

Pūrongo Rautaki haere o Toitū te Taiao

Environment and Sustainability Strategy Progress Report

2021-2025



Ihirangi

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Kupu Arataki

Introduction



In 2021, the Council adopted the Environment and Sustainability Strategy 2021 – 2051/ Te Rautaki Toitū te Taiao. As part of the Strategy, Council made a commitment to produce a Progress Report, 3 yearly that comments on the state of our local environment. The purpose of the State of the Environment Report is to be transparent with our stakeholders, community, iwi and hapū on how Council is progressing on the goals set in the Environment and Sustainability Strategy.

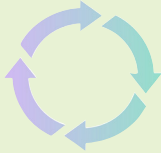
The Council is responsible for managing the environmental impacts from their activities and services but cannot achieve all of the outcomes in the Environment and Sustainability Strategy alone. We need to work with our community partners to transition South Taranaki into a low emission, sustainable and low waste district.

The environment that Council are currently operating in is extremely challenging. The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) and Three-waters legislation are both under reform for a second time, changes are being made to the National Emission Reduction Plan and targets and economic costs have skyrocketed which means councils are having to pay more to deliver the same levels of service. This is the first Progress Report that Council has published in reflection of our progress made to date.

This Report will be used to assist in the review of the Environment and Sustainability Strategy and help identify improvements that can be made.

Te Pūnaha Kauwhata Pāpātanga

Rating System Key (trackers)

Not yet started 	Not yet started means that the activity or action is still waiting to be started. There may be several reasons why this action has not been started such as time, financial or resourcing constraints.
Making progress 	Making progress means that the action has been started but there is still more work to be done.
Achieved 	Achieved means that this action is completed and requires no further action. This is a rare status because most of the actions included in the Strategy require ongoing effort, however some actions might warrant an achieved ranking if they are completed.
Ongoing 	This includes the actions that are ongoing, because some actions will never be completed or achieved because they require continuous action.



Goal 1 - Sustainable Resource Management

Ensure Council is sustainably managing the natural and physical resources for the district for future generations.

Desired outcomes

- Environmental sustainability is at the heart of all our activities, projects, governance and decision-making.
- Best-practice scientific evidence informs our work.
- We invest in sustainable infrastructure and monitoring systems so that we can deliver on our Strategy goals.
- We manage our finances in an environmentally sustainable and ethical way.
- The custodianship of Mātauranga Māori knowledge systems, practices and teachings inform and underpin environmental sustainability responses, actions and decisions.

What Council has done to date



Some degree of the human impact on the natural environment is managed through the resource consent process. The Council uses the District Plan as a primary tool in managing adverse effects on the local environment. The District Plan has been used to impose legal protections on areas that are environmentally or historically significant, control and mitigate the effects of people using hazardous substances and optimise the use of land to sustain and promote ecosystem services we rely on as a district.

We are making progress on managing our financial investments in an environmentally sustainable and ethical way. Our current Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Investment Policy states that the Council encourages its external fund managers to build ESG considerations into their investment decision-making processes.

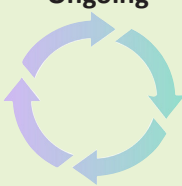
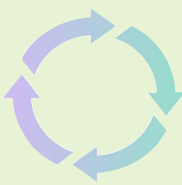
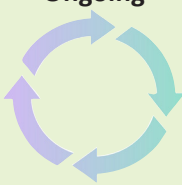
Progress towards achieving our goal of sustainable resource management included advocacy and education programmes that aim to inform and educate our communities in South Taranaki to achieve environmental sustainability and resource management. Examples of public awareness programs include water conservation messages through local media outlets such as radio and the Hāwera Cinema, publishing information on our website about how the Council have been responding to the problems of climate change, and distributing flyers with our new kerbside bins to inform communities on what items can be recycled to reduce waste to landfill.

Demonstrating sustainable infrastructure and construction practises that serve the public efficiently while placing less strain upon the natural environment is another key action for the Council under the Sustainable Resource Management goal. Te Ramanui o Ruapūtahanga (Te Ramanui), our new library and visitor centre that has been opened, stands as a prime example of how the Council has incorporated sustainable infrastructure into our building processes.

