitats and improving ecological health. Key initiatives included creating a microforest at Springvale Botanical Cemetery and the virtual elimination of herbicide use at Melbourne General Cemetery through Project Cultivate.

Shaping a sustainable future together

Achieving our environmental vision means taking actions that are respectful of culture, heritage, and community. We take a collaborative approach to sustainability, working across the organisation and with our community and stakeholders to enhance environmental outcomes.

We continue to seek guidance on cultural knowledge, practices, and traditions. We are proud to work in partnership with the Bunurong Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our cemeteries and memorial parks are located.

All our partnerships allow us to understand cultural and faith practices, share knowledge, explore innovative solutions, and lead the way in creating and maintaining environmentally responsible spaces and services together.

A promise in perpetuity

Building on strong foundational achievements and partnerships, our Environmental Strategy 2026–30 reflects our ambition to go further, be smarter, and more deeply embed sustainability across our operations. Our approach aligns with Victorian Government targets, focusing on:

Sustainable resource use – renewable energy, water conservation, and responsible procurement.

Reducing emissions – continuing our progress to net zero.

Waste reduction – Avoiding waste and maximising resource recovery.

Climate resilience and biodiversity – restoring habitats and protecting ecosystems.

This strategy is more than a plan – it’s a promise to our communities, future generations, and the environment. By embedding sustainability into every decision, SMCT will remain a trusted guardian of memorial spaces, helping to shape a healthier and more resilient future.



About SMCT

At SMCT, we believe cemeteries and memorial parks are more than places of interment; they are spaces for reflection, remembrance, and connection. We are committed to creating sustainable environments where families and communities can honour loved ones, share stories, and celebrate life in ways that are meaningful to them.

Established in 2010, Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust (SMCT) is a Victorian Government public entity reporting to the Minister for Health. We are entrusted with providing cemetery, cremation, memorial, and supporting services in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

SMCT manages 11 public cemeteries and memorial parks, covering 374 hectares of land. These include historically significant sites like Melbourne General Cemetery (MGC) and St Kilda Cemetery (STK), and high-activity sites such as Springvale Botanical Cemetery (SBC) and Bunurong Memorial Park (BMP).

We work closely with Traditional Custodians and cultural and faith communities to create spaces that respect and reflect the traditions and values of those we serve. Our cemeteries and memorial parks are continuing to transform into community spaces that nurture connection, protect heritage, and promote biodiversity and sustainability.

Our purpose, vision, and values

Purpose: We create and maintain cemeteries and memorial parks where people can honour and celebrate their loved ones.

Vision: Be a sector leader in cemeteries and memorial parks and in supporting our diverse communities as they grieve, honour, and celebrate life.

Values: At each cemetery and memorial park, we pledge to our colleagues and community that we will act with:

- Passion – commitment of heart and mind
- Respect – by valuing every voice
- Integrity – doing what is right
- Dedication – to the needs of our clients and people
- Empathy – to listen and reflect with sensitivity.





Our commitment to environmental sustainability

The health of our natural environment is more important than ever. Issues such as climate change, waste management and energy conservation are front of mind for communities, governments, and organisations. Simultaneously, rapid population growth and urban development are placing increased pressure on land and natural resources, making sustainable planning essential.

At SMCT, we are proud of our environmental leadership, and we are committed to setting the sector's benchmark for sustainability. Our Environmental Strategy outlines how we will continue to embed environmentally responsible practices and prepare for a climate-resilient future.

Trends shaping our operating environment also inform this Strategy including:

- **Demographic change:** Victoria's population is projected to grow by 1.7% annually over the next decade, with those aged over 65 increasing by 2.3% per year to 2041¹.
- **Environmental expectations:** Communities and governments expect stronger sustainability outcomes, including lower emissions from burial and cremation services.
- **Stakeholder collaboration:** Partnerships with other cemetery trusts, industry bodies, and local governments are key to driving positive change.
- **Land availability:** Limited land and pressure from urban development mean we must optimise existing spaces, protecting heritage and history, while looking to future needs.

