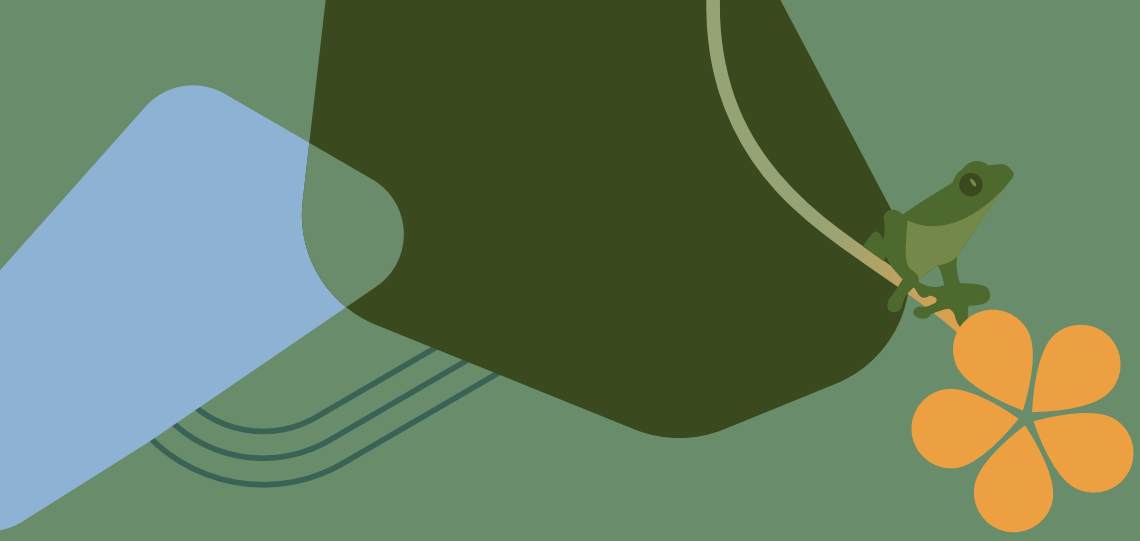
Merri-bek
City Council

Merri-bek Integrated Water Management Action Plan

2025 – 2030



Acknowledgement of Country

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek, and pays 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. Land and sovereignty was never ceded.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbreviation	Full Term
CAPEX	Capital Expenditure
CASBE	Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment
CMA	Catchment Management Authority
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (now DEECA)
DTP	Department of Transport and Planning
EPA	Environment Protection Authority
EP Act	Environmental Protection Act 2017
GED	General Environmental Duty
IWM	Integrated Water Management
LGA	Local Government Area
MCC	Merri-bek City Council
MW	Melbourne Water
MCMC	Merri Creek Management Committee
NA	Not applicable (the reason may vary)
OPEX	Operational Expenditure
WSUD	Water Sensitive Urban Design
WWCHAC	Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

Note: Neighbouring councils include Hume City Council, Mitchell Shire Council, City of Whittlesea, Darebin City Council, Moonee Valley City Council, City of Melbourne, and City of Yarra.

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1. Executive summary

This Action Plan outlines Merri-bek City Councils second five-year plan under Merri-bek City Councils Integrated Water Management Strategy (IWM Strategy) 2040 – Towards a water sensitive city. Building on the foundation of the 2020-2025 Action Plan, this new phase(2025–2030) sets out targeted actions to support the transition toward a resilient, liveable, and water-sensitive Merri-bek.

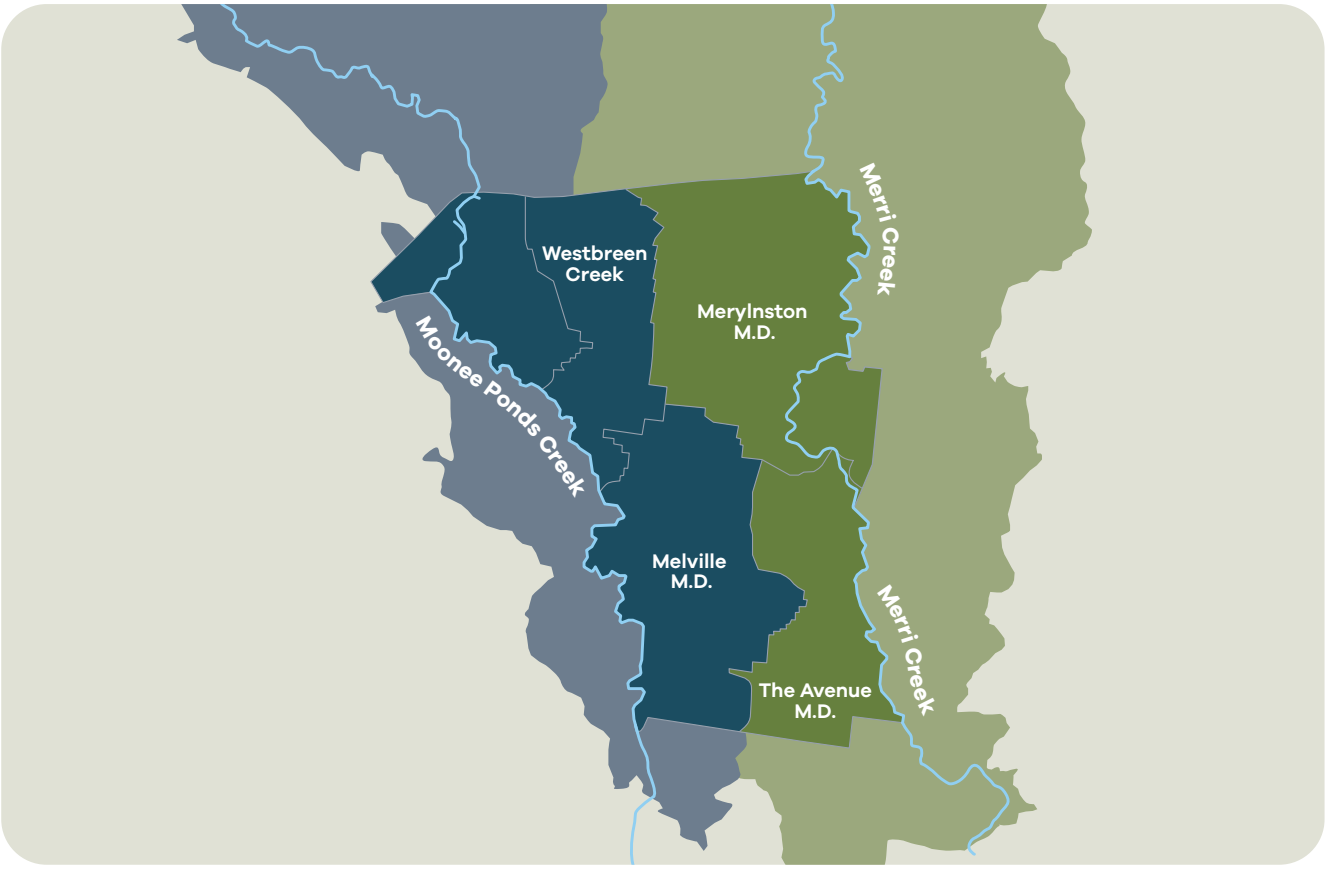
The Action Plan identifies priority initiatives across five key outcomes, including:

1. Collaborating in a water sensitive city
2. Resilient and Liveable Landscapes
3. Wise Water Use
4. Healthy Waterways
5. Community Embracing Water Sensitive Urban Design

Collaboration and partnerships are key to implementing the action plan. Merri-bek continues to work alongside Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Melbourne Water, DEECA, Merri Creek Management Committee, Chain of Pond Collaboration, other councils, water corporations, landowners, volunteer groups, and our community.

