



Merri-bek
City Council

Merri-bek Council Action Plan 2025-26

Quarter Two Report



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.

Executive Summary

This report demonstrates Council's ongoing commitment to the sustainable, equitable, and transparent management of funds on behalf of Merri-bek ratepayers, key stakeholders, and the broader community.

In accordance with sections 88 and 90 of the Local Government Act 2020, Council adopted the revised Community Vision 2025–2035 and Council Plan 2025–2029 on 10 September 2025.

The Council Action Plan 2025–26 outlines the specific actions to be undertaken during the first financial year to implement the Council Plan. All actions in the Action Plan are resourced through the 2025–26 Annual Budget, which forms part of the broader 2025–2029 Budget.

This Second Quarter Performance Report provides an update on the delivery of the Council Action Plan 2025–26.

In summary, the status of the 79 actions in the plan is as follows:

Number	Percentage	Status	Definition	Traffic Light
2	3%	Achieved	Completed, achieved	✓
75	95%	In Progress	On track	●
0	0%	Off Track	Behind Target	●
0	0%	Critical	Action is significantly delayed	●
1	1%	Action Not Started	Yet to commence	●
1	1%	Withdrawn	On hold or removed	●

The rest of this report below provides a detailed progress update for each action below including:

- A description of the action
- The percentage complete against what was planned for this financial year
- The status in the form of a traffic light (see table above); an
- Relevant officer commentary.

Theme 1: Care for nature and climate resilience

1: 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.

Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
1	Plant and nurture suitable trees in tricky places, parks, and streets	●	City Infrastructure	Civil works for the Guthrie Street streetscape project are complete, successfully creating infrastructure for canopy growth in high-density urban conditions. The project delivered 27 new tree pits, including 16 in-road pits and nine footpath pits designed for future canopy trees. Environmental cooling was further enhanced through 15 nature strip beautifications, which involved removing as much asphalt as possible to create new garden beds. These sites have been prepared for tree planting during the 2026 season. Planning is underway to delivery further new tree plots to complete this years tricky places program. The 2025 annual tree planting program has concluded, with 2,458 trees successfully established across the municipality. The program strategically prioritised climate resilience and canopy equity: northern suburbs focused on filling vacant nature strip locations, while southern areas targeted high-heat zones by installing trees in specialized pits and cut-outs. These combined efforts advance Merri-bek's commitment to increasing canopy cover and mitigating the urban heat island effect in our most vulnerable precincts.
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	●	Place and Environment	A program logic model was developed to outline the inputs, activities, outputs, and intended outcomes for community engagement in tree-planting initiatives. An internal working group meeting was held to align on appropriate engagement approaches for different community groups.
3	Facilitate native understorey planting trial project	●	City Infrastructure	This project involves planting around 6,000 m2 of new native understorey plants across Merri-bek. These new understorey planting sites will increase biodiversity in the local area and enhance key habitat links. The six new native understorey planting sites include: * Moomba Park, Fawkner, has two sites totalling 1,800m2. Site one is located under a stand of river red gums, where the new planting provides a dense, shrubby habitat which is vital for small birds. The second site is located near the Moomba Park wetlands. It will focus on removing the invasive Chilean Needle Grass and revegetating with indigenous species, which will improve the biodiversity value of the wetland and its surroundings. * Westbreen Creek, Pascoe Vale (750m2): enhancing existing patches of native grasses at Joyce Reserve with the removal of mowing, weed control works, and new native grass plantings. * Kernan Avenue Reserve, Pascoe Vale South, includes 470m2 of new grass and understorey planting next to the Moonee Ponds Creek to create a new habitat node on this significant habitat corridor. * Park Street Linear Reserve in Brunswick East includes 320m2 of new native understorey planting. This new planting builds on earlier plantings with Brunswick South Primary and enhances this key habitat link between the Merri Creek and Royal Park for many species, including pollinating insects. * Yaruk'ho Wilam Edgars Creek Parkland in Coburg North includes a new 2,600m2 planting

Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
				of native understorey in and amongst an existing stand of river red gums to widen the vegetation buffer protecting the Merri Creek. All the sites are currently being prepared, and plant orders have been secured through local nurseries. Community planting days are planned for a selection of sites in 2026.
4	Commence the biodiversity and climate change resilience top-up research grant program		City Infrastructure	Work is currently underway to scope the establishment of the biodiversity and climate change resilience top-up research grant program. This includes defining program objectives, eligibility criteria, funding structure, and governance processes to ensure alignment with Council priorities and community needs. Once the framework is finalised, detailed guidelines will be developed to support transparent and effective implementation. Community and stakeholder engagement will follow to confirm priorities and maximise impact. The program is expected to launch later in 2026.
5	Facilitate the Lizards with bikes: revitalising the Coburg Velodrome underpass project		City Infrastructure	The Lizards on bikes project is an opportunity to revitalise the underpass at the Coburg cycling velodrome. In conjunction with the community, Council has developed a concept plan for the site that includes extensive planting of local native plants, path works, seating, and a mural. The existing rocky batter that leads into the velodrome will be transformed with improved habitat planting for local lizards. The concrete walls of the underpass will be transformed with a mural featuring lizards on bikes The progress of the project includes: * Site preparation works * Development of a planting plan and ordering of 4300 local native plants * Installation of a new gravel path * Development of a project brief for the artwork
6	Deliver key stormwater harvesting and wetland projects as outlined in the Integrated Water Management Action Plan		Place and Environment	The upper Moonee Ponds Creek wetland detailed design process has commenced. The Austin Crescent ephemeral swale detailed design process has commenced. Feasibility study of Martin Reserve stormwater harvesting is underway. Further refinement of the A.G. Gillon and Reaburn Reserve Stormwater harvesting detailed design is underway, to ensure the designs are in accordance with the recently released (update) flood modelling.
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		Place and Environment	Contribution to Integrated Water Management outcomes within Coburg and Brunswick, have been progressed in the following ways: * Draft Integrated Water Management Roadmap has been prepared by Melbourne Water in partnership with Merri-bek and (DEECA led) IWM Forum members. * Integrated Water Management considerations were included in the submission to DTP for the Built Form Overlay for the Merri-bek cluster (Brunswick and Coburg). * Contributed to the Coburg Central IWM Plan (as part of the 'Coburg is Here' concept) by providing advice as subject matter experts through the project working group.
8	Promote and support an inclusive energy transition, including solar and thermal subsidies for low-income households		Place and Environment	Highlights year to date include: * Promotion of expanded Solar Savers service which has multiple reputable suppliers for all aspects of a home energy upgrade. * Procurement of suppliers for the Solar and Thermal subsidy program is almost complete. The program has 44 people on waitlist and promotion will relaunch in early 2026.

Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
				* Through collaboration with Uniting community service organisation, residents on a low income have been supported to access the Victorian Government's Power Saving Bonus. * Promotion of the Victorian Government's Solar for Apartments program has seen Merri-bek having highest local government take-up, with 28 apartment buildings accessing the solar subsidies. * As part of a research project with RMIT University on Renters and Retrofitting, Council recruited renters and landlords for research interviews and home energy assessments. * Construction commenced on the Brunswick Community Battery.
9	Deliver circular economy community initiatives and trial a fortnightly rubbish service		Place and Environment	Circular Economy highlights included: * 74 households and 6 groups held garage sales across the two weekends of the national Garage Sale Trail * Council held a community garage sale during Garage Sale Trail with 22 stalls and 784 shoppers * Council's Bold Business Gathering, hosted by ReWine in Brunswick East, profiled local planet positive businesses. Council's fortnightly rubbish trial in parts of Hadfield and Brunswick launched in July. Monitoring has seen positive trends in reduced waste to landfill and participants quickly adapting to putting the right bins out each week.
10	Increase awareness and capacity of the Merri-bek community on heat and flood risks to support resilience building		Place and Environment	A Climate Resilience Communications Plan was developed to consolidate key messages, communication channels, and supporting tools. Council events, including the Emergency Management Expo and the Seniors Festivals in Brunswick and Glenroy, provided opportunities to share key messages on heat safety and strategies for keeping cool. Heat health sessions for seniors' social groups and child health sessions for parents and carers of babies (including heat health information) are currently being organised. They will be delivered throughout the summer period.
11	Commence Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Electrification and Plant Room Renewal Project		Community	The contract for works was awarded in October 2025. Detailed design is currently in progress, with onsite works scheduled to commence in May 2026 following the completion of end-of-season operations.
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		City Infrastructure	Council is continuing to embed environmentally sustainable considerations into the planning, design, and delivery of buildings and infrastructure. This includes strengthening internal practices and working with partners and suppliers to explore opportunities to improve environmental performance across projects. Examples of these practices include works at Fawcner Library, where opportunities to improve climate resilience in an existing building are being considered through the Climate Vulnerability Implementation - Buildings funding, supporting more informed and resilient infrastructure outcomes. Consistent with Council-adopted positions through its Climate Emergency and Climate Risk strategies, Council is focusing on outcomes such as increased use of recycled content, lower carbon impacts, alignment with circular economy principles, and improved climate resilience, where appropriate and economically viable.