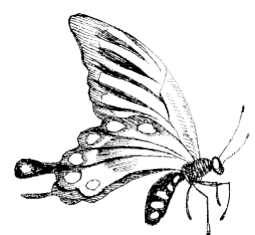
These challenges also bring opportunities to innovate, collaborate and lead the sector in environmental practices. By focusing on climate readiness, waste reduction, and resource efficiency, SMCT is committed to creating memorial spaces that contribute to a more sustainable Victoria.

Embedding sustainable practices

SMCT's Environmental Policy underpins our long-standing commitment to the environment. It guides our Environmental Strategy and aligns with internationally recognised standards, Victorian Government strategies and policies, and our own organisational values and priorities. This alignment ensures a whole-of-organisation approach, strengthening collaboration, accountability, and embedding sustainability into everything we do.

The implementation of a world-standard Environmental Management System (EMS) is central to our policy. Through the EMS, we will monitor and improve performance in key areas, including:

- Environmental protection and pollution prevention
- Sustainable resource use
- Water and energy conservation
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Biodiversity and habitat restoration.



¹ Department of Transport and Planning, *Victoria in future 2023: population and household projections to 2051*, November 2023.



For the long-term benefit of our communities, our policy also commits us to:

- ensuring environmental impacts and assessments are integral to decision making and planning
- fostering a culture of low environmental impact, including seeking low environmental impact options for products and services
- a 'precautionary principle': where significant uncertainty exists about a product or practice's environmental harm, we will cease its use as soon as practicable
- creating awareness amongst our team members, funeral directors, suppliers, and customers about sustainable practices, products, and initiatives
- collaboration and consultation with other Class A and Class B cemeteries on new sustainability initiatives and technologies, including provision of low environmental impact burial and funeral products
- delivering timely and transparent environmental performance reports to key stakeholders.

Our sustainability commitments can only be achieved through strong partnerships. We will continue to collaborate and lead with integrity, meet regulatory requirements, and respond to growing expectations for environmental action.









Our achievements

Our first Environmental Strategy (2022–25) identified initiatives from across the organisation that together ensured our activities were environmentally conscious and guided by sustainable practices. It represented our commitment to the community that we will manage our environmental responsibility to industry-leading standards.

The inaugural Strategy established high-impact targets to ensure we made considerable progress towards our goals. An independent review concluded that SMCT successfully met or exceeded all its 2025 environmental targets. The progress we delivered provides us with renewed impetus to refresh our commitments and obligations towards sustainable practices for the benefit of our communities and the planet.

Our key achievements under our previous Strategy included:

 Climate resilience and biodiversity	 Renewable energy use	 Waste and resource recovery	 Greenhouse gas emissions reduction
500,000 native plants and grasses for Project Cultivate (MGC)	100% renewable electricity used across sites	35.3% reduced waste to landfill	55.2% emissions decrease
4,280 native plants and wildflowers for SBC Dianella Microforest and Mountford Drive swale	6x increase in renewable energy proportion used	125% increase food and organics recovery	1.6x exceeded target for emissions reduction
100% reduction of insecticide use at SBC	Solar installation at MGC, SBC and BMP	Recycling introduced for uniforms, stationery and organics	Natural Burials created standards and fact sheets for employees and community members





SMCT’s Environmental Strategy

2026-30

Our Environmental Strategy 2026–30 reaffirms SMCT’s commitment to a sustainable and resilient future – one that balances environmental responsibility with operational excellence.

This strategy creates a clear pathway for us to reduce our environmental impact, use resources responsibly, and deliver tangible benefits for SMCT and our communities. Over the next five years, we will implement initiatives across four key areas that protect the environment, enhance efficiency, and reduce regulatory risk:

- Sustainable resource use – advancing renewable energy use, water conservation, and responsible procurement.
- Emissions reduction – meeting and exceeding targets to reduce GHG emissions.
- Waste and resource recovery – decreasing waste to landfill by thinking differently about how to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste materials.
- Climate resilience and biodiversity – restoring natural habitats, strengthening ecosystems, and mitigating climate change impacts.

This strategy commits SMCT to meet or exceed Victoria’s targets for emissions reduction, waste and resource recovery, renewable energy use, and biodiversity, ensuring our actions today create lasting value for generations to come.