The Action Plan aligns with the existing IWM Strategy framework, maintaining continuity with its measures and indicators while enabling future refinement, particularly in how Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung values are embedded and how improved data informs future measures.

Figure 1: Map of Merri-bek City Council showing local creeks, sub-catchments and their connection to the broader Merri Creek and Moonee Ponds Creek Catchments – credit RAIN Consulting.



"Water, which has sustained us for thousands of years, forms part of our Dreaming. We, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, are the Traditional Owners of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung lands".

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Nation Statement, Water is Life: Roadmap for Traditional Owner Access to Water Nation Statement (2022)

"A Wurundjeri individuals physical body, and what keeps it alive, can be likened to the physical elements of a landscape like a river, a tree, or a mountain. The spiritual body and what keeps you alive can be compared to the elements that lie within the physical, such as a rivers water, a leafs veins, or a trees sap, that keeps our body alive. The health of self and Country are intrinsically linked through your individual cultural landscape; if Country is ill, so will you be and vice versa."

M. Nicholson & D. Jones, Wurundjeri-al Narrm-u (Wurundjeri Melbourne): Aboriginal living heritage in Australias urban landscapes (2020)

"It is envisaged that all water bodies and their tributaries throughout Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country will be afforded the rights of a living entity, respected for their cultural values, and that the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung would act as the voice of those entities."

Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Nation Statement, Water is Life: Roadmap for Traditional Owner Access to Water Nation Statement (2022)

2. Cultural and Strategic Foundations

2.1 – Waterways: Cultural and Ecological Significance in Merri-bek[1]

The waterways and landforms of Merri-bek are of profound cultural, spiritual, and ecological significance to the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people, the Traditional Owners of this land. **Merri-bek meaning rocky country**, in Woi-wurrung language, is a place shaped by the basalt plains of the Werribee volcanic province. The landscape features stony rises, ephemeral wetlands, and deep creek valleys—places that have long supported ceremony, gathering, and resource harvesting.

Major waterways such as **Merri Creek** and **Moonee Ponds Creek** played central roles in Wurundjeri life. **Merri Creek** served as a vital meeting place for the Kulin Nation and is believed to be the resting place of respected leaders like Ngurungaeta (headman) Billibellary. **Moonee Ponds Creek**, named after Ancestor Moonee Monee, once flowed as a chain of waterholes rich in wildlife. Both creeks are lined with culturally significant sites, including artefact scatters, middens, and scarred trees.

Smaller tributaries—including **Edgars Creek, Merlynston Creek, Westbreen Creek, and Campbellfield Creek**—also hold deep cultural value. These waterways were used for fishing, camping, and gathering, supported by archaeological evidence.

Despite colonial impacts and urbanisation, these waterways remain vital cultural and ecological corridors. **Protecting and restoring their health is critical not only to honouring Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung connection to Country, but also to the wellbeing of all living things.** Healthy creeks support biodiversity, cool urban environments, and provide meaningful spaces for learning, reflection, and community connection.

1 The Coburg Conversation Context Mapping, Prepared for Merri-Bek City Council by Greenshoot Consulting February 2024

2.2 – Designing with Country: Embedding Cultural Values

In 2025 Council continued its partnership with the Wurundjeri Policy and Partnerships subcommittee to embed Wurundjeri perspectives in place-based planning and design. This collaboration is supporting the development of Country-centred design principles and cultural narratives that inform strategic planning and design for urban renewal initiatives.

2.3 – Emerging Directions: Recognising Waterways as Living Entities

Across Australia and globally, there is growing recognition of **waterways as living entities** with their own rights and intrinsic value—beyond their use to humans. In Victoria, this approach is being embedded through initiatives such as the **"Water is Life" Roadmap** and **"Waterways of the West" Action Plan**, which promote legal and cultural recognition of waterways as interconnected, living systems and acknowledge Traditional Owners as their voice and custodians.

A landmark example is the Yarra River Protection (Wilip-gin Birrarung murron) Act 2017, which declares the Birrarung (Yarra River) as a single, living natural entity stretching from its source to the sea. The name *Wilip-gin Birrarung murron* means "keep the Birrarung alive" in Woi-wurrung, the language of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people—Traditional Owners of much of the Birrarungs catchment.

Merri-bek City Council reflects this shift through its commitment to **self-determination and cultural preservation**. In 2021, the Council, alongside Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents, signed a Statement of Commitment, setting out a shared vision for reconciliation and support for pathways toward Treaty.

This statement outlines seven key commitments that guide the Councils ongoing partnership with Traditional Owners, including:

1. Building strong partnerships with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
2. Supporting traditional ceremonies such as Welcome to Country
3. Embedding Aboriginal cultural competence across Council
4. Consulting Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people on key decisions
5. Protecting and promoting Aboriginal cultural heritage
6. Recognising and interpreting Aboriginal water values and protecting waterways
7. Integrating cultural values into natural resource management

Through these commitments, Merri-bek supports a future where waterways are honoured as living cultural landscapes and managed in partnership with Traditional Custodians.

Statement of Commitment to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung People and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities of the City of Merri-bek (PDF).

3. Policy Context

Merri-bek City Council plays a vital role in managing local water resources and protecting waterways, contributing to the health of Port Phillip Bay and the resilience of our urban environment. Through planning policy, infrastructure delivery, maintenance, and advocacy, Council ensures that development and municipal activities align with best practice in IWM and WSUD.

Moomba Park Wetland, Fawkner, Completed 2023

Council's responsibilities are guided by state and local policy frameworks, with some of the more recent and influential ones including:

3.1 – Legislative and Planning Context – EP Act, GED, OMLI, VC154

Environmental Protection Act 2017[2] (the EP Act) sets out the environmental obligations and protections for all Victorians and uses a prevention-based approach. The Environmental Protection Authoritys (EPA) governance structure, purpose, powers, and tools for regulation are enshrined in the Act EP[3].

In July 2021, an amendment to the EP Act introduced the general environmental duty (GED) for all Victorians. The GED expectation is that all Victorians will manage their activities to avoid the risk of environmental damage.

If pollution or damage is caused, one must respond and restore the area, and the EPA must be told immediately[4]. In May 2024, the Obligations of managers of land or infrastructure (OMLI) was introduced, setting additional requirements for councils to identify, assess, and manage localised environmental risks – including stormwater pollution – in line with the GED. This order requires councils to integrate these obligations into local risk management frameworks, action planning, and regular reporting.

Publication 1739.1 provides EPA guidance on meeting the GED, including how stormwater risks should be identified and managed.

For more detail on how stormwater risks are identified and managed in line with the GED in Merri-bek, and how this aligns with the IWM Action Plan, refer to Appendix B – Stormwater Risk Summary.

The EP Act and GED obligations work alongside the Victorian Planning Scheme requirements introduced through Amendment VC154 (2018), which embed IWM and stormwater management standards into private development. VC154 ensures that new developments meet best practice environmental management (BPEM) objectives for stormwater quality and flow, supporting compliance with the EP Act and protection of waterway health.