Action No.	Action	Status	Directorate	Comments
	need.			
13	Continue reducing carbon emissions of Council's fleet	●	City Infrastructure	Fleet has developed a 10-year Fleet Asset Management Plan, supported by a Fleet Capital Investment Plan for the 5 years ending in the financial year 2029-2030, that considers the maturity of Zero-Emissions technology today and Zero Emissions technology on the future horizon. The goals of the plan are to deliver targeted emissions reduction across the fleet operations within budget. * Automation of Investment Models and Total Cost of Ownership Modelling * Scenario analysis was conducted based on balancing budget envelopes and Greenhouse Gas emissions. * Planning the replacement of the council's Passenger Fleet to be Net-Zero by 2027. * Purchased one Zero-Emissions Battery Electric Truck, removing 6,000kg CO2e from operations. * Plans are underway to pilot Zero-emissions vehicles across the waste collection fleet, reducing emissions by up to 50,000kg CO2e per vehicle. * Received approval to purchase two Light Commercial Electric Vans that will remove 8,000kg CO2e. * Tender process underway to replace five trucks that were manufactured before 2010, which will remove up to 20,000kg of CO2e
14	Continue to advocate for Environmentally Sustainable Design outcomes in the planning scheme to State Government	●	Place and Environment	There has been a broad range of planning reforms by the State Government over 2025. Many of the proposed changes required input from industry and local government, and in some cases advocacy for change. Merri-bek are members of Council Alliance for Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE) and work closely with other member councils to provide feedback and to undertake advocacy throughout the year. We will continue to do this as the need arises. Such advocacy work over the past quarter includes: * On 4 August 2025, CASBE (on behalf of member councils) released its position paper Planning for Sustainable and Resilient Communities - 2025 and Beyond. - CASBE meets with DTP periodically to advocate for better ESD outcomes through the planning reforms. * While not strictly advocacy, in October officers also submitted a response to DTP in relation to the proposed Built Form Overlay schedules.
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	●	Place and Environment	Internal workshop has been held, to better understand desired outcomes and barriers to achieving improved development outcomes in light of the state planning reforms and the subsequent weakening of influence that council now has on development. Actions from this workshop will inform some of the ways in which council will guide and promote sustainable outcomes in the future.

Theme 2: Healthy and inclusive communities

2: 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.

Action Code	Action Name	Status	Responsible Officer Division	Comments
16	Investigate possibility for renewal of Pascoe Vale Outdoor Pool	●	Community	This forms part of the broader Aquatic Strategy 2018-2038 review, which is currently underway. The scope of works has been confirmed, and the engagement of consultants will be presented to Councillors in 2026.
17	Review progress of the 20 years Aquatic and Leisure Strategy	●	Community	A Councillor briefing was completed during this quarter. A final update on the review of the 20-Year Aquatic and Leisure Strategy will be presented in 2026 to inform future capital works budgets.
18	Facilitate support for the Youth Holistic Outreach Program	●	Community	A new funding and service agreement has been established with Youth Projects. The agreement includes defined targets for service delivery, reporting requirements, and timelines. The program is successfully engaging and supporting at-risk young people.
19	Challenging gender-based violence through youth led initiatives	●	Community	Two schools are participating in the program: Pascoe Vale Girls College and Coburg High School. Peer educators were actively involved in planning and delivering activities for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign at both schools. This included presentations to approximately 170 students and the creation of a collage featuring student campaign messages.
20	Scope options to provide additional free third spaces for children, young people, and families	●	Community	Background research and consultation to identify opportunities for increasing spaces for young people have been completed, informing a report adopted by Council in October 2025 which included the following initiatives: • Expanding youth programs at Fawcner Sports Hall to three afternoons per week on a six-month pilot. • Piloting a family engagement program offering free access to Council spaces three times weekly. • Completing a feasibility study on additional free third spaces by October 2026. • Referring \$319,445 in required funding to the 2026–2030 budget process. • Working with Fawcner's Future to find a short-term youth space, with focus on young women. • Increasing engagement with children aged 8–12 to strengthen their input.
21	Progress the development of the Brunswick Early Years Hub	●	Community	Building Blocks Partnership Agreement finalised, confirming that the State Government will commit funding of \$4,704,545 towards the project which is estimated to cost \$12,404,545. The site has been prepared, and the construction tender is progressing.
22	Increase awareness of library early literacy programming through partnership with MCH	●	Community	Children's Services Librarians delivered 41 outreach visits to early childhood settings to promote library services and literacy among pre-schoolers. These sessions introduced families and educators to library resources, encouraged early reading habits, and supported the development of foundational literacy skills. The outreach program also strengthened community connections and increased awareness of library programs available for young children and their caregivers.