As South Taranaki hosts a list of renewable resources, Te Ramanui is built with systems that take advantage of this fact. Solar panels on the roof of Te Ramanui help generate electricity for the building while water tanks form part of a rainwater harvesting system that collects natural rainfall for the use of toilet facilities and removes the need to service the toilets through the Council's water supply. To ensure proper temperature control and air flow, Te Ramanui is built with SMART (Self-Monitoring Analysis and Reporting Technology) windows that automatically close or open based upon changes in CO2 and temperature levels in various parts of the building and double-doored 'wind lobbies' that reduce the amount of air lost when people enter and exit the facility. LED lighting throughout the building provides energy efficiency due to lower power consumption and double-glazed windows create better insulation that reduces heat loss. Additionally, a rain garden has been built for the purposes of collecting rainwater that has not been used by the rainwater harvest system and slowly filters the water catchment before releasing it into our stormwater system.

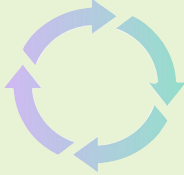
Kia whai te kaupapa haere

Tracking our progress

Category	Action	Tracking Status	Comment
Environmental Protection	Council will demonstrate leadership in environmental stewardship and best-practice sustainability by applying an environmental sustainability and climate change framework to all Council policies, plans, projects, governance, and decision-making processes.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	As part of the requirements of the Environment and Sustainability Strategy, all reports that are presented to Council for consideration undergo an assessment on the potential impacts that Council decisions will have on our environment. This practise ensures that environmental considerations and risks have been identified within decision-making reports and taken into consideration by Council before reaching a decision. Education for report writers to identify and understand these risks are in progress.
Advocacy and Education	We will ensure that our communities understand and support the uptake of environmental sustainability initiatives, through continuing advocacy and environmental awareness and education campaigns covering climate change, biodiversity, freshwater and waste minimisation.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	Our ongoing educational and public communication programs ensure that our local communities are aware of and support environmentally sustainable efforts in South Taranaki. Some examples are water conservation notices during summer, business waste community programmes, school education programmes and our parks volunteer program with Te Paepae O Aotea.
Sustainable Development	We will support and promote environmentally sustainable infrastructure development and construction practices.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	Transitioning to sustainable construction practices is starting to occur through new developments and infrastructure renewals (where possible). Our most recent example is Te Ramanui o Ruapūtahanga, the new Hāwera LibraryPlus facility that has been developed with sustainability in mind. One of the challenges we experience, is that new facilities and infrastructure are not built or installed regularly. This action will always be ongoing because Council has an advocacy and lead by example role to play within the local community.

Kia whai te kaupapa haere

Tracking our progress

Category	Action	Tracking Status	Comment
Ethical Investing	We will ensure our finances and investment portfolios are managed in an environmentally sustainable and ethical way using ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) criteria.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	Our ethical investments are a matter that STDC will have to continuously assess and will always be identified as making progress. Our investment strategies undergo a ranking process that allow Council to have a proactive approach to determine how and where we invest our finances.
State of the Environment Report	Council will publish triennial Environment and Sustainability State of the Environment reports, to maintain transparency in its environmental sustainability work programme and actions.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	This is the first State of the Environment Report. Both Central Government and Regional Councils have legal obligations to provide reports on the state of the environment, however, local Councils do not. Nevertheless, Council will continue with our commitment to publish triennial Progress Reports to track our progress in achieving the goals of the Strategy and to show our commitment to the environment.
Cross-Council Prioritisation	All Council facility controllers, whether asset managers, property managers, or budget holders, for facilities that use energy and create emissions, will have KPIs for energy efficiency and emissions reductions built into their annual work programmes.	Not yet started  Ongoing 	Progress on this action is on hold until Council have established their own Climate Mitigation Framework that will identify Council's emission profiles and identify how to reduce the organisational emissions. Once the Climate Action Plan has been adopted and implemented, Council officers will use its framework to begin to structure their KPIs and work programmes to meet established emission reduction goals.

Goal 2 - Environmental Protection

Ensure we recognise and protect places of natural heritage and outstanding natural features and landscapes across the district.

