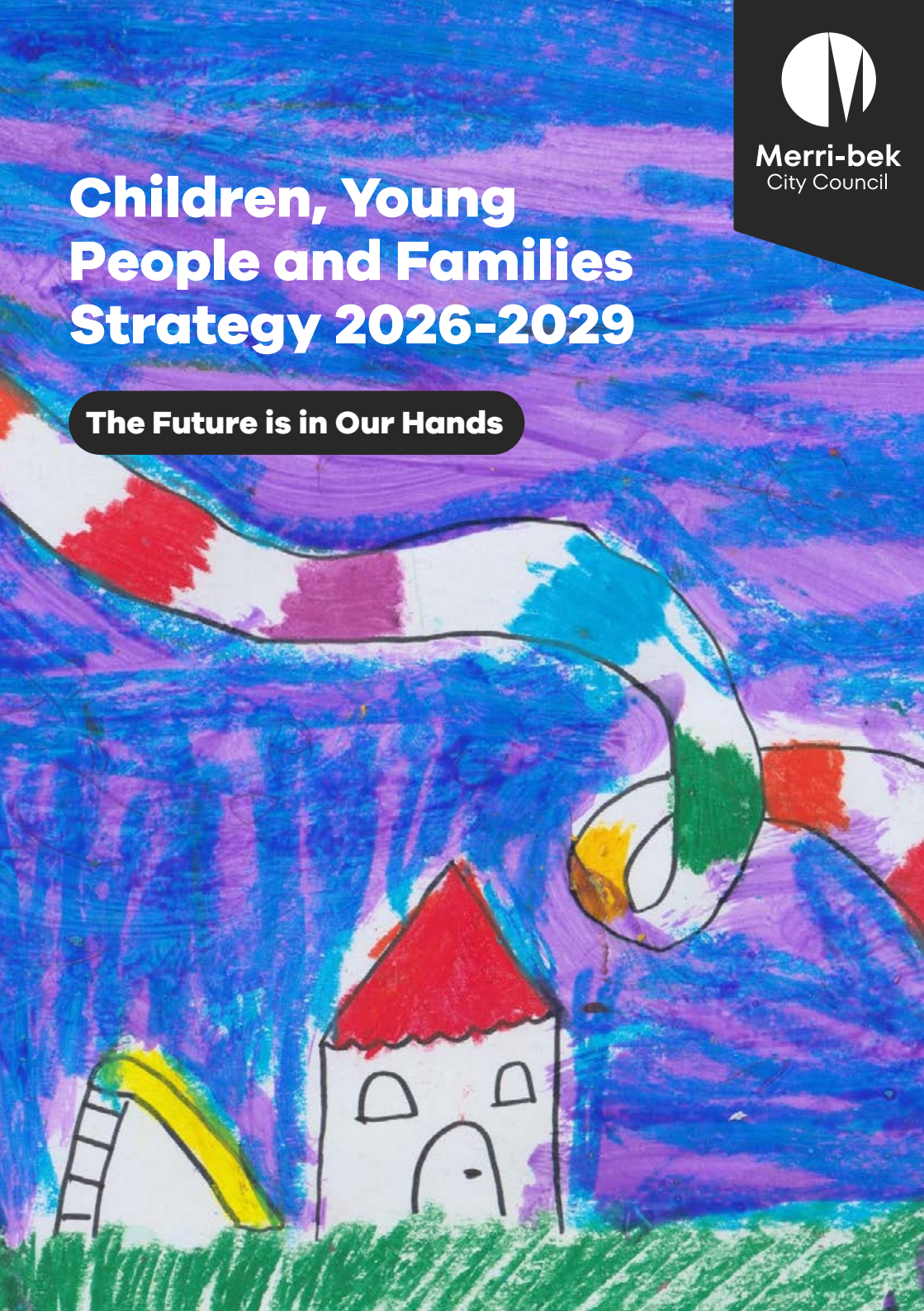
Merri-bek
City Council

Children, Young People and Families Strategy 2026-2029

The Future is in Our Hands





Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area known as Merri-bek. We pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging, as well as to all First Nations communities, who significantly contribute to the life of the area.