3.2 – Integrated Water Management Framework (2017)

The IWM Framework for Victoria, established by Victorian Government in 2017[5], provides a collaborative structure for planning and managing the entire urban water cycle. It enables strategic partnerships between local government, water corporations, catchment management authorities (CMAs), Traditional Owners, and the community to deliver integrated and place-based outcomes.

This is the first time in Australia that collaborative IWM has been implemented at a state-wide scale. The Framework seeks to maximise community value by aligning water, land use planning, and urban development processes.

Merri-bek City Council plays an active role in two IWM Forums:

- **Yarra Forum:** covers Wurundjeri and Bunurong lands; includes Merri, Edgars, Merlynston Creeks.
- **Maribyrnong Forum:** covers same traditional lands; includes Moonee Ponds and Westbreen Creeks.

2 Victorian Legislation. Environmental Protection Act 2017
3 Environmental Protection Authority. Laws and regulations.
4 Environmental Protection Authority. General environmental duty for businesses.
5 https://www.water.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0028/663139/IWM-framework-for-victoria.pdf

Key guiding documents: Strategic Directions Statements and The Yarra Catchment IWM Action Plan[6] and Maribyrnong Catchment IWM Action Plan[7] were developed through this Forum and outlines shared priorities for waterway health, stormwater management, climate resilience, and cultural recognition across the catchment.

Merri-beks involvement ensures alignment between local planning and regional water priorities, supporting shared objectives for sustainable growth, community wellbeing, and protection of waterways.

3.3 – Climate Emergency

In September 2018, Merri-bek declared a Climate Emergency. We have committed to urgent action to respond to this emergency. We support the demand for urgent action on this issue by all levels of government. We invite everyone to get involved and do their part.

We are applying sustainability principles throughout our services, activities and planning. This includes:

- addressing the urban heat island effect
- integrating environmentally sustainable design measures into our planning and building operations
- becoming a water sensitive city – including through implementation of VC154, embedding Integrated Water Management (IWM) requirements in private development via the planning scheme
- protecting our biodiversity and natural environment

3.4 – DRAFT Merri-bek Council Plan 2026-30

The draft Council Plan 2026–2030 sets a renewed direction for Merri-beks commitment to environmental sustainability, cultural connection, and community wellbeing. It is structured around five strategic themes. IWM directly supports the following:

- Theme 1: Care for Nature and Climate Resilience; This theme recognises the importance of protecting and restoring natural systems, increasing resilience to climate change, and supporting Traditional Owner self-determination.
- Theme 3: Beautiful and Liveable City; This theme focuses on creating a well-designed, accessible, and sustainable built environment that supports vibrant and inclusive neighbourhoods.

Refer to Appendix C for a detailed mapping of Merri-bek Council strategies that align with and support the IWM Strategy and Action Plan.

6 https://www.water.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/702422/Yarra-Catchment-IWM-Action-Plan.pdf
7 https://www.water.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/702425/Maribyrnong-Catchment-IWM-Action-Plan.pdf

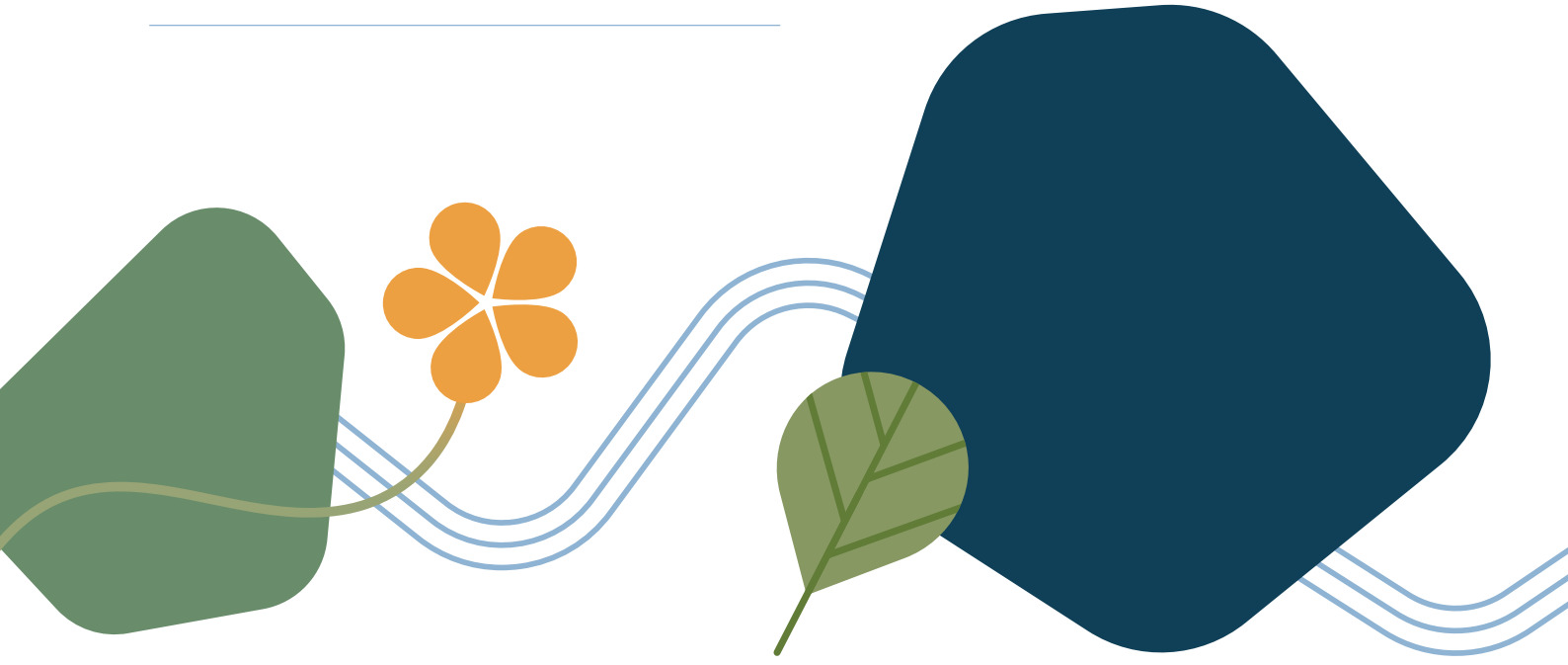
4. Integrated Water Management Strategy 2040

In 2014 Merri-bek began a journey towards becoming a water sensitive city with Watermap 2020 – Merri-bek's Path to a water sensitive city (2014-2020). Our journey continues to 2040 and beyond, with our second strategy, Integrated Water Management Strategy 2040 – Towards a water sensitive city, adopted in 2020.

