



**Merri-bek**  
City Council

# Merri-bek Council Action Plan

**2025-26**



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now 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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## About this Council Action Plan

The Council Action Plan 2025-26 supports implementation of the Council Plan 2025-2029 for the first financial year of the 4-year period. It includes the specific actions to be taken during the first financial year in the implementation of the Council Plan 2025-29.

All actions documented in the Council Action Plan 2025-26 are resourced through the 2025-26 annual budget (included in the 2025-2029 Budget).

The Council Plan outlines 5 strategic objectives, one under each theme, which together represent the strategic direction of Council over the next four years.

- **Care for nature and climate resilience;** to create a flourishing and climate resilient Merri-bek by improving wildlife and nature connectivity, greening and cooling for healthier streets and public realm, and engaging the community in meaningful climate action.
- **Healthy and inclusive communities;** To support accessible facilities, programs, services, housing that promote community wellbeing, and connection for all ages, abilities, genders, and cultures, fostering a safe, inclusive, and thriving Merri-bek community
- **Beautiful and liveable city;** Create safe, accessible streets and public spaces that support vibrant communities, active travel, rest and relaxation, and community pride, while ensuring development and growth are well managed and local character is celebrated, ensuring Merri-bek is a welcoming, liveable, and connected place for all.
- **Thriving economy and culture;** A lively and inclusive Merri-bek where the economy supports local business and industry growth, celebrates artistic and creative expression, and connects the community through vibrant cultural experiences.
- **Engaging and responsible council;** a responsive and engaged Merri-bek that prioritises excellent service, embraces engaging communication methods, advocates community needs, and continues to uphold sustainable financial management and accountable governance that builds trust and collaboration with the community.

In achieving each strategic objectives, the Council Plan 2025-29 also sets out:

- A series of strategies which outline the outcomes the plan aims to achieve and how we will meet our objectives.
- Initiatives and Priorities: which describe what councils wants to achieve through services and programs, projects, and infrastructure delivery.
- Strategic Indicators: Measures to monitor progress against the objectives; and
- Related Strategies, Plans and Policies: other strategic planning documents that will support delivery of the Council Plan.

As the Council Plan is integrated with the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan (MPHWP), the health and wellbeing priorities identified below are aligned with the actions outlined in this plan. These numbers indicate actions aimed at delivering positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

These areas are:

1. Improving mental wellbeing and social connection
2. Increasing active living
3. Tackling climate change and its impacts on health
4. Preventing all forms of violence and discrimination
5. Improving food systems
6. Other Areas
  - 6a) Reducing harm from tobacco and e-cigarette use
  - 6b) Increasing immunisations.

The Council Action Plan will drive accountability and turn our four-year Vision into measurable action. Progress will be reported quarterly to Council and included in the Annual Report.

## Theme 1: Care for nature and climate resilience

**Strategic objective:** To create a flourishing and climate resilient Merri-bek by improving wildlife and nature connectivity, greening and cooling for healthier streets and public realm, and engaging the community in meaningful climate action.

#	Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2025/26	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
1.1	Cool our city through planting and protecting canopy trees, increasing permeable surfaces, greening and beautifying our public and open spaces and optimising water capture and re-use to support plant growth.	1	Plant and nurture suitable trees in tricky places, parks, and streets	3	City Infrastructure
		2	Investigate opportunities to reduce impacts of urban heat and increasing heatwaves by collaborating to get more shade trees in places like schools, retirement villages, and backyards	3	Place and environment
1.2	Restore and renature open spaces, creek corridors and waterways that create a vibrant network of interconnected green corridors, enhance wildlife habitats, and promote biodiversity.	3	Facilitate native understorey planting trial project	1,2,3	City infrastructure
		4	Commence the biodiversity and climate change resilience top-up research grant program	1,2,3	City infrastructure
		5	Facilitate the Lizards with bikes: revitalising the Coburg Velodrome underpass project	1,2,3	City infrastructure
1.4	Reduce potable water usage and mitigate floods impacts through stormwater harvesting and improve water quality through raingardens and onsite water treatment.	6	Deliver key stormwater harvesting and wetland projects as outlined in the Integrated Water Management Action Plan	3	Place and environment
		7	Deliver outcome-focused Integrated Water Management planning for the Coburg and Brunswick activity centres to enhance liveability, manage stormwater and flood, support water efficiency, and build climate resilience	3	Place and environment
1.6	Enable and engage the community to take meaningful action for resilience, a safe climate and circular economy, with a focus on vulnerable communities including First Peoples, including delivery of programs and services that improve thermal comfort, reduce energy bills, reduce carbon emissions, and reduce waste to landfill.	8	Promote and support an inclusive energy transition, including solar and thermal subsidies for low-income households	1,3	Place and environment
		9	Deliver circular economy community initiatives and trial a fortnightly rubbish service	3	Place and environment
		10	Increase awareness and capacity of the Merri-bek community on heat and flood risks to support resilience building	3	Place and environment