Desired outcomes

- Our natural ecosystems and species are protected, resilient and connected.
- Our natural resources are managed sustainably for future generations.
- Our flourishing biodiversity provides nature-based solutions to climate change and other environmental issues.
- Our communities have the skills, knowledge and capability to be effective and active guardians of our natural ecosystems and species.
- Collaboration and partnerships are delivering better outcomes for our ecosystems and species.
- Kaitiaki are recognised and resourced to protect their environment and taonga species.

What Council has done to date



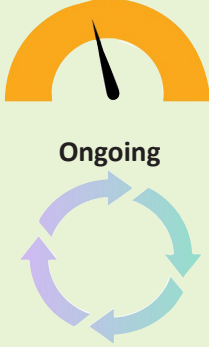
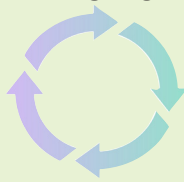
Council plays a pivotal role in the protection of local flora and fauna which collectively offer the ecosystems services we rely on. The Council has allocated a total of \$337,000 in the Long Term Plan (LTP) to be spent from Years 1 to 10 on biodiversity restoration of Council parks and reserves. The Council also support the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems on private land through financial support programmes like the Natural Environment Fund (previously known as the Significant Natural Area Fund), which aims to protect the growth of the natural environment and providing rate rebates for ecological purposes.

Council officers have completed planting of native plant species on multiple sites across the district with the expectation that the planting of native species will support our biodiversity networks and encourage species to return to the restored environment. The Council is supporting the development of biodiversity corridors across the district that will support the further growth in biodiversity and enhance the ability of promoting the expansion of key critical species.

Council work with community groups and the Taranaki Regional Council to protect biodiversity corridors and areas that are significant to South Taranaki. Pātea is home to an area of ribbonwood/sea rush vegetation along the Pātea River which holds national significance. Council officers organised volunteer days to assist with planting and have been working with the regional council to protect and better enhance the site. Another project Council supports is the Rawhitiroa Wetland Project which seeks to preserve a 2-hectare reserve and to create a native habitat for the endangered Brown Mud Fish. Council also continues to support Rotokare and all the protection work that occurs throughout the scenic reserve.

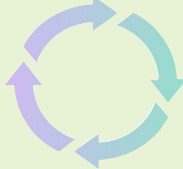
Kia whai te kaupapa haere

Tracking our progress

Category	Action	Tracking Status	Comment
District plan	Through careful planning and research, serious damage and adverse impacts to our natural environments will be prevented through the District Plan, so that our natural resources are managed sustainably for future generations.	Making Progress 	The Operative District Plan includes provisions for protecting the natural environment; however, further considerations are scheduled for the next District Plan review. The resource management system is currently under reform, and we anticipate legislation to provide clarity on national expectations in 2025/2026.
Significant natural areas	Council will ensure our remaining natural ecosystems and species are protected, resilient and connected, via a network of Significant Natural Areas (SNAs).	Not yet started 	There are provisions under the Operative District Plan that identifies and protects a number of SNA's, however, Council aspires to undertake more work in this space to better identify and protect more SNAs around the district. SNAs and how these are identified and protected are being considered under the resource management reform.
Environment and natural heritage fund	Landowners will be supported with legally protecting and restoring natural ecosystems on private land through Council's Environment and Natural Heritage Fund and rates rebates.	Ongoing 	Council offers a Natural Environments Fund to provide financial support to private landowners who seek to undertake environmental protection activities on their property. Council's Rates Remission Policy was reviewed and updated late last year and includes remission options where applicants can apply for waivers of their rates for land protected for the purposes of natural, historical, or cultural conservation.

