

## Chief Executive Officer's report

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**Since I joined Moreland in December 2019, I have witnessed the resilience, commitment and flexibility of our organisation. And the incredible spirit in our community.**

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This has been especially so during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreland Council's key directions are to strengthen community, support a progressive city and to govern responsibly. In a pandemic, those directions remain critical. We redeployed staff to support our relief efforts, health and safety initiatives and business continuity plans. And we began the process of welcoming 309 full-time equivalent staff through the State Government-funded Working for Victoria scheme, creating new jobs for Morelanders.

Staff in our essential areas worked to maintain services at a critical time. Hundreds of staff began working remotely for the first time. Many of our frontline staff found truly resourceful and new ways to deliver services. We started storytelling programs on social media, online support services for young people and a new helpline to connect those dealing with isolation. Our emergency management staff worked closely with the State Government to support testing and community engagement programs.

Moreland's councillors have shown great leadership in prioritising new programs to support the community, business and the arts sector through the pandemic. At Moreland, our first priority is always the community. That means diverting resources to help those most affected by the pandemic and its social, health and economic impact.

This annual report covers the year to 30 June 2020. Our response to COVID-19 had an impact on achieving some of the goals that had been set before the pandemic. Through good financial management, we are on track to increase our special community support measures and continue other operations at current levels in the coming year.

The gains we have made so far on continuous improvement have seen further progress in our customer service performance. We had more requests from customers over the past year, and still our performance improved. We are committed to further improving customer service to provide the best experience possible to our community members and ratepayers.

The new *Local Government Act 2020* has brought higher expectations to how we engage with the community, as well as greater transparency requirements. We have begun our considered approach to implementing the new requirements.

We were reminded of the importance of local councils with the centenary of our vital Maternal and Child Health Services. That was not the only thing to celebrate during the year. Our recently redeveloped Brunswick Town Hall precinct won the Civic Landscape Award of Excellence at the Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture Victoria 2020 Awards.

We enabled households to reduce waste going to landfill with the roll out of our opt-in food and garden organics collection service. An additional 6,500 households opted-in to this collection after it was launched in July 2019. Our Waste Services and Sustainable Communities Team made great efforts to deliver this important change, improving how we operate our waste services.

Plus, we added to our A Park Close to Home project, with the acquisition of sites on Sydney Road (Brunswick), Cardinal Road (Glenroy) and Service Street (Coburg).

We completed an upgrade of the Bonwick Street shopping strip in Fawkner, delivering a space for the local community to connect with new seating, improved pedestrian facilities and better lighting. We also started streetscape improvement works at Gaffney Village in Pascoe Vale.

Brunswick's Sheils Reserve redevelopment delivered new recreation and play equipment for residents to enjoy, as well as revegetation to increase habitat for local biodiversity.

We supported community sport with the construction of female friendly changerooms at Reddish Reserve, Hadfield and the clubhouse at Coburg's Glen Cairn Tennis Club. And we completed one of the first projects in our 20-year Aquatic and Leisure Strategy with upgrades to Fawkner Leisure Centre, including vibrant new spaces and improvement works to the pool.

Other highlights for the year included:

- achieving a residual 'carbon footprint' for operations that is 70% below the baseline year of 2011-12, although there is much more work to be done before we achieve our goal of zero emissions
- the first full year of purchasing 100% of our electricity for operations from renewable sources
- the development of a new Youth Strategy and Implementation Plan
- the use of Virtual Moreland technology to improve community engagement with planning and development
- an award for excellence from the Stormwater Victoria Awards for our Chain of Ponds collaboration at Moonee Ponds Creek
- recognition of our Word Play, library family literacy program at the Department of Education and Training Victorian Early Years Awards and the Victorian Public Healthcare Awards.

We also supported local government communities in areas affected by the summer bushfires. Our staff supported the emergency response provided to Mallacoota evacuees from the emergency relief centre in Melbourne. Others travelled to Wodonga to help the recovery effort in Towong Shire.

The 2019-20 year has been without precedent. Thank you to everyone who has helped us deliver the best outcomes possible for our community. We will build on our city's strengths and take ourselves forward, together.

**Cathy Henderson Chief Executive Officer**