#	Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2025/26	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
1.7	Deliver climate resilient and sustainable Council-owned infrastructure, fleet, and plant that, during construction and into operations, optimise use of recycled products, maximise water efficiency, capture and re-use water, transition towards all-electric and zero emission fuels and respond to a hotter, more unpredictable future climate.	11	Commence Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Electrification and Plant Room Renewal Project	3	Community
		12	Expand Council's practice to ensure Council buildings and infrastructure are environmentally sustainable in their planning, design, and implementation.  In the first year, focus on tangible increases to recycled content. Over four years work towards new buildings and infrastructure that is 100% renewably powered, lower carbon, reflect circular economy principles, consider ways to be more climate resilient and adapted and work is prioritised to reflect greatest need.	3	City Infrastructure
		13	Continue reducing carbon emissions of Council's fleet	3	City Infrastructure
1.8	Influence the delivery of more climate resilient, less carbon intensive and more nature-inclusive private developments through providing clearer guidance for environmentally responsive design, promoting, and negotiating improved outcomes through the planning permit application process and subsequent proactive enforcement of planning conditions.	14	Continue to advocate for Environmentally Sustainable Design outcomes in the planning scheme to State Government	3	Place and environment
		15	Promote the delivery of more climate resilient, less carbon intensive and more nature-inclusive private developments through providing clearer guidance for environmentally responsive design, promoting, and negotiating improved outcomes through the planning permit application process and subsequent proactive enforcement of planning conditions	3	Place and environment

## Theme 2: Healthy and inclusive communities

**Strategic objective:** To support accessible facilities, programs, services, housing that promote community wellbeing, and connection for all ages, abilities, genders, and cultures, fostering a safe, inclusive, and thriving Merri-bek community.

#	Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2025/26 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
2.1	Improve accessibility, user experience and develop underutilised spaces in our community, aquatics and leisure centres and recreational facilities.	16	Investigate possibility for renewal of Pascoe Vale Outdoor Pool	1,2,4	Community
		17	Review progress of the 20 years Aquatic and Leisure Strategy	1,2,4	Community
2.2	Create supportive, accessible spaces and programs that promote youth wellbeing and social connection, empowering young people to thrive and feel connected to the community.	18	Facilitate support for the Youth Holistic Outreach Program	1,4	Community
		19	Challenging gender-based violence through youth led initiatives	1,4	Community
		20	Scope options to provide additional free third spaces for children, young people, and families	1,4	Community
2.3	Offer a range of services for all ages and stages to support children and families, encourage participation in programs that strengthen community ties, and highlight the importance of early childhood education and health.	21	Progress the development of the Brunswick Early Years Hub	1,4	Community
		22	Increase awareness of library early literacy programming through partnership with MCH	1,6	Community
2.4	Support older adults by providing accessible spaces, programs, and services that encourage independent living, promote health and activity, and encourage connections across generations to enrich their lives and wellbeing.	23	Deliver and extend outdoor help program for seniors for 2025/26	1,2,4	Community
		24	Deliver the ageing well navigation support program to older residents	1, 2, 4	Community