Action Code	Action Name	Status	Responsible Officer Division	Comments
23	Deliver and extend outdoor help program for seniors for 2025/26	●	Community	New sub-contractors have been inducted to deliver the Outdoor Help Program for seniors. During this quarter, 80 residents have received services, with an additional 76 approved jobs currently scheduled for delivery by contractors.
24	Deliver the ageing well navigation support program to older residents	●	Community	Council provided one-to-one support to 60 residents and delivered 14 outreach sessions attended by 260 residents during the first half of the financial year. The primary focus was on the New Aged Care Reforms effective from 1 November, helping residents understand and navigate the changes and what they mean for their individual circumstances. These sessions aimed to increase awareness, build confidence in accessing services, and ensure compliance with the new requirements.
25	Deliver programs addressing food security through local markets, referral, and voucher systems, strengthening local procurement and logistic	●	Community	Council successfully secured \$522 000 from VicHealth to establish the Merri-bek Food Alliance project. The key project partners Open Table, Merri Food Hub, and Fawknor Food Bowls developed a Memorandum of Understanding to build on existing work through a collaborative alliance that aims to ensure everyone in Merri-bek has access to affordable, healthy, and culturally meaningful food. Through the My Smart Garden, a wicking bed-building session was held at Buleke Bek Garden.
26	Review and implement Social Cohesion Plan	●	Community	During this quarter, Council's flagship Social Cohesion Project - Democracy Lab was recognised nationally, winning the MAV Lab Innovation Award in the Connector Award for Community Inclusion and Cohesion category. Eight of the twenty participants from the 2025 Lab are now actively engaged in community initiatives, with four trialling their project ideas at local Neighbourhood Houses. Council also hosted a successful Community Morning Tea at the Glenroy Community Hub in partnership with Open Table, aimed at strengthening social and cultural inclusion for people from marginalised and socially isolated backgrounds. Survey results showed 84% of participants reported stronger social connections and 92% felt an increased sense of belonging. Regional anti-racism work continues in partnership with Whittlesea, Darebin, and Hume councils. This quarter, Council distributed 220 anti-racism support service booklets, 95 postcards, and 42 posters across libraries, neighbourhood houses, community groups, and partner organisations, reaching staff, residents, youth services, sports clubs, faith communities, and multicultural service providers. One staff training session was delivered, with two more scheduled for the remainder of FY 2026. In September, Merri-bek joined a delegation to Canberra, where the Mayor, a Council Officer, and a Lived Experience delegate met with MPs to advocate for fairer refugee policy and raise the profile of the taskforce's key asks.
27	Evaluation and development of a human rights policy	●	Community	The Merri-bek Human Rights Policy (2016-2026) has guided how Council has supported human rights for 10 years. Council has begun an Independent Evaluation of the policy and its implementation. Analysis of service data, key stakeholder and staff interviews, community feedback and analysis of Council reports has been undertaken, as well as the development of case studies of good practice. Lessons learned and recommendations will inform the development of the new policy in 2026.

Action Code	Action Name	Status	Responsible Officer Division	Comments
28	Create Library of Things plan for Merri-bek libraries		Community	The Merri bek Library of Things is a free tool and equipment lending service available through our libraries. It allows cardholders to borrow practical and recreational items. The collection now includes: - Thermal cameras - Water-saving kits - Induction cooktops - CO ₂ monitors - Jigsaw puzzles
29	Deliver the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan including Functional Zero and Assertive outreach		Community	Work from the last quarter has included a councillor briefing on homelessness, creating for the website and a homelessness outreach booklet.
30	Advocate for systemic changes to enable a socially just and climate resilient Merri-bek.		Place and Environment	Highlights have included: *Continued to support the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances advocacy in collaboration with ACOSS to the Federal Government for funding of \$72.5M for a scalable home energy upgrade program that is inclusive of vulnerable and low-income households. *Coordinated Local Government and Owners Corporation peak bodies advocacy and a submission to the Victorian Government's Owners Corporation Act Review. Seeking to address governance barriers that are preventing upgrades in apartment buildings to reduce energy bills, improve comfort, build community and lower climate risk. *Letter sent from Mayor to Federal Energy Minister Chris Bowen asking for an ambitious 2035 Australian Emissions Reduction Target. *Submission made to Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry on Electricity Supply For Electric Vehicles.
31	Embed library social worker program		Community	Recruitment for a new Library Social Worker role is progressing, with the position in the final stages of the hiring process.
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 bathrooms, seating under shelter, showers, lockers and a place to heat food as well as improved access to services		Community	Council continued to work closely with our local partners on percent projects. We are recruiting for a community safety officer who will assist in building advocacy and creating safer places for people in Merri-bek.
33	Develop and implement Gender Equality and Family Violence Action Plan		Community	Provided input into the review of Council's Human Rights Policy 2016-2026, which identifies gender equality and family violence prevention as key action areas. Led the development and implementation of Council's Gender Equality Action Plan, ensuring alignment with legislative requirements and embedding gender equity principles across programs and services.

