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The Hon Georgie Purcell MP
Chair, Economy and Infrastructure Committee
Legislative Council, Parliament of Victoria
Parliament House, Spring Street
Melbourne VIC 3002

31 October 2025

Re: Parliamentary Inquiry into Electricity Supply for Electric Vehicles

Dear Ms Purcell

Merri-bek City Council welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee's Inquiry (Inquiry) into how Victoria can best harmonise electric vehicles (EVs) with electricity supply and demand. The following submission has been prepared by officers and is based on endorsed Council strategy and policy positions.

Council strongly supports the transition to zero emissions vehicles as part of a broader modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport (including walking and cycling) and as part of the transition to a zero-carbon economy where no one gets left behind. Merri-bek is a leader in the electric vehicle charging space. We recognise that electrification of transport is essential to meet our net-zero community emissions target by 2035. However, this process must be managed fairly, sustainably and collaboratively across all levels of government.

The EV transition should occur within an integrated sustainable transport strategy that also prioritises mode shift to public and active transport. Reducing car dependence alongside electrification will deliver co-benefits including lower emissions, congestion reduction, improved health, and enhanced community liveability.

Council seeks a clear and consistent State framework that supports local delivery while harmonising tariffs, infrastructure and policy across the state. We also support the submission made by the Victorian Greenhouse Alliances.

This submission provides some background on Merri-bek policies and investments and experience with EVs. It then provides commentary and recommendations in response to the six questions of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.

## Merri-bek's EV policy settings and experience

### Merri-bek Council policies

Our Zero Carbon Merri-bek 2040 Framework sets out Council's vision for a zero carbon future by 2040. Council's community targets are to achieve 75% community emissions reduction by 2030, net zero by 2035, and drawdown ('negative emissions') by 2040. For Council's own emissions we are targeting an 80–100% reduction by 2030. Our Climate Emergency Action Plan 2025-2030 aims to expand publicly accessible EV charging infrastructure in Merri-bek to a ratio of 17:1 EVs to public charging bays.

The expansion of electric vehicle charging is underscored in other important Council policies including our:

- Climate Risk Strategy – which includes EV charging to improve grid resilience and adaptation.
- Moving Around Merri-bek – which promotes low-emission and shared mobility.
- Circular Economy Strategy – which supports reuse and recycling of EV batteries.

### Local government and EV charging

The transition to electric vehicles will take place at the local level – on our streets, in our car parks, and through our planning and community facilities. Councils are responsible for managing kerbside space, approving charging installations, and ensuring equitable access for residents who lack off-street parking. But clear state policy, funding pathways and technical standards are essential to help councils coordinate grid-friendly charging, support local fleet electrification, integrate EV infrastructure with community batteries and resilience hubs, and avoid a "patchwork" of EV offerings across the State.

Councils are the only tier of government able to ensure:

- Equitable access to public and kerbside charging for renters, apartment dwellers, and low-income households;
- Fair use of limited kerbside space that also serves pedestrians, cyclists and businesses
- Integration with community-scale batteries and neighbourhood resilience hubs to reduce local energy disadvantage.

### Council's EV charging infrastructure

Merri-bek currently manages 22 public EV chargers, capable of charging 27 EVs simultaneously (as well as 13 Council-only chargers with capability for charging 17 Council EVs simultaneously). Council's public chargers see an average of 100 charging sessions per day, consuming 22kWh per session. This is 37,000 sessions per year consuming 817MWh. Through the collection of postcode data, 50% of all charging sessions are Merri-bek residents.