Figure 1. SMCT’s environmental targets

Target/measure (2022 baseline)	FY2025	FY2030	FY2035	FY2045	FY2050
Renewable energy use	✓ 100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions	✓ 35%	>50%	>80%	100%	100%
Divert waste from landfill	✓ 25%	80%	85%	90%	90%
Reduce food and organics waste	✓ 25%	50%	80%	85%	90%
Reduce potable water use	NA	20%	25%	50%	50%
Sustainable procurement	NA	Increase in reused or recycled content materials used in projects and operations			
Biodiversity	FY2037 - Net gain in the overall extent and condition of natural habitats				

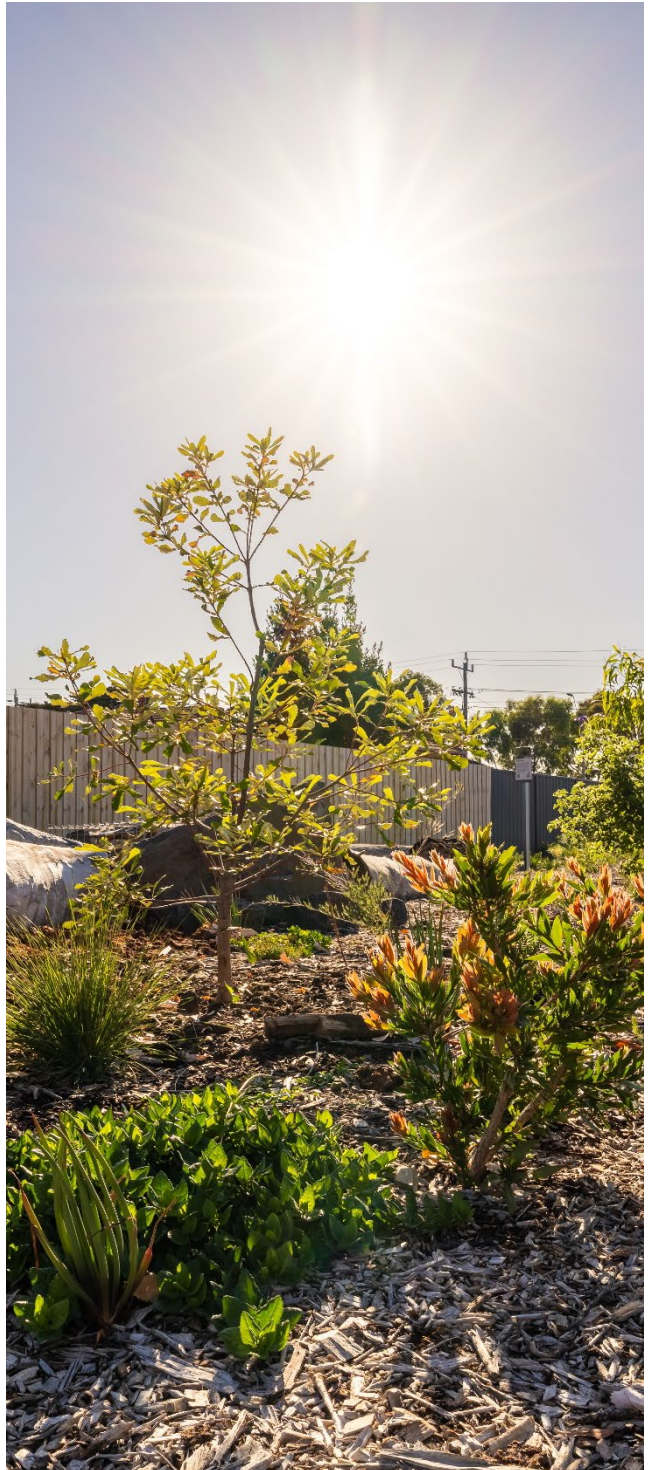


Biodiversity

Biodiversity is essential for human survival and refers simply to the variety of life on Earth, from microorganisms to mammals, and from forests to coral reefs. When we maintain or increase biodiversity, we protect and restore our natural environment. This plays a critical role in reducing carbon emissions and building climate resilience.