Action Code	Action Name	Status	Responsible Officer Division	Comments
				Coordinated Council's planning and delivery of activities for the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign, including hosting the Voices for Change Community Forum on 27 November and participating in Respect Victoria's Walk Against Family Violence in the CBD.
34	Deliver an annual Tobacco education and enforcement program	●	Community	More than 50 per cent of the required retailer education visits and inspections of eating establishments have been completed. Work is underway to increase the level of compliant tobacco signage across the municipality.
35	Develop and implement First Peoples self-determination strategy	●	Community	Council has established a new First Peoples Advisory Committee to guide the development of the strategy. The committee will comprise four individual First Peoples community members, three representatives from Aboriginal organisations, and the portfolio councillor. Council officers continue monthly consultations with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elders, including a recent in-person visit to the Wurundjeri Corporation by staff from Open Space, Property, and Arts and Culture teams, where they met with Elders and the CEO. Council also attended and welcomed the launch of the Wurundjeri Whole of Country Plan 2025-2035, which outlines a vision for healthy Country and will help guide future collaboration. In addition, officers are reviewing the Human Rights Policy and related plans, including the Statement of Commitment to First Peoples, to ensure the new strategy reflects Council's broader goals of truth-telling, cultural recognition, and community 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	●	Community	Council held a productive meeting with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, which expressed a strong interest in partnering with Coburg Leisure. Plans include delivering monthly group fitness sessions and exploring swimming lessons for mothers in their Women's Group. The first session is expected to commence next quarter.
38	Progress plans and projects to revitalise and improve central Coburg	●	Place and Environment	Work is well underway on plans to revitalise Coburg. A draft framework plan has been endorsed by Council and is out to community consultation. Following community consultation the framework may be amended further, alongside implementation decisions (delivery model, procurement), before coming to Council seeking endorsement.
39	Deliver the Merri-bek Affordable Housing Action Plan	●	Place and Environment	This action is up to date and on track. Work continues with government and housing providers to progress accessible and inclusive housing opportunities, including First Peoples housing on Council land, alongside ongoing advocacy for more public and community housing.

Action Code	Action Name	Status	Responsible Officer Division	Comments
40	Support the development of Ballerrt Mooroop site/community hub with engagement of local First Peoples communities and Traditional Owners		Community	Council hosted its first Welcome Baby to Country on 22 October, connecting children and families to culture, community, and future services at Ballerrt Mooroop. Engagement with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Council continues to support the project's progress.

Theme 3: Beautiful and liveable city

3: 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.

Action Code	Action Name	Status	Responsible Officer Division	Comments
41	Facilitate additional public toilets in parks & reserves	●	City Infrastructure	Officers are working to finalise the planned toilets for 2026/27 with engagement expected to occur in early 2026.
42	Deliver Park priorities	●	Place and Environment	Council is progressing the creation of new open space at 568 Sydney Road as part of the Park Close to Home program. The project is currently in its early design phase. The first round of community consultation, completed in December 2025, received more than 700 submissions. This valuable feedback will guide the development of concept designs for the next stage of consultation.
43	Deliver increased shade in Victoria Mall	●	Place and Environment	Council is moving forward with plans to increase shade in Victoria Mall. The initial concept design and preliminary cost estimates are complete, and we're now preparing to engage with local businesses along the mall.
44	Implement hooning prevention measures in reserve carparks in Glenroy	●	City Infrastructure	This program is progressing well. Works have been completed to install speed humps in the ATC Cook car park in Glenroy and Hadfield Tennis Courts / Middle Street car park in Hadfield were completed in November-December 2025. Another project is being planned for delivery in the new year.
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	●	City Infrastructure	This pilot program was developed from extensive feedback during the Open Space Strategy review regarding dogs in open spaces. Following community consultation, Council endorsed a pilot to trial changes at eight parks: • Gilpin Park, Brunswick: Additional funding via the Community Budget Ideas program for dog park upgrades and a new quiet dog area. Concept stage, out for engagement. Proposed on-leash zone near playground/shared path; remainder off-leash. • Wylie Reserve, Brunswick West: Evening lighting during cooler months; activation monitored. • Fleming Park, Brunswick West: Winter lighting, new safety fencing to activate underused areas, and an on-leash picnic area in the northeast. • Harmony Park, Coburg: Previously on-leash; trial off-leash area in the south with fencing and vegetated barriers. • Robinson Reserve, Coburg: Previously on-leash; timed off-leash area (morning/evening) in the north. • Tate Reserve, Coburg: Trial no-dog habitat zone near creek; new off-leash zone with path safety upgrades. • Lorne Street Reserve, Fawkner: Trial fenced off-leash zone; remainder on-leash. • GE Clarke Reserve, Glenroy: Trial off-leash zone in northern area; new accessible path. All sites included engagement, signage, and opportunities for feedback. The pilot is guided by five principles: compliance, accessibility, safety, habitat protection, and preservation of outdoor spaces.