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Caitlin 10
On my paper I put what I think future Merri-bek should look like. On the dogs harness it says, 'future Merri-bek'. I also added ducks, ducklings and a recycling bin'.

"Future Merri-bek"

Introduction

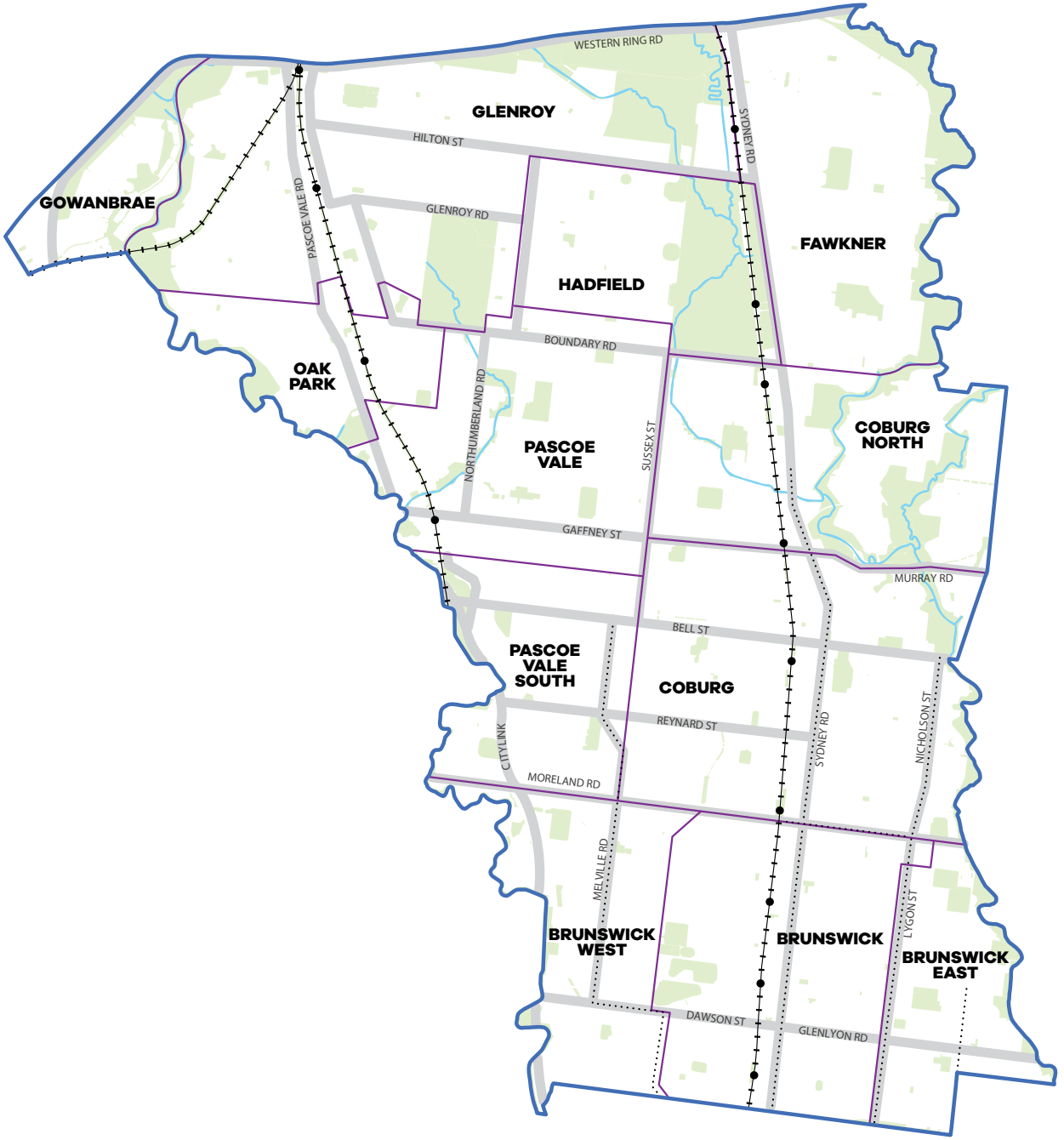
Merri-bek City Council has drafted a new Children, Young People and Families Strategy 2026-2029.