The 11 cemeteries and memorial parks that SMCT manages are biodiverse, supporting a wide variety of plant and animal life. This includes some threatened native species, and some species that are found nowhere else in the surrounding local areas. Habitats at our sites also include patches of remnant indigenous vegetation, some of which are of state and national significance.

Our two largest sites, Springvale Botanical Cemetery and Bunurong Memorial Park, are home to more than 17,000 trees combined, many of which are considered environmentally significant. These include a diverse mix of indigenous, native and exotic species that provide important habitat and food sources for a wide range of wildlife. This rich urban canopy supports many bird species and continues to attract birdwatching groups to our sites.





Our biodiversity commitment

SMCT is committed to protecting and enhancing biodiversity across our sites to support resilient ecosystems into the future. Our Environmental Strategy formalises this commitment by guiding actions that restore, safeguard, and preserve natural habitats for current and future generations.

Our commitment will support local council biodiversity strategies for each of our sites' surrounding municipalities. It will also contribute to the Victorian Government's biodiversity targets in the *Protecting Victoria's Environment – Biodiversity 2037* plan.

To strengthen biodiversity outcomes, SMCT has developed a comprehensive Biodiversity Strategy and commenced initiatives that are already transforming our landscapes. A flagship example is Project Cultivate, our award-winning horticultural project at Melbourne General Cemetery. Following its success, we are scaling this innovative approach to other historic sites, reinforcing our sector leadership in sustainable cemetery management.

Other initiatives we will undertake include:

A flora and fauna inventory: We will develop and maintain a comprehensive flora and fauna inventory to support environmental management and biodiversity conservation efforts. This will include collecting and maintaining data and establishing reporting processes to track progress and inform our future planning.

Improved biodiversity resilience: To achieve this, we will select vegetation suited to specific habitats, prioritising drought-tolerant, climate-ready species for new plantings. Additionally, we will assess the potential impacts of climate change on all species at our sites.

Pest and weed control: We will complete and roll out our Integrated Pest Management Strategy to ensure effective, sustainable control of pest species. We will also maintain active surveillance for high-risk environmental weeds and apply targeted control measures as required.

Habitat creation: We will undertake habitat creation works, such as microforest and woody meadow installations, to maximise vegetation density and biodiversity. This will include the expansion of Project Cultivate to appropriate cemeteries.

Species management: We will finalise and implement our Horticultural Assets Management Plan. It will guide our ongoing management of native and non-native species, ensuring biodiversity and resilience. We will continue to update our Tree Management Plan to ensure our tree replacement strategy and tailored nutrient and water care regimes to maintain healthy landscapes.





Sustainable resource use

All the resources we use in our daily lives are finite. Sustainability means seeking to use those resources wisely so that they are available for future generations to use.

SMCT is already working hard to prioritise sustainability at our sites. At Springvale Botanical Cemetery and Bunurong Memorial Park, we've introduced goats for targeted weed management, reducing herbicide requirements in sensitive landscapes. Additionally, several sites now support populations of ladybirds, lacewings, and aphidius wasps, which are natural predators that manage aphids on roses without pesticides.

We support circular economy principles, which is a system designed to keep materials in circulation through maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling, and composting. This commitment is evident through our sustainable procurement practices, such as purchasing recycled content furniture, tree stakes, and lawn vases. We have also incorporated permeable concrete made from recycled materials into projects including new bin infrastructure footings, tree surrounds, and footpaths, reducing waste and lowering our environmental footprint.

The use of recycled organic compost and mulch has been actively prioritised across our sites and our biodiversity projects including Project Cultivate at Melbourne General Cemetery, Dianella Microforest and Mountford Drive swale restoration projects at Springvale Botanical Cemetery. Project Cultivate alone utilised over 5,500 m³ of recycled mulch, significantly reducing waste and improving soil health. Additionally, we repurpose fallen trees for environmental and community benefits, transforming logs into seating and creating hollow habitats for native fauna, reinforcing our circular economy principles.

Our sustainability commitment

SMCT is committed to a future where we prioritise materials that support the circular economy and generate low levels of greenhouse gas emissions to produce. To achieve this, we will develop our Sustainable Procurement Strategy and Policy, which commits us to:

Packaging efficiency: Whenever possible, we will use products with minimal and/or fully recyclable packaging. We will continue to build on our past accomplishments such as sustainable floristry packaging which saw us eliminating plastic wrapping and products. We have also stopped using single use plastic packaging since 2023, in line with the Victorian government ban. We will also continue using 100% recycled plastic lawn vases.