Action Code	Action Name	Status	Responsible Officer Division	Comments
				Learnings will inform the Stage 2 review of the remaining open spaces. Overall support has been strong, except at Tate Reserve, where opposition led to vandalism of fencing and signage, including damage to a bush kinder space. Feedback for improvements was received at Gilpin, Fleming, and Harmony Parks.
46	Engage the community in the review of and update of the Domestic Animal Management Plan	✓	City Infrastructure	Community engagement has been undertaken on Merri bek's draft Domestic Animal Management Plan (DAMP). Public consultation and feedback to inform the development of the draft and subsequently for feedback on the draft was completed. Feedback obtained was considered in the development of the final DAMP endorsed by Council in the November Council meeting.
47	Engage the community in the review of and update of the Local Law	●	Community	The Local law review process is progressing on schedule with internal engagement occurring through October and November.
48	Adopt a new Road Management Plan and implement the changes resulting from its review	●	City Infrastructure	The Road Management Plan was reviewed in time to meet the statutory deadline of 31 October. It was then endorsed by Council in the October Council meeting. The implementation of the changes being built into business-as-usual processes is in progress.
49	Deliver the Streets for People Plan priority projects	●	Place and Environment	Over the past six months, delivery of the Streets for People priority projects has focused on Breese Street, where community consultation has been completed. Planning is underway to commence community consultation for Hope Street and Harding Munro in the coming months.
50	Deliver sustainable transport initiatives that improve options for people walking and riding throughout Merri-bek	●	Place and Environment	Work is progressing to strengthen school travel initiatives, with coordinated efforts underway to deliver infrastructure improvements in and around school precincts.
51	Deliver the Ride & Stride behaviour change program plus priority infrastructure upgrades around schools, to foster safe and active travel to and from school	●	Place and Environment	The Ride & Stride behaviour change program continues with participating schools. The Biketober program was completed in the first quarter of the year, encouraging residents to ride bikes for fun, fitness, and sustainable transport through friendly workplace and community challenges. With the School Transport Precincts Officer now in place, focus will shift to progressing priority infrastructure upgrades.
52	Support the expansion of the Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network across Merri-bek	●	Place and Environment	A range of initiatives have been progressed to support the expansion of the Electric Vehicle (EV) charging network. These include: - An AC (slower) dual-charger was installed at Davies St, Brunswick and opened in October. One port is available to the public, while the second is dedicated to a carshare vehicle. - A study on potential fast charger sites across Merri-bek has been completed, and we have reached out to Citipower and Jemena to understand next steps for working with them to expand the network. In particular we are exploring the feasibility of a fast charger at the council carpark (south of Brunswick Tram Depot). - A trial of private home-to-street EV charging infrastructure has been launched, and four installations have been completed to date. This trial has elicited a high degree of interest from councils both in Melbourne and around the country (Perth, Sydney, Hobart).

Action Code	Action Name	Status	Responsible Officer Division	Comments
53	Deliver the Wheatsheaf Road Glenroy streetscape improvement project (over two years)		Place and Environment	This project was previously delayed pending Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) agreement to the design. Progress has been made with in-principle agreement so Council and DTP are now finalising documentation of the agreement before DTP can provide road works consent. This is a precursor to works commencing.
54	Ensure Council is well briefed to support the best possible design outcomes from major planning applications		Place and Environment	Most major planning proposals are determined through a Council resolution at the Planning and Related Matters Council meeting. Generally, matters exceeding the structure plan height or referred to Council by the Planning Minister are considered by Councillors. All major planning applications undergo a review with expert input from our Urban Design, Environmentally Sustainable Development team, and heritage advisor.
55	Reporting on Ministerial planning permit decision-making through the Quarterly Planning Permit Activity Reporting to the Planning & Related Matters Council Meeting		Place and Environment	The Activity Report included details on Ministerial applications. The Activity Report for the October Council meeting noted: There were no Ministerial applications referred to Council during the September quarter.
56	Ensure the review of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme leads to a framework that supports great housing, employment, and liveability in Merri-bek		Place and Environment	Work is underway to ensure the Merri-bek Planning Scheme continues to provide a clear and effective framework of local policies and controls to guide the type and location of housing growth.

Theme 4: Thriving economy and culture

4: 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.