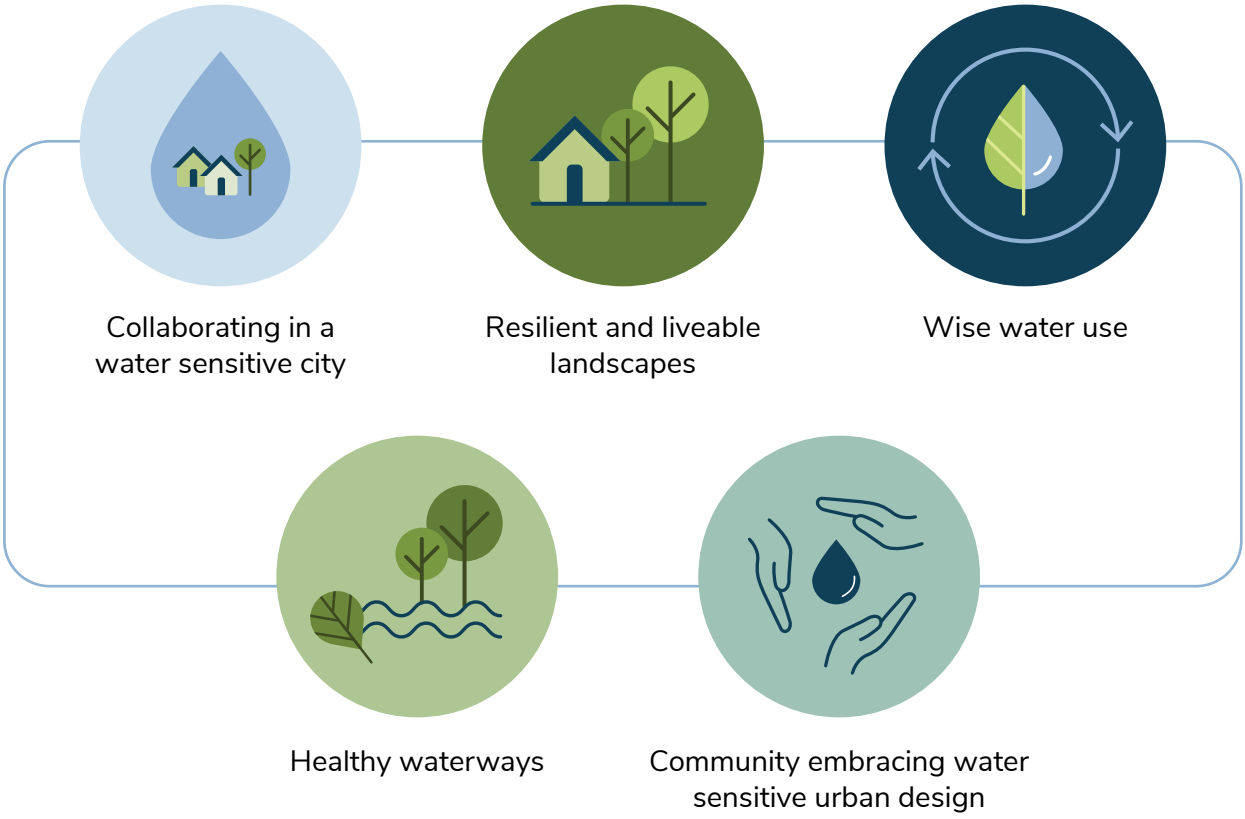
Our **vision** is that Merri-bek will be a water sensitive city: a liveable city where we take good care of our waterways and make the most of our precious water resources. We keep our open spaces resilient to climate change impacts and, enhance urban and natural environments and support community health and wellbeing. Council leads by example and working together with our key partners, supports community actions to become a water sensitive city.

IWM principles in the strategy:

1. **Merri-bek is a water supply catchment** – stormwater is a precious resource accessible at a range of supply scales.
2. **Merri-bek provides ecosystem services** – the built environment supplements and supports the function of the natural environment.
3. **Merri-bek is resilient to flood and drought** – supports good urban design, green city and cool microclimate.
4. **Merri-bek is a water sensitive community** – the community is engaged and enabled to participate in creating a water sensitive city.



The IWM Strategy 2040 is built around five key outcomes:



Gavin Park Raingarden Opening Ceremony, Completion 2022

4.1 – Working Together in a water sensitive city

Merri-bek City Council plays a key role in local water management, helping to protect waterways and Port Phillip Bay through planning policies that support environmentally sustainable development and IWM. Refer to Table 1 for a further summary of other functions that council also undertake.

While state government leads on water policy, local councils manage day-to-day operations—such as local stormwater, drainage, and urban water infrastructure—and contribute to broader initiatives like Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) in streetscapes and open space.

Water management is a shared responsibility, requiring coordination across the entire water cycle. Refer to Figure 2 for an overview of key delivery partners.

Table 1 – Council's Water Management Functions

Service Focus	Council Functions
Sustainable Council Buildings	Design, implementation, and ongoing water efficiency and maintenance practices.
Open Spaces & Irrigation	Water-efficient design and maintenance of sports fields, trees, and parks.
Stormwater Harvesting & Wetlands	Planning, delivery, and maintenance of water reuse and treatment systems.
Water Sensitive Streetscapes	Integrated WSUD features in street design and renewal projects.
Drainage Infrastructure	Engineering design and maintenance of local stormwater networks.
Stormwater & Flood Management	Flood risk planning, modelling, emergency response, and adaptation to climate impacts.
Revegetation & Biodiversity	Habitat restoration, planning, and ongoing care of creek corridors and open space.
Sustainable Private Development	Planning scheme guidance, assessment, and compliance enforcement.

Our partners

Moonee Ponds Creek

Chain of Ponds Collaborations

- Conservation Volunteers Australia
- Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek Inc
- City of Moonee Valley
- Living Colour Studio – Architecture Interior Design Art
- Greater Western Water
- City of Melbourne
- MooneeBUG
- Moonee Valley Sustainability

Interest in both waterways and collaboration groups

- Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
- Melbourne Water
- Yarra Valley Water
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
- EPA
- DTP
- Parks Victoria
- Hume City Council
- CASBE
- Residents
- Developers
- Waterwatch
- Litterwatch

Merri Creek

Merri Creek Management Committee

- Darebin City Council
- Merri-bek City Council (formerly Moreland)
- Whittlesea City Council
- Yarra City Council
- Mitchell Shire Council
- Friends of Merri Creek
- Merri Stream Team
- The Merri Paddle
- Friends of Coburg Lake and Surrounds

Figure 2: Diagram illustrating external water management partners

5. Summary of Achievements and Development of New Actions

In 2020, Council adopted the IWM Action Plan 2020–2025 to continue its transition toward a water sensitive Merri-bek. This plan marked a significant shift toward whole-of-council collaboration and laid the groundwork for continued innovation and investment through the 2025–2030 Action Plan.

Key Achievements (2020–2025):

Stormwater Treatment & Water Savings:

- Moomba Park Wetland (Fawkner): Treated 49 kg/year of nitrogen; created habitat for growling grass frogs; improved amenity and signage.
- Brunswick Parklands IWM Plan: Achieved 108 kg/year nitrogen removal and saved 22 ML/year potable water through reuse.
- Dunstan Reserve Harvesting: Removed 130 kg/year nitrogen and saved 13 ML/year potable water.
- Gavin Park Raingarden: Delivered 114 kg/year nitrogen reduction and improved stormwater quality.

Innovation & Pilots:

- CB Smith Passive Irrigation Trial: Permeable kerb irrigation for 4 trees with soil moisture monitoring.
- City Oval Permeable Pavement Trial: Enhanced passive irrigation and flood mitigation.
- Streetscape WSUD: Delivered tree pits and streetscape raingardens like the ones in Stewart and Eddy Streets.

Waterway Restoration:

- Moonee Ponds Creek – Stage 1: Rehabilitated 400 m of urban waterway via Chain of Ponds collaboration.

Community Engagement:

- Supported 1,000+ volunteers, 6,775 education participants, and 333 events through programs like Waterwatch and Merri Creek Management Committee.

Sector Leadership & Partnerships:

- Secured $2.03M in external funding (e.g., DEECA, Melbourne Water).
- Active participation in IWM Forum and strategic partnerships with Melbourne Water, YVW.

Private Development Contributions:

- 14.2 ML/year rainwater tank capacity installed via ESD enforcement – equivalent to nearly six Olympic pools.