Sustainable procurement and materials substitution: We will adopt principles of sustainable procurement across all our sites. This means that we will prioritise the procurement of products and services with a low carbon footprint and with environmentally friendly practices where suitable.

Logistics and supplier agreements: Where possible, we will prioritise procurement of products and services from local suppliers to reduce emissions from transport. We will also review and update supplier agreements to incorporate best practice building and infrastructure requirements.





Our commitment to water conservation

Our 2026–30 Strategy builds on previous water conservation initiatives and the achievements of our Water Management Strategy by setting a new target to reduce potable water use. Because there are no Victorian Government benchmarks for commercial water consumption, we have adopted guidance from targets established by local councils where our sites operate.

SMCT has made a commitment to reduce potable water use by 20% by 2030 by increasing reliance on alternative water sources. A key element of this strategy is our Biodiversity Plan, which promotes water efficiency through planting native and indigenous species that require less irrigation, as well as climate-ready species that are more resilient to drought and extreme heat.

Other efforts to help us meet our water targets include:

Improved rainwater harvesting processes: Rainwater harvesting is an efficient way to collect and use this precious resource. We can use rainwater for irrigation, cleaning, and

bathroom applications and maximise our current rainwater harvesting. We will explore opportunities to install new rainwater harvesting infrastructure across our sites.

Water efficiency: We will provide training and resources that promote practical behaviors such as using water wisely, fixing leaks promptly, using water-efficient appliances, and adopting smart cleaning practices. Visual reminders like signage will reinforce these habits, helping us achieve our goal of reducing potable water use.

Stormwater management: Stormwater can carry litter, sediment, and debris, which degrade ecosystems and water quality. To address this, we will review and upgrade our stormwater management systems to align with best practices. A key initiative will be implementing a stormwater quality monitoring program, ensuring that alternative water sources used for irrigation meet high environmental standards.



SMCT harvests stormwater for irrigation use at Springvale Botanical Cemetery



Energy use

SMCT consumes a significant amount of energy to deliver our services effectively. This includes powering our crematoriums, buildings, lighting, appliances, and outdoor tools and equipment.

Global momentum is shifting toward renewable energy adoption, particularly in electricity generation. As a Class A cemetery trust, SMCT has taken strong sector leadership by transitioning to 100% renewable electricity, a significant milestone we achieved under our 2022-25 Environmental Strategy. We accomplished this through solar optimisation projects and exclusive procurement of electricity from certified green sources.

Building on our success, we continue to source electricity in the most environmentally responsible way, and we are also expanding our renewable energy initiatives. SMCT's ongoing efforts will continue to prioritise clean energy solutions across our operations, reinforcing our sector leadership in environmental sustainability.

As part of our commitment to strengthening renewable energy capacity, SMCT expanded solar power generation across three sites under the 2022–25 Environmental Strategy. This included several system upgrades, including:

- Decommissioning inefficient solar systems at Bunurong Memorial Park and Springvale Botanical Cemetery Crematorium.
- Installing new solar systems at Bunurong Memorial Park (99kW), Springvale Botanical Cemetery (99kW), Melbourne General Cemetery's St. Michael of the Cross Mausoleum (13.2kW) and St. Mary of the Cross Mausoleum (18.48kW).
- Completing lighting upgrades at Pieta Mausolea in Cheltenham Memorial Park and Springvale Botanical Cemetery.

Our approach to energy use

Building on what we delivered under our previous Environmental Strategy, we will continue to optimise our solar power generation initiatives. Our goal is to progressively increase the capacity and efficiency of solar power systems by 2030. This initiative will complement our continued purchase of certified green energy and substantially increase our proportion of renewable energy use.

Our Environmental Strategy 2026-2030 will see SMCT transform our energy use through several projects and initiatives:

Energy efficient lighting and equipment: We will replace inefficient lighting with LED technology, install smart lighting systems, and upgrade to energy-efficient appliances where possible.