Kia whai te kaupapa haere

Tracking our progress

Category	Action	Tracking Status	Comment
Restoration projects	We will support the creation of biodiversity corridors and green spaces to connect large and important habitats throughout the district, and restoration of Council-owned properties and Reserve land, particularly at sites where riparian planting and management is required, and/or where community restoration groups are actively working on Council-owned land.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	The restoration projects are in the planning stages but are scheduled to occur in 2025. It is anticipated that planting will occur across an additional 20 hectares which will add to the 13.1 hectares already completed.
Supporting others	Council will actively support and work with Iwi, hapū and community restoration groups and NGOs to help them achieve their environmental goals. We will empower our communities to have the skills, knowledge and capability to be effective and active guardians of our natural ecosystems and species, through environmental awareness and biodiversity restoration initiatives.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	As a community leader, STDC have been supporting local groups across the district in achieving their own environmental goals for the community benefit of those around us. Working examples of how Council is supporting others include the Friends in the Hāwera Park initiative, which involves a group of volunteers undertaking planting and caretaking at King Edward Park, and the horticulture student volunteer program with Te Paepae O Aotea.
Collaboration	Collaboration and partnerships are already delivering better outcomes for our natural ecosystems and species. The protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems throughout the District will be aligned with national legislation and regional efforts, including the Project Mouna Taranaki, Lake Rotokare Sanctuary, and Wild For Taranaki biodiversity accord, to which Council is a signatory.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	We have worked closely with major external partners to protect and restore local biodiversity and ecosystems. Initiatives in this space have included staff participating in volunteer days to help in maintaining Lake Rotokare Sanctuary for the betterment of both persons and nature, assisting Taranaki Regional Council in the development of regional climate and environmental plans, and partnering with the bodies such as Department of Conservation and local iwi on regional projects such as Project Maunga Taranaki.

Te Rerekē haere o te Āhuarangi

Goal 3 - Climate Change

Plan for, and respond to, the impacts of climate change through emissions reduction, mitigation and adaption plans.

Desired outcomes

- We develop a Climate Action Plan to ensure we are adequately mitigating for and adapting to climate change.
- We consider climate change in all our decisions.
- We reduce organisational emissions that contribute to climate change so that we are a net CarbonZero organisation by 2035.
- Through our partnerships and collaboration, we facilitate a just transition to net CarbonZero across the District by 2050.
- We reduce the negative impacts of climate change across the District.
- Our communities understanding and resilience to climate change impacts increases over time.
- Mātauranga Māori informs and underpins climate change work programmes.

What Council has done to date



Council has delivered on several key climate mitigation programs. Annual emission inventories have been completed since 2019 and verified by external entities. These inventories help the Council keep track of its total yearly organisational emissions and develop policies and projects that will reduce carbon usage. Completed energy audits of Council-owned facilities and assets have resulted in the transition from fossil fuel sources to green energy alternatives. For example, the plan to transition the Hāwera Aquatic Centre from gas boilers to an electric heat pump and where possible phasing out of petrol-powered

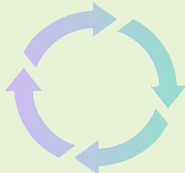
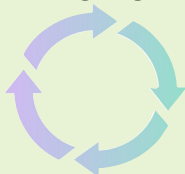
vehicles in the Council fleet for hybrid vehicles that require less fuel for greater travel distances. It should be noted that some assets cannot be transitioned through this process.

To offset carbon emissions that the Council cannot reduce, the Council have started planning and implementing tree planting projects across the district. These projects are intended to grow into natural forests that will serve as carbon sinks that remove greenhouse gas emissions from the atmosphere.

Climate change adaptation, which involves planning and preparing for how we would respond and live in a world affected by climate change, is another key feature of the Environment and Sustainability Strategy goal. Due to the rise of global sea levels along coastlines brought on by climate change, and our responsibility to manage an extensive coast, the Council partnered with external consultants to map out changes to the shoreline and will use the generated data to predict potential coastal changes and enable better community adaptation. The Council is preparing for potential climate emergencies that could arise across the district through conducting climate change risk assessment and modelling of climate change risks at the local level.

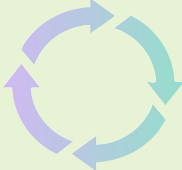
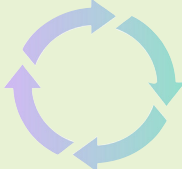
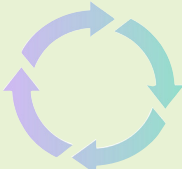
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Tracking our progress