#	Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2025/26 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
2.5	Strengthen the local food system, increasing access to healthy, affordable food, supporting local food producers, community gardens and enterprises, and reducing food insecurity through coordinated local government policies and community partnerships.	25	Deliver programs addressing food security through local markets, referral, and voucher systems, strengthening local procurement and logistic	5	Community
2.6	Build community pride and belonging by encouraging participation, supporting, and hosting events that bring people together that strengthen social connections and celebrate Merri-bek's diversity.	26	Review and implement Social Cohesion Plan	1,4	Community
2.7	Ensure Council services are inclusive, accessible, and culturally safe, promoting social participation, wellbeing, and equity by removing barriers and improving communication for diverse community needs.	27	Evaluation and development of a human rights policy	1,4	Community
2.8	Focus on our core services that are accessible and affordable to everyone, with special attention to mental health, lifelong education and learning services.	28	Create Library of Things plan for Merri-bek libraries	1	Community
2.9	Advocate for and build partnerships to address the social determinants of health including socioeconomic status, education, transport, housing, climate change as well as access to mental health care, community services, emergency food and material relief.	29	Deliver the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan including Functional Zero and Assertive outreach	1,3,4	Community
		30	Advocate for systemic changes to enable a socially just and climate resilient Merri-bek.	3,4	Place and Environment
		31	Embed library social worker program	1,2,3,4,5,6	Community
		32	Explore, including through partnership arrangements, ways to improve health, access and inclusiveness in public & private spaces for people in precarious housing such as access to toilets and	1,3,4	Community

#	Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2025/26 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
			bathrooms, seating under shelter, showers, lockers and a place to heat food as well as improved access to services		
2.10	Support programs that prevent and reduce harm from gender-based violence and other forms of discrimination and promote respectful relationships and encourage everyone to participate safely in our community.	33	Develop and implement Gender Equality and Family Violence Action Plan	1,4	Community
2.11	Maintain food, tobacco and e-cigarette, gambling, alcohol, public health and other education and compliance programs to support a healthy community.	34	Deliver an annual Tobacco education and enforcement program	6	Place and Environment
2.12	Work to preserve First Peoples culture by supporting Elders, empowering younger generations, promoting truth telling, recognising culture's foundational role in wellbeing.	35	Develop and implement First Peoples self-determination strategy	1,4	Community
2.13	Prioritise First Peoples self-determined solutions that promote culture, connection, and community strengthening, which contribute to wellbeing.	36	Partner with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service to investigate options, locations and co-design culturally safe programs and services that promote and improve access to Councils Aquatic and Leisure Centres addressing a range of barriers for Aboriginal Victorians	1,2,4	Community
2.14	Promote genuinely affordable social, quality, and sustainable housing by encouraging well-designed, sustainable developments.	37	Report the achievements of negotiated voluntary social and affordable housing outcomes through planning process in Quarterly Planning Permit Activity reporting to the Planning and Related Matters Council meeting	1,3,4	Place and Environment
2.15	Partnering with government and housing providers to develop accessible, inclusive	38	Progress plans and projects to revitalise and improve central Coburg	1,3,4	Place and Environment

#	Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2025/26 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
	housing, including First Peoples on Council land including in Central Coburg and other locations, as well as advocating for more public and community housing.	39	Deliver the Merri-bek Affordable Housing Action Plan	1,3,4	Place and Environment
2.17	Support the advancement of Ballert Mooroop as Merri-bek's First Peoples gathering place.	40	Support the development of Ballert Mooroop site/community hub with engagement of local First Peoples communities and Traditional Owners	1,3,4	Community

## Theme 3: Beautiful and liveable city

**Strategic objective:** Create safe, accessible streets and public spaces that support vibrant communities, active travel, rest and relaxation, and community pride, while ensuring development and growth are well managed and local character is celebrated, ensuring Merri-bek is a welcoming, liveable, and connected place for all.