Maximising solar power: SMCT already uses solar panels as part of our commitment to clean energy. We will expand solar installations across all sites to maximise renewable generation.

Purchasing renewable energy: We will continue sourcing certified renewable electricity through the Victorian Health Building Authority, building on our achievement of 100% renewable electricity.

Future options for natural gas alternatives

Building on our renewable electricity achievements, SMCT is exploring innovative cremation technologies to reduce natural gas dependency.

Through initiatives that the Victorian Government's Gas Substitution Roadmap supports, we will consider future opportunities to use hydrogen as a backup power source.

We will also investigate electric and hybrid cremators as green alternatives to natural gas cremators. These projects reflect our commitment to pioneering low-emission solutions and advancing our environmental leadership within the cemetery sector.



Waste and resource recovery

SMCT has a long-standing commitment to reducing waste. This includes prioritising recycling and incorporating environmentally responsible materials into our operations whenever possible. This commitment is embedded in our Environmental Strategy and is implemented through our 2023 Waste Strategy.

The Waste Strategy sets clear priorities for initiatives that prevent waste, enhance resource recovery, and improve operational efficiency. It also focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and maximising material reuse within a circular economy framework.

Between 2022 and 2025, SMCT achieved a 35.3% reduction in general waste to landfill, surpassing our original target of achieving 25% by 2025. This success clearly reflects our commitment to innovative waste management and sustainable practices.

Key initiatives driving this outcome included:

- Garden organics recovery through on-site composting and mulching at Springvale Botanical Cemetery.
- Infrastructure upgrades that included installation of permanent bin systems and public organics bins for used flowers.
- Expanded recycling streams for disposable coffee cups, uniforms, batteries, e-waste, stationery, and metals.
- Sustainable floristry practices to reduce plastic packaging waste.

These efforts helped us exceed our waste reduction goals and strengthened our sector leadership in environmental stewardship and resource recovery.

Our approach to waste and resource recovery

Guided by our Environmental Strategy, our Waste Strategy focuses on significantly reducing landfill waste, enhancing recycling efforts, and increasing the use of recycled materials across our operations.

Our 2026-30 commitments include:

Improved waste separation and recycling: We will build on our current waste separation and recycling efforts. This will include verification of recycling processes to ensure recyclables are not 'contaminated' (i.e. non-recyclable items don't end up in recycling bins). This will mean working closely with our waste and recycling contractors to assess and affirm best practice.

Garden organics recovery: We will seek opportunities to enhance current composting and mulching practices at Springvale Botanical Cemetery. We will also evaluate options for integrating organics recovery into future projects and site development plans.

Food waste recovery: We will maintain efforts to reduce food waste through initiatives focused on avoidance and recovery. This will include providing food organics bins and delivering a targeted education campaign. We will also explore potential partnerships with food donation programs to support communities and further minimise food waste.

Waste education: We will develop and deliver an education program to encourage correct use of recycling and organics bins, aiming to reduce contamination and improve the quality of recovered resources.

Problematic materials: We will develop and implement a plan to eliminate the use of polystyrene, plastics, and wire in floral arrangements for crematoriums, chapels, and burial services. It is expected this plan will include establishing a recycling system and promoting the adoption of biodegradable materials.

Waste audits: Audits will be conducted periodically to track our progress on meeting our 2030 waste targets.





Emissions

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions refer to the release of gases that trap heat in Earth's atmosphere, contributing to global warming and climate change. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the most significant of these gases. As the world aims to reduce CO₂ emissions through moving towards a low-carbon future, SMCT is playing its part.

Guided by our 2022–25 Environmental Strategy, we made significant progress in identifying our GHG emission sources and we reduced emissions across our sites and operations through targeted actions. Key initiatives included enhancing waste management systems to increase recovery of organics and commingled recyclables and purchasing 100% of our electricity from certified renewable sources, eliminating emissions associated with electricity generation.

Through these actions, SMCT surpassed its emissions reduction target of 35%, achieving a 55.2% reduction – more than one and a half times higher than the original goal. This performance also exceeded the Victorian Government's 2025 target of a 28-33% reduction in GHG emissions.