Action	Goal	Tracking Status	Comment
Low emissions future	Council will lead the district to a low emissions future.	Not yet started  Ongoing 	Before we can begin work on the goal of having a low emissions future, there are a few steps that must first be achieved. One of these steps includes the introduction of our own climate mitigation plan which will help us to identify and target areas that produce the most emissions.
Emissions reduction	Climate change is a strategic priority that will be included in and influence all Council plans, projects, policies and decisions.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	We have introduced several emission reduction projects which were covered in this report such as the Hāwera Aquatic Centre and the STDC Vehicle Fleet transition from being powered by fossil fuels to green energy alternatives. It should be noted that both goals will be a transitional process that Council will continually need to act on and will never be considered as an 'achieved' action.
Embedding climate change	Council will develop and implement an energy and carbon reduction plan, setting 3-yearly carbon budgets and carbon reduction pathways, to ensure it is a carbon neutral organisation by 2035 (excluding biogenic methane and nitrous oxide).	Making Progress  Ongoing 	Embedding climate change into decision-making is a work in progress for our Council. We are yet to develop any sort of emission reduction plan, but we are scheduling to create a Climate Action Plan to be developed over 2025 to begin implementation in 2026. We are still working towards being a carbon neutral organisation by 2035 and will rely on emission profiles to show progress.

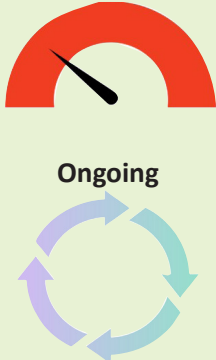
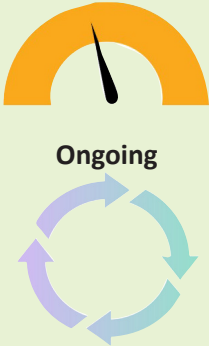
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Tracking our progress

Action	Goal	Tracking Status	Comment
Afforestation projects	Using One Billion Trees co-funding and through accessing and utilising other co-funding streams, native plant afforestation on Council land will be increased to develop carbon sinks for offsetting organisational emissions that cannot be reduced.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	Afforestation, in contrast to reforestation, is the process of planting native plant and trees in an area where such plant species did not originally grow before. These type of planting projects serve the same purposes as our reforestation projects that they will offset climate emissions that cannot be eliminated conventionally. We are looking into projects of reforestation (planting trees where they were before) and afforestation to help reduce carbon emissions.
Renewable energy	Council assets and infrastructure using energy from fossil fuels will be incrementally upgraded to become more energy-efficient and/or run on energy from renewable sources.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	Renewable energy projects that Council have implemented to upgrade our facilities and assets to environmentally sustainable standards. Some examples include the Hāwera Aquatic Centre electric pump project and the inclusion of renewable energy features such as solar power cells and rainwater tankers into the construction of Te Ramanui. As mentioned earlier in this report, there are transitions required to more sustainable and energy efficient options, however, these need to happen over a period of time.
Green transport	We will support the uptake of electric vehicles across the district and promote alternative active transport options by building safe walkways and cycleways (for both recreational and commuting purposes) throughout the district.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	A vast majority of the Council's current fleet of vehicle have been transitioned from being majority comprised of petrol-powered vehicles to environmentally sustainable electric-hybrid models. However, not all our fleet vehicles can be transitioned through this process, so Council will work to introduce pathways that will offset the assets that cannot be replaced.
Rangatahi	Council will investigate opportunities to develop critical thinking, communication and leadership skills of youth/rangatahi through a Rangatahi Climate Change Strategy.	Not yet started 	A Rangatahi Climate Change Strategy has not been created. An example is Empower Youth which is a platform for our youth to have a voice on the work of Council. EmpowerYouth are engaged in policy development and provide submissions advocating for youth.

Kia whai te kaupapa haere

Tracking our progress

Action	Goal	Tracking Status	Comment
Mapping climate risks	Guided by the National Adaptation Plan and the proposed Climate Change Adaptation Act, climate change related risks in our District will be clearly identified, mapped, and communicated, so that our communities' understanding and resilience to climate change impacts will increase over time.	Making Progress 	Council have undertaken a climate change risk assessment which will guide our work towards developing our own Climate Change Risk Assessment Framework. Once this framework is in place we will have an idea of where to go from there. This work is also being guided by national and regional work on climate change such as the Ministry for the Environment's National Climate Change Risk Assessment for New Zealand.
Climate action plan	Create a Climate Change Action Plan to ensure Council are considering climate change in all our decisions, communities are able to understand the risks and impacts of climate change and to ensure there are options for climate risk mitigation, adaptation or managed retreat within our communities.	Not yet started 	Options are being explored by Council staff on how to develop a Climate Action Plan that delivers on our objectives of reducing organisational emissions while also preparing to deal with the adverse effects of climate change in our district. However, work towards this goal can only begin once we have done our assessment of the climate risks that will affect the district as this will play a central role in what the objectives and the guidelines of the plan will be.
Increasing resilience and reducing risk	Acting on the Climate Action Plan, Council will ensure our communities and infrastructure develop increased resilience to extreme weather events and climate change impacts over time	Making Progress 	Protecting and strengthening the resilience of Council's infrastructure is important to the service we provide and protecting our communities. Council's climate risk assessment will help identify where any vulnerable assets might be and allow Council to consider how to manage these assets in future climate related events.