#	Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2025/26 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
3.1	Build new and revitalised local parks that promote access to open space close to home, catering for all needs and abilities.	41	Facilitate additional public toilets in parks & reserves	1,4	City Infrastructure
		42	Deliver park priorities	1,2,4	Place and Environment
3.2	Ensure clean, safe, and inviting spaces and vibrant places, promoting responsible and civic engagement and greater neighbourhood pride, usage, and social connections.	43	Deliver increased shade in Victoria Mall	1,4	Place and Environment
		44	Implement hooning prevention measures in reserve carparks in Glenroy		City Infrastructure
		45	Implement the outcomes of the community engagement for the Stage 1 Pilot - Dog Walking in Merri-bek initiatives at 8 different reserves, including improving Gilpin dog park	1,2,4	City Infrastructure
		46	Engage the community in the review of and update of the Domestic Animal Management Plan	1	City Infrastructure
		47	Engage the community in the review of and update of the Local Law		City Infrastructure
3.3	Deliver road and footpath construction and maintenance, prioritising vulnerable footpath users and high-use areas to enhance safety, reduce injury, and improve overall travel experience.	48	Adopt a new Road Management Plan and implement the changes resulting from its review	2	City Infrastructure
3.4	Create healthy streets along our Streets for People network that facilitate active transport, improve accessibility and wayfinding, and improve safety and vibrancy of our streets.	49	Deliver the Streets for People Plan priority projects	2,3,4	Place and Environment
		50	Deliver sustainable transport initiatives that improve options for people walking and riding throughout Merri-bek	2,3,4	Place and Environment

#	Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2025/26 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
3.5	Integrate the Ride and Stride program with infrastructure programs to create safer ways for students to get to school using active and public transport.	51	Deliver the Ride & Stride behaviour change program plus priority infrastructure upgrades around schools, to foster safe and active travel to and from school	2,3,4	Place and Environment
3.6	Expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure including in activity centres and economic development hubs to strengthen adoption of zero emission vehicles by residents and visitors alike.	52	Support the expansion of the Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network across Merri-bek	3	Place and Environment
3.7	Design, approve and develop public places that and promote universal access and personal safety for all.	53	Deliver the Wheatsheaf Road Glenroy streetscape improvement project (over two years)	1,2,4	Place and Environment
3.8	Facilitate high-quality built form outcomes and design innovation through built form policy and controls, planning decision-making, advocacy on state planning reform, and input to State planning decisions.	54	Ensure Council is well briefed to support the best possible design outcomes from major planning applications	1,3	Place and Environment
		55	Reporting on Ministerial planning permit decision-making through the Quarterly Planning Permit Activity Reporting to the Planning & Related Matters Council Meeting	1,3	Place and Environment
3.9	Ensure the Merri-bek Planning Scheme provides an effective framework of local policies and controls that guide the type and location of housing growth to manage land use change, support economic and sustainability objectives, and protect natural and cultural resources.	56	Ensure the review of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme leads to a framework that supports great housing, employment, and liveability in Merri-bek	3	Place and Environment

## Theme 4: Thriving economy and culture

**Strategic objective:** A lively and inclusive Merri-bek where the economy supports local business and industry growth, celebrates artistic and creative expression, and connects the community through vibrant cultural experiences.

#	Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2025/26 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
4.1	Grow a socially inclusive and economically sustainable productive local economy, supporting job creation, young people, the creative industries, and innovation that offers diverse employment opportunities for the Merri-bek community.	57	Continue to develop the Brunswick Design District in partnership with RMIT University and Creative Victoria, with a focus on supporting economic opportunities and job growth in design-related businesses	1,4	Place and Environment
4.2	Invest in great public spaces and streetscapes so they are accessible, clean, safe, and appealing and support vibrant activity centres and precincts and strengthen community connections.	58	Implement safety & amenity improvements in major activity centres including Glenroy, Brunswick, and Coburg	1	Place and Environment
		59	Belair Street, Glenroy, on-street garden bed	1, 3	City Infrastructure
		60	Deliver the West Street Streetscape Renewal Project (over two years)	1,2,4	Place and Environment
		61	Deliver priority actions from the Places for People Plan	1,2,3,4	Place and Environment
4.3	Revitalise local shopping precincts by beautifying streetscapes, activating local community events, removing graffiti, installing public art, and improving amenity to create beautiful, accessible centres.	62	Develop a Public Art Policy	1,4	Community
4.4	Strengthen the local economy with great business programs and actively supporting business and trader networks and associations to support small businesses and stimulate economic and community development.	63	Deliver the Merri-bek Economic Development Action Plan	1	Place and Environment

