

Business Sustainability Survey

Data report

July 2021



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1 Executive Summary

In 2021, Council’s Local Economies and Environmental Sustainability teams undertook a survey of Boroondara’s business community to understand how we could better support local business to be more environmentally sustainable.

The survey sought feedback on what environment sustainable practices local businesses were undertaking and what more could be done in the future to promote and support local businesses to be more successful through sustainability.

We received 81 responses.

Of the 81 responses, 90% rated environmental sustainability as “Important” or “Very Important” to their business operations.

At least 65% of respondents identified their priority themes as waste management and minimisation, recycling, energy efficiency and biodiversity. This was followed by water efficiency, non-toxic chemicals, sustainable procurement and transport.

It was encouraging to see that many of the businesses were already taking a lead in improving the sustainability of their business. Particularly in the areas of energy and water efficiency, recycling, waste avoidance, using non-toxic chemicals and procuring local and more sustainable goods and products.

The results of the survey told us that the key areas of support that businesses needed from Council to help them become more environmentally sustainable were:

- access to free sustainability programs
- greater information and resources on how to implement environmental sustainability into their business operations
- workshops/webinars on how to become more environmentally sustainable
- support and mentoring to develop internal processes and systems.

This feedback will now provide a roadmap for us to work alongside our businesses to deliver a sustainable businesses program that will help businesses thrive and achieve greater environmental, social and economic benefits.

2 Who participated

A total of 81 businesses participated in the survey, with representation from businesses operating in every suburb of Boroondara.

Table 1. Suburb of operation

Suburb of operation*	n	%
Camberwell	22	27.2%
Hawthorn	16	19.8%
Ashburton	15	18.5%
Canterbury	15	18.5%
Balwyn North	14	17.3%
Surrey Hills	10	12.3%
Hawthorn East	7	8.6%
Kew	7	8.6%
Glen Iris	6	7.4%
Balwyn	5	6.2%
Deepdene	5	6.2%
Kew East	4	4.9%

* some businesses operate in more than one suburb

Table 2. Business type and ownership

Business type	n	%
Café, restaurant, pub	19	23.5
Health care and social assistance	15	18.5
Other	13	16.0
Retail	12	14.8
Professional services/office-based	8	9.9
Construction	7	8.6
Beauty, hair and personal services	3	3.7
Education and training	2	2.5
Rental, hiring and real estate services	2	2.5
Ownership type		
Independently owned	40	49.4
Sole trader	29	35.8
Corporate	4	4.9

Franchise	4	4.9
Other	4	4.9

3 Findings

3.1 Business attitudes to sustainability in Boroondara

As can be seen in Table 3, over 90% of respondents rated environmental sustainability as “Important” or “Very important” to the operating of their business.

Table 3. When making decisions about how you operate your business, how important is environmental sustainability?

	n	%
Not important at all	0	0
Not so important	6	7.4
Important	38	46.9
Very important	37	45.7

All council priority themes were ranked as either ‘important’ or ‘very important’ by at least 65% of respondents.

- Most highly ranked was ‘Waste management and minimisation as well as recycling’
- Least highly ranked was ‘Sustainable transport’

Table 4. Importance of council priority themes

	Not important at all	Not so important	Important	Very important
Waste management and minimisation as well as recycling	/	2.5%	23.5%	74.1%
Sustainable water use and water pollution	2.5%	8.6%	38.3%	50.6%
Energy efficiency and renewable energy (i.e. reducing your power bills)	/	4.9%	29.6%	65.4%
Sustainable transport (i.e. how you and your staff commute to and from work, vehicles used in your business)	3.7%	30.9%	28.4%	37.0%

Biodiversity, trees and protection of our natural environment	2.5%	11.1%	25.9%	60.5%
Non-toxic chemicals (e.g. cleaning chemicals)	/	12.3%	40.7%	46.9%
Sustainable procurement practices	2.5%	14.8%	42.0%	40.7%

3.2 Current sustainability practices and interests

Table 6. Which of the following environmentally sustainable actions and behaviours best describes the current views of your business?