Through our Environmental Strategy: 2026 – 2030, we will support the wellbeing of our communities and the planet by deepening our commitment to reducing GHG emissions. In line with international practices and Victorian Government goals, we aim to build on past success by proactively addressing emerging risks as part of playing our role in the transition to a low-carbon future.



Solar power system at Springvale Botanical Cemetery



Our continued emissions reduction commitment

Under this Environmental Strategy, we will implement a range of initiatives to further reduce our GHG emissions. Central to this will be the continuation of actions outlined in our Climate Response Strategy that aim to further drive down our emissions:

Building efficiency: With 62% of SMCT's emissions coming from electricity and gas, improving our buildings' energy efficiency remains essential. Although SMCT now sources 100% renewable electricity, reducing energy demand ensures cost savings and resource efficiency. Transitioning from gas to electric equipment and adopting energy-efficient appliances will further cut emissions while lowering operational costs.

Sustainable transport: Transport emissions account for 13% of SMCT's baseline, with team member transport costs contributing 7%, whether to and from work commuting or on the job travel. To address this, we will optimise vehicle fleet size, adjust vehicle use, and transition our light commercial fleet to electric vehicles where suitable. Updating fleet policies to prioritise low-emission vehicles and equipment will further reduce emissions, improve air quality, and support community health and wellbeing.

Sustainable procurement: Concrete is the fourth largest emission source from SMCT's baseline emissions (8%) and the second largest emission source from most recent reporting (34%). This is mainly the result of construction materials used for our footpaths, driveways, buildings, and monuments. By developing a sustainable procurement policy, SMCT will identify suitable alternative materials for use in infrastructure projects such as low emission recycled glass, soil, rock, and crushed concrete.

Waste and resource recovery: Waste is SMCT's third-largest source of emissions, accounting for 14% of the baseline. Current actions to divert waste from landfill include improved recovery of garden organics, and additional recycling streams for different materials. Looking ahead, we will focus on increasing food organics recovery, reducing packaging waste, and limiting the use of polystyrene, plastics and wire in floral arrangements. We will also promote biodegradable alternatives to further minimise environmental impact.

Low-emission cremation and burial options: Burial and cremation processes are a significant contributor to our GHG emissions. The reliance on natural gas for cremation presents a major challenge, as viable green alternatives are not yet widely available. SMCT will consider options such as hybrid and electric cremators as part of investigating ways to further decrease our emissions from cremations and burials.

Product information: By highlighting the environmental impacts of different burial and cremation options, SMCT will help consumers make informed choices. Emissions vary significantly by method; for example, lawn graves produce far fewer emissions than headstone graves. To reduce information gaps, SMCT will provide clear disclosures, such as product statements or brochures, outlining the environmental footprint of each option.



Climate resilience

SMCT's cemeteries and memorial parks are important places of heritage, culture, and tradition. They are places where memories are preserved and links to cultural and religious practices are honoured. They also play a vital environmental role as green spaces that support biodiversity and provide habitat for plants and animals, including rare and endangered species.

Climate change poses a significant and escalating challenge worldwide, including for SMCT and the communities we serve. Taking action to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts is essential to safeguard our built and natural assets for future generations. Across SMCT's region, these impacts are already visible and projected to intensify, bringing more frequent and severe heatwaves and storms, heavier rainfall, prolonged dry periods, and heightened fire risks.

As stewards of heritage and green spaces in perpetuity, SMCT must plan for future climate impacts, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This proactive approach will not only strengthen organisational resilience but also protect biodiversity, preserve cultural heritage, and deliver meaningful benefits for our communities.

We have made significant progress in identifying and assessing climate-related risks across our 11 sites. These insights have shaped our Climate Response Strategy, which guides our action to address climate impacts, strengthen resilience, and ensure our sites' long-term sustainability.

Our approach to climate resilience

In 2025, SMCT completed climate change risk and vulnerability assessments across all sites to evaluate existing adaptation measures and identify future opportunities. These assessments examined environmental risks such as extreme heat, heavy rainfall and flooding, bushfires, drought, and severe storms. They also included broader risks such as threats to financial stability, health and safety, infrastructure resilience, and social, cultural, and religious values.