#	Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2025/26 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
4.5	Facilitate the further improvement and development of key local commercial and industrial precincts to attract business investment, stimulate economic growth, research, create job opportunities, and improve community vibrancy.	64	Maintain the Commercial Priority Planning Service to facilitate well prepared planning permit applications that can deliver new or increased local employment opportunities	1	Place and Environment
4.6	Nurture a vibrant arts culture by promoting diverse artistic activations and creating engaging experiences throughout the precincts right across Merri-bek, to celebrate creativity, attract visitors and reflect Merri-bek's unique culture and heritage.	65	Deliver expanded Merri-bek murals street art program	1,4	Community
4.7	Champion the growth of performing arts spaces, advocate for artists' livelihoods, and promote diverse art forms to enrich the cultural landscape and empower the creative community in Merri-bek.	66	Scope project to activate underutilised community spaces for arts and performance	1,2,4	Community
4.8	Ensure our festival program remains financially sustainable, responsive to community needs and that opportunities to engage with events and the arts are offered equitably across the municipality, catering to diverse and changing community needs.	67	Refresh festival program in line with community needs	1,4	Community
4.9	Enhance Merri-bek's cultural landscape by supporting the production and delivery of arts programs, events, and library facilities, providing opportunities to create, learn, and connect.	68	Redesign grants program to support more opportunities to create, learn and connect	1,4	Community
		69	Develop scope for Fawkner Library redevelopment to increase opportunities to learn and connect	1	Community
4.10	Catalyse the revitalisation of Central Coburg by finalising design and commencing construction of a new Coburg Library and Piazza.	70	Undertake design competition for the Coburg Library and Piazza concept design	1	Community

## Theme 5: Engaging and responsible council

**Strategic objective:** A responsive and engaged Merri-bek that prioritises excellent service, embraces engaging communication methods, advocates community needs, and continues to uphold sustainable financial management and accountable governance that builds trust and collaboration with the community.

#	Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2025/26 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
5.2	Prioritise enhancing customer service by improving responsiveness and effectiveness through meaningful interactions and ongoing improvements in systems and service delivery.	71	Develop Customer Experience Strategy		Community
5.3	Coordinate advocacy efforts to pursue funding, policy changes and projects that achieve positive community outcomes, by collaborating with community members, peak bodies, and other levels of government.	72	Deliver advocacy activities that support council priorities	1,2,3,4,5,6	CEO Office
5.4	Effective communication with the community using accessible language and innovation across communications platforms to create engaging content through Council-owned channels, resulting in greater connection, and understanding.	73	Increase editions and page count for Community News	4	Community
		74	Continue the Merri-bek Community Connectors program	4	Community
5.5	Strengthen engagement through greater use of inclusive communications catering to Merri-bek's diverse audiences; and through education, targeted consultations, storytelling, and closing the loop to community.	75	Maintain the planning and building on-line booking service for improved customer convenience and freely accessible high-quality advice	4	Place and Environment

#	Council Plan Initiatives and priorities:	#	What we will do in 2025/26 Actions:	Health and Wellbeing Priority Alignment	Directorate:
5.6	Prioritise sustainable, climate resilient, equitable, finance management to ensure financial sustainability and effective use of resources and robust decision making.	76	Integrate climate risk into Council processes and systems, focusing on risk management, finance, and asset management and capital works planning	3	Place and Environment
		77	Update Merri-bek's open space and developer contribution models		Place and Environment
		78	Complete or commence construction of every project listed in Merri-bek's first Development Contributions Plan before 30 June 2026		City Infrastructure
5.7	Co-design meaningful consultation of local place initiatives.	79	Finalise designs for the Breese Street precinct improvements	1,4	Place and Environment