Council Efficiency Upgrades:

- Smart irrigation retrofits enabling real-time water management and efficiency gains.

For the detailed Summary of Achievements please refer to here.

Refer to Appendix D for an overview of the development process and the IWM Action Plan Engagement Report for a summary of community and stakeholder engagement.

IWM Benefits

6. The Actions

The following summarises what we plan to do over the next five years, the benefits we aim to achieve, and who we will work with to make it happen. These actions are grouped to reflect our strategic focus areas and show how we will work together across council and with the community. Refer to Appendix A for the detailed list of all of the actions.

Progress of action plan will be tracked through a structured monitoring and evaluation framework. Please refer to Appendix E for details on how Council will report annually on outcomes and conduct a comprehensive evaluation at the end of the Action Plan period.

Moomba Park Wetland,
Fawkner, Completed 2023

6.1 – Collaborate, enable, and empower

Outcome 1 – Collaborating in a Water Sensitive City

Outcome 5 – Community Embracing Water Sensitive Urban Design

Merri-bek Council shares our water management responsibilities with neighbouring councils and other water managers like Yarra Valley Water and Melbourne Water.

It is important to work with partners to achieve outcomes collectively.

Traditional Owners can also teach us how to care for Country, and how to include cultural values in water planning and management.

Continuing partnerships and planning with our partners (refer to section 3.6.3-Figure 2).

Indicators

- **Working with others improves IWM outcomes**
- Increase uptake of water sensitive urban design in new development,
- Reduced flow volume conveyed from new development,
- Increased uptake of rainwater tanks in existing development
- Working together with community groups for a transition to water sensitive cities

What we will do:	Key Benefits			Key Partners
Continue to work with Traditional Owners and support Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people to care for and be the voice of the creeks	 Community and Culture	 Local Amenity	 Biodiversity	MCC, WWCHAC, DEECA, Melbourne Water, neighbouring councils
Continue to collaborate in the State Government led Integrated Water Management Forums	 Community and Culture	 Water Usage / Supply	 Storm / Flood Mitigation	MCC, IWM Forum, DEECA
Improve how we measure and track our progress and impact	 Water Usage / Supply	 Pollution / Litter Reduction	 Storm / Flood Mitigation	MCC,DEECA, MW, neighbouring councils
Improve how we share water management knowledge and information	 Community and Culture	 Water Usage / Supply		MCC, Neighbouring councils, WWCHAC, DTP, DEECA, Merri Creek Management Committee, Chain of Ponds, MW
Support developers and the community with updated guidance on blue-green infrastructure like rain tanks, raingardens and stormwater management	 Community and Culture	 Urban Greening	 Water Usage / Supply	MCC, IWM Forum, DEECA, MW
Continue to advocate for stronger planning provisions and funding for water management and waterway health	 Community and Culture	 Water Usage / Supply	 Biodiversity	MCC, IWM Forum, DEECA, MW, DTP, CASBE
Continue community planting days, Waterwatch and Nature Stewards programs to support connection and education around the natural environment	 Community and Culture	 Biodiversity	 Water Usage / Supply	MCC, Waterwatch, MCMC, neighbouring councils

Refer to **Appendix A** for detailed actions.

6.2 – Cooling, canopy, and biodiversity

Outcome 2 – Resilient and Liveable Landscapes

It is important to keep rainwater in the landscape to support our environment and ecosystems. Rain and irrigation keep our leafy streets, sports fields and local parks cool and green.

Water is essential for biodiversity, living creatures and our urban forest. As climate change increases temperatures, water can be used to keep our people and environment cool and healthy.

Indicators

- Increase urban tree resilience supported by water
- Increase permeability
- Reduce flood extent
- Reduce urban heat island

What we will do:	Key Benefits			Key Partners
Continue to find ways to use stormwater to water trees, parks and sportsfields.	Water Usage / Supply	Urban Greening	Local Amenity	MCC, MW, YVW, WWCHAC
Increase where we water our sportsfields, parks and reserves for cooler and greener public spaces.	Urban Greening	Urban Cooling	Local Amenity	MCC, MW, WWCHAC
Continue to explore and design multi-functional stormwater management and include nature-based solutions that add greening and cooling benefits.	Storm / Flood Mitigation	Urban Greening	Urban Cooling	MCC, MW, MCMC, WWCHAC, Chain of Ponds Collaboration, Friends of groups
Continue to design and construct wetlands which improve the quality of stormwater and provide habitat and improved amenity in parks and reserves.	Biodiversity	Urban Greening	Local Amenity	MCC, MW, MCMC, WWCHAC, Chain of Ponds Collaboration, Friends of groups

Refer to **Appendix A** for detailed actions.

Dawson Street Raingardens, Brunswick

6.3 – Water use, flow, and quality

Outcome 3 – Wise Water Use

Outcome 4 – Healthy Waterways

Our waterways have cultural significance for First Nations peoples and are highly valued by the Merri-bek community. We all have a responsibility to protect the health of our waterways.

As our population grows and our climate changes we need to develop diverse ways to increase our water supply and protect our waterways. This could look like:

- Designing and maintaining systems that treat our stormwater
- Using rainwater and stormwater to irrigate sports fields, parks and gardens
- Using stormwater treatment systems like wetlands, raingardens and water tanks as alternative water supplies
- Slowing down water flowing into our creeks to improve the quality of the water, protect our environment and provide stable habitats for our ecosystems.

Designing with water in mind helps our urban environments withstand the impacts of drought and climate change.

Indicators

- Reduce Councils mains water use
- Increase Council alternative water use where there will be overall positive impact on the environment
- Reduce community water use per capita
- Reduce stormwater pollutant loads, and flow volumes discharged to receiving waters
- Increase provision of water for biodiversity

What we will do:	Key Benefits			Key Partners
Deliver 2 new large scale Stormwater Harvesting projects to collect, treat and reuse rainwater from roofs and roads for our sportsfields	 Water Usage / Supply	 Storm / Flood Mitigation	 Pollution / Litter Reduction	MCC, MW, WWCHAC
Reduce water use through education and sustainable design policies	 Community and Culture	 Water Usage / Supply		MCC, MW
Educational signage that explains how wetlands and raingardens improve water quality and support healthy eco systems.	 Water Usage / Supply	 Biodiversity	 Local Amenity	MCC, MW
Support the community to install, maintain and use rainwater tanks	 Community and Culture	 Water Usage / Supply		MCC, Friends of Merri Creek, Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek, MCMC, Chain of Ponds Collaboration
Continue supporting community action to reduce litter and waterway pollution	 Community and Culture	 Pollution / Litter Reduction		MCC, Friends of Merri Creek, Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek, MCMC, Chain of Ponds Collaboration

Refer to **Appendix A** for detailed actions.

Appendices

Appendix A – Integrated Water Management Action Plan (2025-2030) Details

The scope of the action plan renewal does not include changing the strategy so the framework in the strategy, including Outcomes, Indicators and Measures remains the same.

Actions marked with an asterisk (*) are subject to business case development and the availability of grant funding, and will be considered in future Council budget processes.