	Not applicable to my business	Not interested	Not doing but are interested to do in future	Already doing	Already doing and hope to do more in the future
Using energy efficient lighting and appliances	1.2%	/	9.9%	25.9%	63%
Using water efficiently	4.9%	/	9.9%	38.3%	46.9%
Using renewable sources of energy (e.g. wind and solar) or purchasing Green Power	14.8%	4.9%	49.4%	6.2%	24.7%
Recycling cardboard, glass bottles, aluminium, etc.	2.5%	/	3.7%	32.1%	61.7%
Avoiding or reducing waste such as disposable plastics	2.5%	/	7.4%	35.8%	54.3%
Using non-toxic cleaning products	4.9%	/	28.4%	25.9%	40.7%
Using compost bins or worm farms to manage organic waste, coffee beans, etc.	32.1%	9.9%	21%	9.9%	27.2%
Choosing purchasing or delivery practices that reduce waste	7.4%	1.2%	30.9%	28.4%	32.1%
Choosing suppliers based on their environmental credentials	6.2%	6.2%	48.1%	17.3%	22.2%
Procuring locally made or produced items (e.g. products and goods)	11.1%	2.5%	18.5%	28.4%	39.5%
Using products with better sustainability credentials than alternatives (e.g. compostable or recycled crockery or cutlery)	19.8%	/	17.3%	25.9%	37%
Offering a discount to consumers who provide a reusable container or cup	61.7%	6.2%	16%	8.6%	7.4%
Participating in share, exchange and/or repair programs/initiatives that involve donating, repairing, selling, sharing or	34.6%	2.5%	28.4%	17.3%	17.3%

buying used equipment, waste, materials, etc.					
Purchasing recycled-content products	27.2%	4.9%	19.8%	23.5%	24.7%
Promoting and encouraging sustainable transport use as part of the business' operations and amongst staff	30.9%	4.9%	25.9%	19.8%	18.5%

3.3 Current waste management and reduction practices

Table 9. We would like to understand your actions and behaviour in relation to the different waste types generated by your business.

	Not applicable to my business	Not interested	Not doing but are interested to do	Already doing	Already doing and hope to do more in the future
Diverting organic waste such as food scraps and coffee beans from landfill (i.e. through compost bins or worm farms)	35.8%	4.9%	19.8%	16%	23.5%
Recycling cardboard boxes (non-waxed)	2.5%	/	3.7%	42%	51.9%
Recycling cardboard boxes (waxed such as a fruit and vegetable box)	44.4%	1.2%	7.4%	19.8%	27.2%
Recycling e-waste	24.7%	1.2%	16%	25.9%	32.1%
Recycling glass bottles and jars	23.5%	/	6.2%	30.9%	39.5%
Recycling other glass items (not glass bottles and jars)	34.6%	/	8.6%	22.2%	34.6%
Recycling aluminium cans	30.9%	3.7%	6.2%	27.2%	32.1%
Recycling paper - clean (office type paper)	12.3%	1.2%	9.9%	37%	39.5%
Recycling paper - soiled (wet, dirty)	42.0%	3.7%	14.8%	18.5%	21%
Recycling aluminium foil (sheets, trays)	50.6%	1.2%	9.9%	13.6%	24.7%
Recycling metal tins	42%	2.5%	8.6%	19.8%	27.2%
Recycling other metal objects (not tins)	44.4%	2.5%	9.9%	16%	27.2%
Recycling polystyrene	27.2%	2.5%	24.7%	21%	24.7%
Recycling flexible plastics (can scrunch in the ball of your hand)	19.8%	1.2%	25.9%	18.5%	34.6%

Recycling hard plastic containers (e.g. margarine tubs, hard plastic takeaway containers, etc.)	22.2%	/	14.8%	24.7%	38.3%
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3.4 Support from Council

Table 12. For your business, what support could the City of Boroondara provide to become more environmentally sustainable?

	Not useful	Useful	Very useful
More information and resources (booklets, tip sheets, etc.) on how to implement environmental sustainability into your business operations	21%	48.1%	30.9%
Facilitated sustainable business network/group for your business to network and share ideas about environmental sustainable business practices	28.4%	42%	29.6%
Mentoring support from another small business who has successfully implemented environmental sustainable business practices	33.3%	35.8%	30.9%
Workshops and webinars on how to become more environmentally sustainable	25.9%	44.4%	29.6%
Free programs for your business to sign up to (e.g. waste reduction/minimisation program to reduce plastics, and initiatives that increase energy and water efficiency and use of non-toxic chemicals)	16.0%	35.8%	48.1%
Demonstrations/trials of products with better sustainability credentials than alternatives (e.g. compostable or recycled crockery or cutlery) for use by your business	34.6%	33.3%	32.1%
Support for developing internal processes and systems that promote environmental sustainability	25.9%	37%	37%
Programs that support your business to exchange, sell, and share or donate used equipment, furniture or other materials	29.6%	34.6%	35.8%
Support for training staff on the benefits of your business becoming more environmentally sustainable	30.9%	43.2%	25.9%