A strategy is a plan that helps us reach a goal. It explains:

- **What we want to achieve**
- **The steps we will take to make it happen**

Why did we make the strategy?

We want to make sure that Merri-bek is a happy, healthy, safe and fun place for children, young people and families to live and learn.



Can you find the suburb where you live on the map?

How Council made the draft strategy

We made this strategy by listening to lots of people in our community.

This included, children, young people, families and people who help and support others.

We asked children, young people and families three questions:

1. What do you like about living in Merri-bek?
2. What are the issues or challenges for children in Merri-bek?
3. What would make Merri-bek a better place for all children?

Most of the people we heard from were children:

- Many were aged 0 to 11 years
- Lots were aged 5 to 11 years

Most people we spoke to live in Merri-bek and many were from Coburg.

More than 1,400 people shared their ideas!

Isabella 11
My future Merri-bek is a beautiful diverse place where we can have a home for things like... sacred kingfishers and platypus and most of all...EVERYONE!



How did we get the feedback?

Surveys

For different groups and ages available online and in printed form.

We asked lots of people to share their ideas using surveys. You could fill them out online or on paper.



Art activities

For children to provide feedback for this project.

Children shared their ideas through fun art activities.

There were special activity books where children could:

- Draw what they like about Merri-bek
- Show what would make Merri-bek an even better place

There were two options:

- For younger children (ages 0–8)
- For older children (ages 9–12)



Pop-ups

Pop-ups at local community spaces around Merri-bek.

We set up 5 pop-up spots where people could come and share their ideas.

These were held at:

- Coburg Farmers Market
- Glenroy Library
- Fawkner Leisure Centre
- Glenroy Hub
- Brunswick Baths

Anyone could stop by, learn about the strategy, and tell us what they think.



Focus groups

8 focus groups

We also talked with different groups of people to hear their ideas. We spoke with 8 groups, including:

- Young people from Merri-bek
- LGBTQIA+ young people
- People who work in community services
- School principals
- Children's groups
- Council staff

These conversations helped us understand what people think and what they need.



"Everyone



Sophie 12
"This Drawing is a bright and colourful town with a clear river and bike tracks and park. It also has a bright clear sky."



Anonymous 11
"This world has clean energy, and everyone is friendly."

is friendly"

What Council heard from children, young people and families

Here are some of the main ideas people shared:

People really like parks, libraries and places to meet and being kind, including everyone, and feeling part of a community is very important.

Some people are worried about:

Mental health (feelings and wellbeing), money and cost of living, getting the help and services they need. Some groups, like migrant and refugee families, can face extra challenges.

On the following page is an infographic of what the children said at the Children's Forum.

Circle the topics that are important to you



Gus 11
"My art is based in the future and the environment is the best."

OUR COLLECTIVE VOICE - MERRI-BEK CHILDREN'S FORUM 2025



What do you LIKE about living in your Merri-Bek?