Outcome 1 – Collaborating in a Water Sensitive City

Action number	Action Description	Key Agencies
1.1.1	Walk alongside and support Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people , ensuring we care for, advocate for, and tell the stories of the waterways and lands in partnership with, and guided by, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as cultural custodians.	MCC, WWCHAC, DEECA, Melbourne Water, neighbouring councils
1.1.2	Work together with WWCHAC to agree how Wurundjeri cultural values are acknowledged within the IWM Strategy and translated into action across all Council delivery pathways.	MCC, WWCHAC
1.1.3	Work with our partners including WWCHAC to better present and share IWM information to tell the water story, share resources, and coordinate advocacy actions using a variety of platforms and technologies.	MCC, Neighbouring councils, WWCHAC, DTP, DEECA, Merri Creek Management Committee, Chain of Ponds, MW
1.1.4	Continue collaboration with academic institutions to advance WSUD research and emerging technologies. For example, permeable pavement, passive irrigation, green roofs, Internet of Things (IoT) research, to enhance stormwater management, system efficiency, and adaptive solutions.	MCC, Academic Institutions, MW
1.1.5	Establish baseline data, measures, indicators and targets to track IWM outcomes and inform decision making. Targets include: nitrogen retention, percentage of catchments treated by WSUD, passive irrigation, permeability, volume of harvested and re-used alternative water supply.	MCC, DEECA, MW, neighbouring councils
1.1.6	Advocate with MW for co-investment in the revitalisation and naturalisation of waterways including Merlynston Creek.	MCC, MW

1.1.7	Continue to work with IWM Forum to advocate for improved funding for integrated water projects, stronger collaboration between councils and water authorities, and stronger integration of IWM principles into Victorian Planning Provisions to embed stormwater management in urban development.	IWM Forum, DEECA

Outcome 2 – Resilient and Liveable Landscapes

Action number	Action Description	Key Agencies
2.1.1	Further develop, update and implement technical guidance relevant to the Merri-bek context to increase uptake, quality and performance of passively irrigated trees and landscapes in capital works programs.*	MCC, MW, neighbouring councils
2.2.1	Investigate emerging trends and issues in private and public realm relating to permeability, including soil health and the applications of permeable pavement/asphalt. In collaboration with our partners, use the findings to develop resources 1) to enhance understanding of impacts of permeability on urban resilience and healthy waterways and 2) outline catchment scale opportunities for improved permeability and implementation , and 3) guide the ongoing expansion of permeable surfaces through our renewal and capital works programs for examples bike lanes, carparks, and footpaths.*	MCC, MW, LGAs, DEECA, CASBE, WWCHAC
2.2.2	Urban Planning, ESD, and Planning Compliance teams will continue to enforce existing WSUD requirements and stormwater management obligations during construction through their work. Through CASBE continue to advocate for improved Environmentally Sustainable Development in the planning scheme.	CASBE, LGAs, DTP
2.3.1	Develop internal decision-making frameworks and guidelines for integrating flood modelling into capital project planning. Provide targeted capacity building for capital works delivery teams on flood risk, inundation, and climate change impacts. This will support informed decision-making by offering clear guidance on: • Effective use of flood and hazard data and modelling • Incorporation of climate change considerations into infrastructure design, including selection of appropriate data sources	MCC

2.3.2	Align with the Emergency Management Victoria Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy and identify critical infrastructure to inform prioritisation of drainage improvement projects.	MCC, MW, Emergency Management Victoria
2.3.3	Develop priority drainage asset upgrades program informed by proposed significant development, reviewing, building on and updating our current catchment flood modelling data and local information. Commence implementation to proactively address stormwater capacity, flooding risks, and WSUD integration through the capital works program.	MCC, MW
2.3.4	Improve flood resilience and water efficiency by integrating fit-for-purpose IWM approach at priority sites and identifying IWM Priorities.	MCC, MW
2.3.6	Deliver outcome-focused IWM planning for the Coburg and Brunswick activity centres to enhance liveability, manage stormwater and flood, support water efficiency, and build climate resiliency.	MCC, MW, WWCHAC, YVW, DTP

Outcome 3 – Wise Water Use

Action number	Action Description	Key Agencies
3.1.1	Support development of sustainable sportsfield guidance to complement and build on the implementation of the Sportsfield Surface Policy and apply it to relevant capital projects.	MCC, MW, EPA, DEECA
3.1.2	Continue to integrate water efficiency measures including water tanks through the implementation of the Sustainable Buildings Policy to all new builds and retrofits.	MCC
3.2.1	Seek external funds to support the delivery of the feasibility study, opportunities include: • Oak Park stormwater harvesting scheme in the Moonee Ponds Creek catchment, an • CB Smith stormwater harvesting scheme) in the Merri Creek catchment. • AG Gillon (Reaburn Reserve) – Brunswick Central Parklands stormwater harvesting scheme in the Moonee Ponds Creek catchment*	MCC, MW, WWCHAC

3.2.2	Review the stormwater harvesting priority program for irrigation of sportsfields and passive open space to align with the sportsfield renewal program, irrigation renewal program, and Open Space Action Plan.	MCC,
3.3.1	Enhance community engagement and education initiatives to support water literacy and increased IWM education (including through Waterwatch, litter management, and nature play). And progressively add updated educational signage at our Wetlands/ SWH to support the education initiatives.	MCC, Waterwatch, MCMC, WWCHAC
3.3.2	Build on existing partner programs to improve communities capacity to maintain and upgrade existing private rainwater tanks.	MCC, MCMC, Chain of Ponds Collaboration

Outcome 4 – Healthy Waterways

Action number	Action Description	Key Agencies
4.1.1	Seek external funds to support the delivery of at least two large scale WSUD projects with increased habitat in the next 5 years. The projects being investigated to deliver include: • Moonee Boulevard wetland • Kingsford Smith Ulm Reserve wetland • Fran Street Reserve wetland • K W Joyce Reserve large scale bioretention system • Gilpin Park wetland and irrigation under the Brunswick Parklands IWM Plan*	MCC, MW, Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek, Chain of Ponds Collaboration
4.1.2	Embed WSUD and IWM principles across projects in Merri-bek: in Council projects (road renewals, streetscape upgrades, private developments, Coburg Library, Piazza) and in externally delivered works within the municipality—such as Big Build Victoria initiatives and level-crossing removals—so every capital investment aligns with the IWM Strategy and delivers measurable water-sensitive outcomes.	MCC, MW, WWCHAC
4.1.3	Continue strategic assessment and prioritisation of Gross Pollutant Trap (GPT) projects with flexibility to adapt to changing priorities.*	MCC, MW

4.1.4	Continue to seek funding and support community group activities and education for litter reduction across the Moonee Ponds and Merri Creeks sub-catchments. Prioritise action at litter hotspots and litter sources.	MCC, MW, Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek, Friends of Merri Creek, MCMC, Chain of Ponds Collaboration
4.1.5	Support development and distribution of communications materials for new and existing businesses which provides information on how to manage litter and waste in shopping strips and prevent it from entering our waterways.	MCC, MW, Neighbouring Councils, Business networks
4.2.1	Complete a feasibility study for the Jukes Road, Fawkner, stormwater diversion into Bababi Djinanang.	MCC, MCMC, Friends of Merri Creek, WWCHAC

Outcome 5 – Community Embracing Water Sensitive Urban Design

Action number	Action Description	Key Agencies
5.1.1	Explore opportunities to increase enforcement resources to improve compliance with stormwater quality requirements in the Victorian Planning Provisions (Planning Scheme)	DEECA, DTP
5.1.2	Continue to update and promote WSUD guidance for developers to reflect emerging best practices in rainwater capture, WSUD asset design, construction, and maintenance. Ensure guidelines support effective stormwater management in private developments and align with current industry standards and regulatory frameworks.	MCC, MW
5.3.1	Continue to run community planting days, promote and fund programs such as Waterwatch Activities and Nature Stewards Program and actively partner with neighborhood houses to trial programs.	MW, Waterwatch, Universities
5.3.2	Develop targeted communication tools to help the community understand their flood risk and how to respond appropriately — including flood mapping, climate change impacts, and safe use of overland flow paths during heavy rainfall events.	MCC, MW

Estimated Funding and Budget Summary

The estimated capital and operational funding requirements for the IWM Action Plan 2025–2030 have been included in Councils forward 5-Year Capital Works Program. The total estimated cost of the Action Plan is $14.1 million, over five years. This includes both operational expenditure (OPEX) and capital expenditure (CAPEX).