Our current and completed climate resilience initiatives include:

- Conducting **biodiversity benchmarking assessments** to monitor and protect ecological values.
- Implementing **emergency procedures** for climate-related risks, including dam failure protocols and bushfire preparedness.
- Establishing **OHS protocols** for climatic events, such as the Inclement Weather and Critical Operational Activities Guide.
- Delivering **Project Cultivate** at Melbourne General Cemetery, which included installing 56 acres of grassland.
- Implementing **Project Cultivate** at St Kilda Cemetery, with 18 acres of new indigenous understory plantings.
- Developing a comprehensive **Water Management Strategy** to ensure sustainable water use and resilience under changing climate conditions.





Future focus on climate resilience

SMCT remains committed to reducing climate-related risks and building resilience through targeted initiatives, as outlined in our Climate Response Strategy:

Strengthen future planning: We will embed climate adaptation into all SMCT policies, strategies and plans so that resilience becomes part of everything we do. By providing training, clear policies, and planning for different scenarios, we aim to ensure our team members and communities are ready for future challenges. We will also invest in infrastructure that can withstand extreme weather – such as roads and materials designed to cope with heavy rain, flooding, heat, and drought – so our spaces remain safe and accessible for everyone.

Engage with community: We will build community awareness of climate-related risks and adaptation and incorporate stakeholder insights, particularly those of Traditional Custodians and members of cultural and religious communities. Engaging these groups will help SMCT share knowledge, foster understanding, and draw on valuable perspectives to strengthen climate resilience.

Protect and enhance the natural environment: Many sites serve as important green spaces, supporting rare or threatened species that face increasing climate-related risks. To protect these values, SMCT will set canopy cover targets for each site. We will use climate-adapted species and implement targeted revegetation in high-risk areas such as flood zones and erosion-prone sites, while broadly expanding our planting.

Manage extreme heat: Extreme heat poses significant risks to SMCT’s team members, site visitors, and local flora and fauna. We will develop and implement organisation-wide heat management measures to protect people and the environment. This will include exploring opportunities to cool sites through additional natural and built shade.

Improve emergency preparedness: Climate-related emergencies – including flooding, severe storms, and fires—require robust preparedness. We will strengthen existing emergency protocols and invest in site upgrades such as improved drainage, fire mitigation measures, and storm-resistant infrastructure. We will also deliver targeted training and engagement programs for team members and contractors to ensure risks are identified early and effectively mitigated.

Data and reporting: SMCT will collect climate-related data to monitor progress, identify trends, and refine strategies. This approach will ensure our Climate Response Strategy adapts to evolving conditions. In addition, we will comply with the Australian Sustainability Reporting Standards (ASRS) by transparently reporting climate and sustainability-related risks and opportunities.



Our sustainable future

As a Class A cemeteries trust, we take seriously our role in setting industry benchmarks. We work collaboratively with the community, First Nations peoples, government, industry, suppliers, and partners to devise and deliver solutions that are of the utmost benefit to the environment.

SMCT will continue to place sustainability at the forefront of our procurement activities and implement the best possible waste and recycling initiatives.

We will build on our achievement of 100% renewable electricity in 2025 by further reducing emissions and using energy and resources sustainably. At the same time, we will enhance biodiversity across our sites, ensuring that both historic and modern cemeteries become thriving ecosystems as part of our ongoing service to the community.

To measure success, we will provide annual progress updates and, after five years, conduct a comprehensive review of achievements and impacts in consultation with key stakeholders and the community.

Achieving targets and completing initiatives will help meet our goals, but how we go about implementing this Strategy is just as important.

Measures of success include:

- Involving the community in biodiversity education, conservation, and restoration initiatives.
- engaging with Traditional Custodians and First Nations groups in management of SMCT's natural environments
- Strengthening relationships and consultation with local government agencies to support collaborative approaches to meet mutual goals.
- Compliance with environmental legislation and other requirements.

We are proud of our progress and remain committed to leading the sector in environmental responsibility for our communities and our planet.

For further information about our Environmental Strategy:

- **Visit** smct.org.au/sustainability
- **Contact** our Environment Team on environment@smct.org.au
- **Take part** in environmental activities through engagewith.smct.org.au