Action Code	Action Name	Status	Responsible Officer Division	Comments
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		Place and Environment	Over the past months officers worked with RMIT University and Creative Victoria to: (i) deliver the third of a series of Open Studio business showcase and networking events; (ii) plan and secure an event within the 2026 Melbourne Design Week; (iii) prepare updates to the Brunswick Design District website; and (iv) explore opportunities to deliver a self-determined First Nations event in 2026.
58	Implement safety & amenity improvements in major activity centres including Glenroy, Brunswick, and Coburg		Place and Environment	Progress has been made in cross-department collaboration to deliver transport-led safety and amenity improvements in the major activity centres of Glenroy, Brunswick and Coburg.
59	Belair Street, Glenroy, on-street garden bed		City Infrastructure	A preliminary design has been completed. Further investigations are underway to ensure the design meets drainage design and maintenance requirements. The project will then proceed to detailed design ahead of procurement processes for delivery.
60	Deliver the West Street Streetscape Renewal Project (over two years)		Place and Environment	Council is progressing with the upgrade of West Street Shopping Strip to transform the activity centre into a vibrant community destination. The final detailed design and consultations with external authorities have been completed. Public tender evaluations have been finalised and presented at December 2025 Council meeting, where the construction contract will be awarded. Works are scheduled to commence in early 2026.
61	Deliver priority actions from the Places for People Plan		Place and Environment	Places for People Plan is the guiding framework for improving Merri-bek's activity centre public spaces. The draft Places for People plan has been presented at the December 2025 Council meeting for endorsement to proceed to community consultation. Priority actions for implementation will be shaped by community feedback and coordinated across various Council service areas.
62	Develop a Public Art Policy		Community	Public consultation for the Public Art Policy closed in December 2025 and provided the community with an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the proposed framework for managing and commissioning public art across Merri-bek. The policy aims to strengthen cultural expression, support local artists, and ensure public art reflects community values and diversity. Following the consultation period, all feedback is being reviewed and incorporated into the final draft. The updated policy is scheduled to be presented to Council for endorsement at a 2026 Council Meeting. Once adopted, the policy will guide future public art projects, funding priorities, and partnerships to enhance creative placemaking and cultural vibrancy in public spaces.

Action Code	Action Name	Status	Responsible Officer Division	Comments
63	Deliver the Merri-bek Economic Development Action Plan	●	Place and Environment	During the quarter Economic Development Unit continued to deliver Economic Development Action Plan - Year 2 actions including: 11 business events (taking the year to date total to 26 Skills workshops & business networking events); a newly launched Love Merri-bek trail map focused on Northern Merri-bek; a major Business Friendly Council service improvement initiative; continued support to the Sydney Road Brunswick and Central Coburg business associations; trader networking events in Glenroy and Lygon Street; a new Shopfront Improvement project in Melville Road; nearly 100 business permit concierge processes; and a First Nations supplier meet and greet event in conjunction with Darebin and Banyule Councils.
64	Maintain the Commercial Priority Planning Service to facilitate well prepared planning permit applications that can deliver new or increased local employment opportunities	●	Place and Environment	The Urban Planning Unit continues to provide its Commercial Priority Service to assist new and expanding businesses in navigating the planning process. From July to December 2025, the Council received 20 commercial priority applications.
65	Deliver expanded Merri-bek murals street art program	●	Community	Several mural sites have been confirmed, including Fleming Park (East Brunswick), Shirley Robertson Children's Centre (Coburg), Oxygen Youth Space (Coburg), and Union Street (Brunswick). A suitable site in Glenroy is still being identified. Installation of murals is scheduled to commence in early 2026.
66	Scope project to activate underutilised community spaces for arts and performance	●	Community	Works have progressed to investigate and provide cost estimates for adding performing arts infrastructure to selected community venues. This work will assess opportunities to enhance facilities for live performances, including staging, lighting, and acoustic improvements to support local arts and cultural programming. The findings will inform future capital works planning and budget considerations, ensuring venues are equipped to host diverse community events and creative activities.
67	Refresh festival program in line with community needs	●	Community	The proposed festival program refresh will be presented to Council in 2026 ahead of seeking feedback via community consultation.
68	Redesign grants program to support more opportunities to create, learn and connect	●	Community	Internal consultation of the redesign will commence in early 2026.
69	Develop scope for Fawcner Library redevelopment to increase opportunities to learn and connect	●	Community	Initial research and planning have been completed in preparation for community engagement scheduled for early 2026. The redevelopment brief will be shaped by both functional requirements and community aspirations, ensuring the design delivers inclusive, adaptable spaces that support education, social interaction, and cultural activities.
70	Undertake design competition for the Coburg Library and Piazza concept design	●	Community	The design competition for the Coburg Library and Piazza concept has been completed, and procurement processes are now being finalised. The winning concept design will be announced in early 2026.