- **Operational funding (OPEX):** $450,000 in operational expenditure is part of our Base budget and existing IWM opex budget over the five-year period, primarily to support program coordination, technical advice, education, compliance, and engagement initiatives. $80k extra over 5 years requested subject to future budget processes, business case approvals and grant funding.
- **Capital funding (CAPEX):** A further $7.62 million in capital projects is identified in Councils forward 5-Year Capital Works Program (as per Council meeting June 2025) and is subject to future budget approval and detailed design. The plan identifies $5.85 million in targeted external grants, primarily from Melbourne Waters *Liveable Communities*, *Liveable Waterways* program, DEECA, and other state or federal funding programs.

  Over the past decade, Merri-bek has successfully secured over $5 million in grant funding to deliver IWM projects. Building on this strong track record, Council will continue to proactively pursue funding opportunities to support the delivery of priority actions and maintain momentum toward the citys long-term vision of becoming a water sensitive city.
- **Maintenance costs:** Maintenance for new WSUD assets is estimated to rise incrementally from 2027–28, reaching additional $90,000 total by 2030. Asset maintenance is typically covered in construction contracts for the first year and absorbed into broader open space contracts thereafter.

Note: Capital costs listed are indicative. Final funding allocations will be confirmed through business cases and detailed design, and considered in future Council budget processes.

Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the five-year budget. It will be considered through the annual budget process in the relevant year and shows the funding mix across OPEX, CAPEX, external funding and maintenance.

Financial Year	OPEX		CAPEX**		Estimated additional maintenance cost per year
	Existing Opex and Base budget $ for IWM	Subject to Business Case and external grant funding $	Seeking external grants (Partnership opportunities with Melbourne Water and DEECA)	Council 2025-29 budget (as per Council meeting June 2025)	
2025-2026	90,000	0	500,000	787,000	NA***
2026-2027	90,000	30,000	3,000,000	3,297,000	NA***
2027-2028	90,000	50,000	2,350,000	2,656,500	15,000
2028-2029	90,000	0	0	750,000	30,000
2029-2030	90,000	0	0	130,000	45,000
Sum*	450,000	80,000	5,850,000	7,620,500	90,000

Table 1. Budget for the delivery of the IWM Action Plan

* Additional Funding is required to achieve the targets.

** Capital costs are indicative only. Final budget allocations will be confirmed through future Council budget processes following completion of detailed design.

*** Maintenance costs apply once assets are constructed. Landscape maintenance is part of the construction contractor after one year.

Appendix B – Stormwater Risk Summary for Merri-bek

Legislative Context and Risk Management

Under the **Environment Protection Act 2017** and the **OMLI Order (May 2024)**, Merri-bek City Council is required to:

- Identify risks posed by urban stormwater to human health and the environment;
- Develop an action plan to mitigate those risks;
- Review and report on progress every five years;
- Consult with partners including CMAs, water corporations, and the community.

These requirements must be integrated with Council's broader Risk Management Framework and align with the Integrated Water Management Strategy 2040 and the current IWM Action Plan (2025–2030).

Key Risk Areas

Risk Area	Description	Impacts	Linked IWM Actions
Pollution (TN, TSS, TP, Heavy metals, litter)	Runoff carries pollutants (nutrients, litter, hydrocarbons, pathogens) to creeks and wetlands	Waterway degradation, ecosystem stress, human health risks, recreational limitations	1.1.4, 1.1.5, 1.1.6, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.3.1, 3.2.1, 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.1.4, 4.1.5, 5.1.2, 1.1.7
Urban Flooding	Inadequate or undersized drainage infrastructure; lack of multifunctional flood storage	Property damage, disruption to transport/ services, reputational risk, increased insurance claims	2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.3.4, 2.3.5, 3.2.1, 5.3.2, 1.1.7
Excess Flow and Volume	High imperviousness and lack of detention/ infiltration options	Creek erosion, flow regime alteration, habitat loss, downstream flooding	1.1.4, 1.1.5, 1.1.6, 2.1.1, 2.2.1, 3.1.1, 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.2.1, 1.1.7
Stormwater Reuse and Water Conservation	Stormwater not reused; continued high potable water demand	Strain on potable supply, missed climate and cost savings	1.1.5, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.3.2, 1.1.7
Private Asset Non-compliance	Inconsistent installation, approval, or maintenance of WSUD in private developments	Reduced stormwater treatment effectiveness, regulatory non-compliance (GED)	2.2.2, 3.3.2, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 1.1.7
Heat Vulnerability and Vegetation Stress	Inadequate water supply to support vegetation and mitigate heat	Urban heat island effect, tree and turf stress, amenity and health impacts	2.1.1, 3.1.1, 3.2.3, 1.1.7

Risk Area	Description	Impacts	Linked IWM Actions
Climate Change Resilience	Longer droughts, more intense storms, and rising uncertainty in rainfall	Overstressed infrastructure, heat extremes, water scarcity, climate-related failures	All actions are responding to this, specifically 1.1.4, 2.3.4, 2.3.5, 3.2.3, 1.1.7
Community Behaviour and Awareness	Gaps in public understanding of water-sensitive behaviours, asset use, and flood preparedness	Poor private maintenance, littering, unsafe use of overland flow paths	1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 3.3.1, 5.3.1, 5.3.2 , 1.1.7
Partnership and Governance Risk	Failure to maintain strong collaboration with Traditional Owners, water authorities, neighbouring councils, and community	Misalignment of efforts, duplicated or delayed projects, lost opportunities for funding, lack of cultural alignment	1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.6, 1.1.7, 2.3.1

Using Risks to Drive Action and Investment

Councils understanding of stormwater risks should directly inform how we:

- target high-risk locations—such as areas with high imperviousness, pollution loads, or flood exposure;
- prioritise actions that deliver co-benefits, e.g. combining flood mitigation with cooling, reuse or biodiversity;
- embed stormwater performance metrics (e.g. flow reduction, pollutant removal, harvesting volumes) early in project design;
- engage with partners and communities where education and maintenance are key to reducing risk;
- track progress via IWM Action Plan indicators to demonstrate environmental, social and compliance outcomes.

Alignment with the IWM Strategy and Action Plan

Each risk area is addressed through the IWM Action Plan (2025–2030), which supports the long-term transition to a water sensitive city under the IWM Strategy 2040. Key alignments include:

- **Outcome 1 – Collaborating in a water sensitive city:** Partnerships with Traditional Owners, inter-agency collaboration, and community co-design initiatives.
- **Outcome 2 – Resilient and Liveable Landscapes:** Increased permeability, drainage upgrades, flood storage, and urban cooling through integrated landscape design.
- **Outcome 3 – Wise Water Use:** Stormwater harvesting schemes, rainwater tanks, irrigation efficiency, and water reuse planning to reduce potable demand.
- **Outcome 4 – Healthy Waterways:** Pollution reduction through WSUD retrofits, GPT assessments, education, and improved stormwater quality outcomes.
- **Outcome 5 – Community Embracing Water Sensitive Urban Design:** Improved asset compliance, updated developer guidance, stronger enforcement, and community programs such as Waterwatch and stewardship.

