

## Mayor's message

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**The past financial year has seen us face unprecedented challenges. But I am proud of the resilience of the Moreland community in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.**

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On behalf of my fellow councillors, I want to thank all of you for coming together and supporting each other. We worked hard to support the community during this uncertain and difficult time. We delivered outreach to our more vulnerable residents. We delivered home library services, online maternal and child health services, and so much more.

We introduced a COVID-19 financial hardship policy. This included an interest-free payment plan for rates. We also deferred rates without penalties. We quickly made \$80,000 in grants available to support community responses to the pandemic. And put in place greater support in the next financial year's budget.

We waived fees for businesses, turned off parking meters in our car parks and delayed the roll out of new parking restrictions. We supported our vibrant arts community through our arts and community recovery grants.

But the past year has seen us tackle more than coronavirus. This report wraps up the last year of the current council term. I would like to thank my fellow councillors for the service they have given over the past 4 years. Together with our community and Moreland staff, we have achieved so much.

As we come to the end of our Council Plan 2017-21, we have much to celebrate. After several years of campaigning by councillors and the community, level crossings are on track to be removed in Moreland.

Design work has been completed for the community hub in Glenroy. Work on this \$30.1 million project is due to be completed in 2021. Preparation has begun for the Saxon Street community hub. Our Counihan Gallery, at the heart of Moreland's cultural life, has been expanded. Brunswick Baths has been renovated. We consulted on the final design of one of Brunswick East's favourite parks, Fleming Park and we brought forward its redevelopment so this will be delivered in one stage.

Your council has also been working to help create a more liveable Moreland. We have been advocating for public transport and have remained at the forefront of action to reduce problem gambling. Our Libraries After Dark program has gone from strength to strength. The program is being rolled out at 10 locations across Victoria to prevent gambling harm. Moreland will manage the \$1 million program – funded by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation – over the next 4 years.

We have been working hard to increase open space across Moreland, especially in our most densely populated areas. We want every resident to be within walking distance of a park. Our A Park Close to Home program made strong progress during the year. We purchased 543 square metres of soon to be green space on Sydney Road opposite Brunswick Town Hall. And sites at Cardinal Road in Glenroy and Service Street in Coburg. These joined the purchase made in the previous year in Frith Street, Brunswick. And new parks at Tinning Street and West Street began construction.

We also adopted a planning scheme amendment to increase the size of trees planted in new developments. This will help shade and cool our streets. It helps us create a more sustainable, liveable Moreland as the climate heats up and our municipality grows.

We took an important step forward in our fight against climate breakdown. We adopted our Zero Carbon Moreland Climate Emergency Action Plan. The plan sets out how we will support residents, businesses and schools to act together in response to the climate emergency. We are already on our way with the roll out of an opt-in food and garden organics collection service for the whole municipality, and the implementation of our plastic wise policy.

During the year we installed more electric vehicle fast-charging stations, with Moreland now having 5 across the municipality. This brought the total number of public charging stations to 14. This is the

highest number of free to use, renewably-powered public electric vehicle chargers owned and operated by any Victorian council.

We made improvements to the way we consult our diverse community. We launched our new online community consultation platform during the year. Conversations Moreland provides opportunities for the community to give feedback, collaborate and become more involved in local council decisions.

Thank you to everyone who has come together to tackle the challenges of the past year. We have achieved so much because of you.

With local government elections in October, this is another opportunity to help shape the future of your community. I encourage you all to get involved and build Moreland's future as one community, proudly diverse.

**Mayor Cr Lambros Tapinos**