Whakaiti Para

Goal 4 - Waste Minimisation

Continue to implement waste minimisation initiatives and improve our waste infrastructure.

Desired outcomes

- We implement our Waste Management and Minimisation Plan's targets.
- We aim to become a ZeroWaste District by 2050.
- We provide improved local disposal options and waste management infrastructure to increase the amount of waste diverted from landfill.
- We continue to implement and promote waste minimisation initiatives.
- We actively work with communities, Iwi, marae-pā and waste minimisation groups to promote District-wide ZeroWaste initiatives and events through education, advocacy and collaboration.

What Council has done to date



To support our communities with waste minimisation, and to encourage waste reduction, the Council has made a change to the kerbside collection service. This included changes to bin sizes, frequency of collection, and the introduction of food waste bins. These changes encourage the diversion of food waste from landfill and have seen an overall reduction in waste generation.

Ensuring that we mitigate and prevent the wastage of local resources that are sourced through consents is another area that

Council has been working on. The Council has worked on educating our rangatahi on the importance of sustainable resource management and how they can contribute as our future generations. Examples of school programs include the 'Waste Free Period Workshops', which educate female high school students on reusable period products, and the 'Your Sustainable School Workshop', which enables teachers and students to think about how they deal with waste as a school community.

Kia whai te kaupapa haere

Tracking our progress

Action	Goal	Tracking Status	Comment
Waste Management and Minimisation Plan	Council will continue to implement our Waste Management and Minimisation Plan targets.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	Council has a Waste Management and Minimisation Plan in place and a new plan will need to develop after a period of six years has lapsed. As Council are obligated to follow this process by the Waste Minimisation Act 2008, this action will be forever ongoing as there will be goals and actions identified in each Plan that is developed.
Zero Waste District	We will aim to become a ZeroWaste District by 2050.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	We have amended our goal to becoming a ZeroWaste District by 2050 by focusing on working towards become a district that sends zero waste to landfill sites. To achieve this, our kerbside collection system underwent changes to separate organic waste from landfill waste. As this is a district wide goal, we need buy in and support from our local community, businesses and each household to make changes to how we treat and dispose of waste. Council are unable to achieve this goal on our own and we are supporting our community through behaviour change workshops and educational activities.
Circular Economy	We will continue to implement and promote waste minimisation initiatives across our communities and encourage and support localism and a Circular Economy.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	We have launched the resource wide business program and through it we can link businesses to local alternatives that circulate resources and lower unnecessary wastage.

Kia whai te kaupapa haere

Tracking our progress

Action	Goal	Tracking Status	Comment
Improved local infrastructure	We will investigate how to provide improved localised disposal options and waste management infrastructure to increase the amount of waste diverted from landfill, with an initial focus on: a. Reducing the amount of compostable organic waste going to landfill (currently 40% of our waste profile), b. Reducing the amount of construction waste going to landfill, c. Developing and implementing a diversified and robust recycling system to cope with current and future demand.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	Council have provided green waste bins to urban households to reduce organic waste going to landfill. We are also exploring the feasibility of a green waste facility in Taranaki because all green waste is transported to other districts for disposal. As a Council, and a district, need to be creative and find local ways to treat and dispose of waste generated in South Taranaki.
Zero Waste Education	We will continue to actively work with communities, Iwi, marae-pā and waste minimisation groups to promote District-wide ZeroWaste initiatives and events through education, advocacy and collaboration.	Making Progress  Ongoing 	We have actively had engagement with communities and schools, and we also worked with Para Kore to support iwi communities and hapu. Again, this is an action that requires consistency and will remain as an ongoing goal.





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