- multi-cultural & diverse
- warm & welcoming community
- accessible public transport
- sharing our ideas
- good food
- street art
- gathering spaces
- shops
- nature
- open spaces
- libraries

What are the ISSUES or CHALLENGES

- construction
- dirty public toilets
- Bullying, racism, homophobia
- littering
- not enough activities
- dog poo
- smoking & vaping
- road safety
- screen safety
- our voices not heard
- community safety
- homelessness

COMMUNITY & ACTIVITIES

- more shops, cleaner streets
- cheaper food & activities
- festivals
- children's calendar of events
- fundraising
- jobs
- address cost of living
- kids mental health
- kids only spaces

What would make Merri-Bek a BETTER PLACE for all children?

SCHOOL

- better lunches
- more subject choices
- sports facilities
- volunteers for after-school activities

SAFER ROADS

- road crossings
- speed cameras
- more car parks
- better footpaths

OPEN SPACES

- all ages playground equipment
- parks & nature reserves
- dog parks
- flying foxes!
- fix vandalism
- community gardens
- less taxes, more animals
- more clean toilets

scribed with ♥ by Zahra Zainal on Wurundjeri Country zahrazainal.com zahradrawslive

Chloe 11
"This picture is about future Merri-bek. This Merri-bek includes clear rivers, safer streets and is a living organism."



What people told us helped us decide what is most important and what actions to take in our strategy.

Our vision

Merri-bek is a place where all children, young people and families feel safe, valued and have the opportunities and support they need to be happy, healthy, to learn and thrive.

Council's three main priorities

We want to improve for children, young people and families:

Health and wellbeing

- Feel safe and cared for.
- Play and be active.
- Have their basic needs met.
- Get help from health services.
- Live in a clean and healthy environment.

Connection and inclusion

- Have a say and be heard.
- Feel included and connected.
- Use spaces, services and activities that welcome everyone.

Learning and thriving

- Build skills for life.
- Get support through different stages of life.
- Learn and grow from an early age.

What Council will do next

Make a plan

We will make plans using your ideas.
These plans will show what we are going to do.

Work together

People at Council will work together and with others in the community to make these ideas happen.

Take action

We will:

- Make services better
- Work with other groups
- Keep listening to the community
- Speak up for what children, young people and families want and need.

How we will make it happen

Work together

We will work with community groups and families so everyone is supported.

Be fair and inclusive

We will make things easier for everyone and support people who need extra help.

Listen to children and young people

Your ideas and voices will help guide decisions.

Support families

We know families are important, so we will support parents and carers too.

"happy peaceful calm"



Gwen 10
"This picture is what I hope Merri-bek looks like in the future, happy, peaceful, calm."

"safe and fun



equipment"

Saarvi 12
"My drawing is about a beautiful park full of safe and fun equipment that children will love. This park is where people can walk/run exercise and do anything they want with a beautiful like with fences so the dogs don't ruin it."

How you can get involved and have your say at Council

Join the Children's Reference Group

Bonnie Thomson: **BNthomson@merri-bek.vic.gov.au**

Teneha Greco: **TGreco@merri-bek.vic.gov.au**

Join the Youth Ambassadors

Lillian Dunn: **LDunn@merri-bek.vic.gov.au**



Jaidyn 11

"There is a man, walking on a footpath and he is happy because he has nothing on his mind. There are birds flying in the sky. There are also trees flowing in the wind and a clean sky."

How to find out more about the strategy

To learn more about the draft strategy and provide your feedback, visit

conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/children-young-people-and-families-strategy

Accessibility

We want this document to be easy for everyone to read and understand.

We have:

- Used simple and clear language.
- Included headings and short sections to make it easy to follow.

If you need this document in another format, we can help.

You can ask for:

- Large print
- Easy Read version
- Translations into other languages
- Help to understand the information

If you would like support or a different format, please contact us:
Email: **accessibility@merri-bek.vic.gov.au**
Phone: **9280 1111**

Zunairah 12
"My drawing is a wheel chair accessible play ground. Just because you're disabled does NOT mean you can't play. I also have bins and toilets because we need more of them."



Merri-bek
City Council

Cover image: Anonymous
"My hopes and dreams are that no one is homeless and there are lots of water slides."