Theme 5: Engaging and responsible council

5: 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.

Action Code	Action Name	Status	Responsible Officer Division	Comments
71	Develop Customer Experience Strategy	●	Community	Development of the Customer Experience Strategy will commence in the new calendar year, with the appointment of a Customer Experience Lead to ensure a coordinated and organisation-wide approach.
72	Deliver advocacy activities that support council priorities	●	Community	Council continued regular meetings with local State and Federal MPs and continued collaborative work with advocacy partners, including Northern Councils Alliance (NCA.), M9, (inner nine Councils), Council Alliance for a Sustainable Built Environment (CASBE), Northern Alliance for Greenhouse Action (NAGA.), Mayoral Taskforce for People Seeking Asylum, and more. Council also met with the Department of Transport and Planning to provide a briefing on Central Coburg and continued to advocate for the duplication of the Upfield Rail Line and the Accessibility of Tram Services. Council also made submissions to Parliamentary Inquiry - Electricity Supply for Electric Vehicles, Melbourne Water stormwater flood mapping program, Former Coburg North TAFE EOI, Victorian Government's Review of the Owners Corporation Act 2016, and Activities Centres Program Phase 2. Year to date, Council has also submitted applications for State and Federal funding for various community projects and grants totalling over \$4 million.
73	Increase editions and page count for Community News	✓	Community	Council has successfully enhanced its communication reach by increasing both the frequency of Community News editions to bi- monthly and the number of pages per edition to 12. This improvement ensures more space for detailed updates, community stories, and accessible information on programs and services. By expanding content volume and distribution, Council aims to strengthen engagement, improve transparency, and cater to Merri-bek's diverse audiences through inclusive and easy-to- understand messaging.
74	Continue the Merri-bek Community Connectors program	●	Community	The new Connectors group launched in September 2025, with 25 members recruited for a one-year term. These Connectors represent Merri-bek's diverse community and collectively speak and write in 10 of the top languages, including emerging languages such as Bengali, Pashto, and Persian. In addition, 10 former Connectors have continued for another year, strengthening continuity and engagement. Over the past three months, Connectors have supported key projects and events, including the Council Vision and Plan, Children, Young People and Families Strategy, Community Budget Ideas 2026-27, Public Art Policy, and the Hidden Disability Sunflower Campaign. They also assisted with major events such as Fawkner Festa, Carols by the Lake, and Senior Citizen Festivals. Key achievements include: * 878 community members accessed in-language Community Budget pages, showing strong interest ahead of the January 18 campaign close. * 50 flyers were distributed for Central Coburg engagement, and 150 multilingual flyers were

Action Code	Action Name	Status	Responsible Officer Division	Comments
				shared with elderly residents for the Senior Citizen Festival. * Connectors reviewed translated materials for four major projects and supported pop-up engagement at events like Paper Planet and Park Close to Home. New Connectors also explored Council spaces such as Glenroy Community Hub and Counihan Gallery—many for the first time—building stronger connections with Merri-bek.
75	Maintain the planning and building on-line booking service for improved customer convenience and freely accessible high-quality advice		Place and Environment	The online booking system continues to operate well for Urban Planning and Building Services, enabling an improved service for those unable to attend the Council offices for general advice.
76	Integrate climate risk into Council processes and systems, focusing on risk management, finance, and asset management and capital works planning		Place and Environment	Cross-functional work across risk management, finance, sustainability, and capital works and asset management has identified proposed actions for 2025-2030. These actions are being refined and will be submitted to the Climate Resilience Integration Board for endorsement.
77	Update Merri-bek's open space and developer contribution models		Place and Environment	Merri-bek's open space and developer contribution model update is progressing as planned. The new Development Contributions Plan (DCP 2.0) is currently awaiting authorisation from the Minister for Planning. Once authorised, Planning Scheme Amendment C236mbek will be formally exhibited for public submission. Separately, the proposed update to the open space contribution rate has been referred by Council to an independent Planning Panel. The Panel will consider Amendment C235mbek in the new year.
78	Complete or commence construction of every project listed in Merri-bek's first Development Contributions Plan before 30 June 2026		City Infrastructure	On target to complete close to all the road and drainage Development Contributions Plan projects by the end of financial year.
79	Finalise designs for the Breese Street precinct improvements		Place and Environment	The design for a greener Breese Street Precinct is well underway. In October 2025, we shared two concept options with the community—Option 1 featuring a one-way southbound street and Option 2 introducing a central shared zone. We received great feedback, and now further traffic modelling is in progress to help shape the final design.