Next Steps for Compliance and Implementation

- Update and publish a revised IWM Action Plan by 2029, embedding this risk framework and linking it to the IWM Strategy.
- Establish baseline data, measures, indicators and targets to track IWM outcomes and inform decision making. Targets include: nitrogen retention, percentage of catchments treated by WSUD, passive irrigation, permeability, volume of harvested and re-used alternative water supply. (Action 1.1.5).
- Strengthen governance by integrating stormwater risks with Councils Risk Management Committee reporting and Directorate-level planning.

Appendix C – Related Council Strategies

The following Merri-bek Council strategies support and align with the Integrated Water Management Strategy and Action Plan.

Councils strategies and plans collectively support Integrated Water Management (IWM) by embedding water-sensitive practices across programs, projects and service delivery. Climate and risk plans promote Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) to reduce heat and manage flood impacts, while nature and urban forest strategies enhance green infrastructure and ecological health. Open space and urban design frameworks enable the integration of WSUD and waterway restoration, and drainage plans ensure the effective management of water assets. Recreation strategies further reinforce IWM by supporting sustainable water use and the creation of cool, healthy public spaces.

Theme	Strategy/ Plan
Climate & Resilience	• Urban Heat Island Effect Action Plan (2016–2026) • Cooling the Upfield Corridor Action Plan (2018) • Climate Emergency Action Plan (2025–2030) – DRAFT • Climate Risk Foundational Action Plan (2023–2025)
Biodiversity & Nature	• Urban Forest Strategy and Implementation Plan (2017–2027) • Nature Plan and Implementation Plan
Open Space & Urban Design	• Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (2024) • Upfield Corridor Urban Design Framework • Public Place Service Improvement Plan (2024) • Edgars Creek Conservation and Development Plan • Westbreen Creek Conservation and Development Plan
Water Infrastructure Management	• Drainage Improvement Plan (2020) • Drainage Asset Management Strategy • Drainage Asset Management Plan 2020
Recreation & Wellbeing	• Aquatic and Leisure Strategy (2018–2038) • Sport and Active Recreation Strategy (2020)

Appendix D – Development of the new action plan 2025-2030

To develop this plan, we undertook the following steps:

- Review the Integrated Water Management 2020-2025 Action Plan to establish what we have achieved and what areas still need work.
- Cross reference against DEECA IWM Forum Action Plans for the Maribyrnong catchment and the Yarra catchment to ensure alignment.
- Review of other relevant Merri-bek strategies and action plans to ensure alignment and cover any gaps.
- Analysis of the Moonee Ponds and Merri Creeks sub-catchments to identify opportunities and priority issues. This included targeted discussions with Friends of groups, Merri Creek Management Committee, Chain of Ponds, and neighbouring councils.
- Draft new actions for 2025-2030 action plan and analysis of resource requirements and implementation timelines.
- Internal engagement on new actions and implementation plan.
- Partnership with Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation WWCHAC water unit (ongoing)
- Community engagement on proposed new actions
- Finalise the actions and the action plan incorporating feedback from engagement.

Evaluation Findings from the 2020–2025 Action Plan

The new action plan has been informed by evaluation of action progress to date and targeted engagement over 2024 and 2025. Key findings from the evaluation include:

- An identified gap and opportunity to increase support for Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung as the Traditional Owners and custodians of Country (including waterways) aligning with Merri-bek's Statement of Commitment,
- Some actions from the previous plan should be streamlined or transitioned to ongoing internal operations—such as governance, monitoring, and asset management.
- Incomplete actions have been evaluated to understand what challenges or barriers delayed or prevented implementation, to inform how the outcome might still be achieved through the next action plan or through other aligned council action plan or council program.
- Some actions are now incorporated into other aligned strategies and plans such as Nature Plan and Open Space action plans.
- A lack of baseline data has made tracking progress and impact difficult. Future actions have been drafted to better monitor progress against appropriate measures and indicators.

The evaluation also found there is a need:

- To tell the story of water better to improve communities connection to the natural environment and develop understanding of the issues and what we can each do to help.
- To develop an approach to share information including across the organization, with partners, Traditional Owners, neighbouring councils, Melbourne Water and the public.
- For technical guidance and upskilling to support the uptake of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) in the private and public realm. Internally this also means in capital works including but not limited to sports and park upgrades, road and transport projects.
- To continue to build an understanding of flood and climate modelling and how to interpret and apply it more comprehensively in decision making.
- To improve our interaction with our diverse community, including education resources about protecting our waterways and sustainable water use.

These findings directly shaped the structure and priorities of the 2025–2030 Action Plan.

Appendix E – Monitoring and Reporting Framework

Annual Reporting

Purpose:

- Update IWM Steering Committee on implementation progress
- Support program delivery and adaptive management

We will report on:

- Progress on key actions; identification of risks to the program
- Report on all the measures for each year*:
  - Indicator 1. Existing MoUs, funding agreements, grants secured; Area of land/waterways managed by Traditional Owners (ha)
  - Indicator 2.1. No. of trees irrigated with non-potable water
  - Indicator 2.2.a. Area of permeable surfaces delivered.
  - Indicator 2.2.b.% of private developments meeting 20% permeability (ResCode compliance)
  - Indicator 2.3. Number of capital flood mitigation projects delivered through IWM approach (e.g. raingardens, tree pits, permeable pavement/asphalt, talking tanks, etc.)
  - Indicator 2.4. Area of irrigated sportsfields and open space (ha)
  - Indicator 3.1. No. of irrigation systems upgraded; total ML saved by replacing potable to alternative water
  - Indicator 3.2. Alternative water sources that substitute potable mains water supply ML/yr (Target: Additional 25 ML/ year stormwater harvested by 2030)
  - Indicator 3.3. Number of collaborative projects with partners, the community and businesses to increase the number of water tanks, water smart gardening and WSUD on private property and reduce per capita water use
  - Indicator 4.1. TN reduction (kg/yr); Area of catchment treater to best practice (ha), Target: treatment of additional 30 ha catchment for 5 years.
  - Indicator 4.2.a. Wetlands/frog bogs/ swales (ha);
  - Indicator 4.2.b. passive open spaces irrigated by SWH (ha)
  - Indicator 5.1. Annual approved rainwater tanks volume in new developments
  - Indicator 5.2. The volume of new detention systems and water tanks, the area of WSUD treatments
  - Indicator 5.3.a. Number of projects and Council contribution on collaborative projects with community groups (e.g. planting, raingarden webinars, Waterwatch collaboration)
  - Indicator 5.3.b. No. of planting days in the waterways corridors/close to WSUDs, No. of volunteers, $ funding to community groups, # community events (rubbish collection, etc)

2030 Final Evaluation

Purpose:

- Assess success of IWM Strategy implementation
- Identify successes, gaps and lessons

We will report on:

- Report on all actions and measures across 2025–2030
- Overall evaluation of outcomes
- Successes, gaps, lessons for renewal

*Measures are aligned with IWM forum MERI plans

Merri-bek
City Council

For more information visit
Integrated Water Management Strategy | Conversations

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