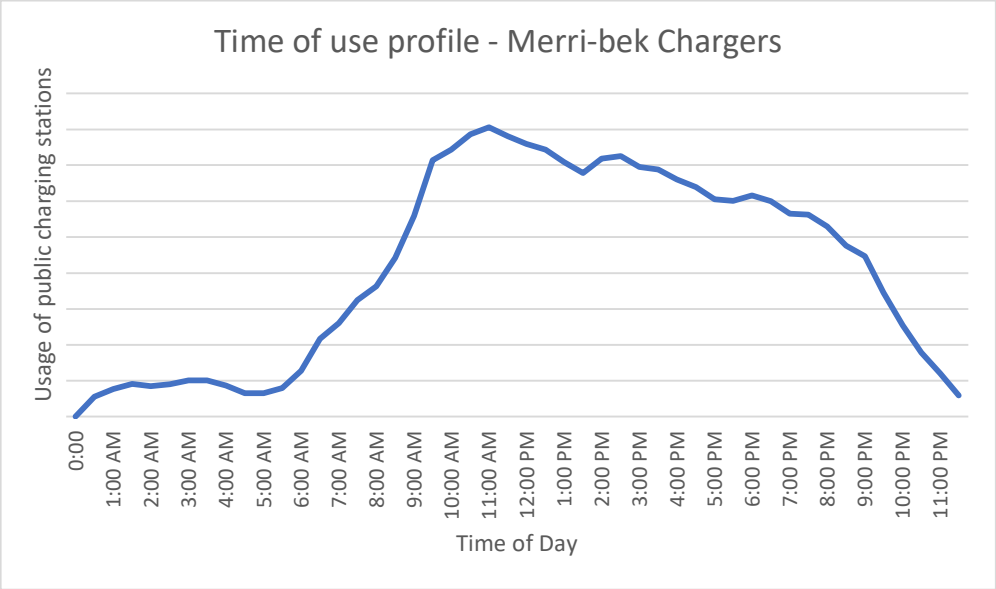
In more established, denser pockets of suburbs such as Brunswick, Brunswick East and Brunswick West, a high percentage of properties do not have off-street parking and therefore cannot charge at home. These neighbourhoods are also the most capacity-constrained in terms of the electricity grid, and often have the a lot of competing uses of precious kerbside space (eg, parking, greening, mobility). This is a common issue in inner-city suburbs in Melbourne.

To address this issue, in the absence of state policy or guidance, Merri-bek is currently trialling home-to-street charging. As part of the trial we are granting permits to 20 residents to install a retractable horizontal boom on their property that will allow them to run a charging cable overhead to their EV parked on the street (keeping the footpath accessible and safe). If the trial is successful we intend to make these permits available to any household and provider that can meet required standards. We also continue to explore other publicly accessible EV charging solutions for areas without off street parking, such as chargers mounted on power poles.

## Key issues and recommendations to the Inquiry

**(1) <u>Strategies to reduce EV charging during periods of peak demand and increase charging during periods of peak supply</u>**

Council's public chargers see highest usage between 10am and 3pm (our portfolio of chargers uses a flat fee structure so this is unrelated to cost). The chart below shows the average use over a 24 hour period from all sessions on our charging portfolio between April and October 2025.




This pattern reflects a strong alignment between user behaviour and solar generation peaks – drivers are already tending to charge when renewable energy is most abundant. To further strengthen this trend, charging operators and service providers (e.g. Chargefox, Exploren) could implement time-of-use pricing, encouraging users to charge in periods of high renewable generation or low grid demand. Such measures are effective where chargers have spare capacity at those times.

Home charging presents a further significant opportunity to act as a "solar sponge," soaking up excess daytime solar generation. Realising this potential requires greater access to home-to-street charging options for households without off-street parking—ensuring equitable participation in the energy transition while helping stabilise the grid and reduce peak-demand stress.

Recommendations:

1. Implement tariff structures that encourage charging at periods of high renewable supply (midday) and strategies to enable overnight charging, and test the effectiveness of variable pricing in shifting charging demand.
2. Mandate and encourage smart-charging capability in all fleet charging infrastructure to enable automatic load management and grid coordination.
3. Fund and promote pilot programs for home-to-street charging solutions in areas with high on-street parking to maximise daytime solar utilisation.
4. Encourage data-sharing agreements between DNSPs, councils, and charge-point operators to inform optimal siting and load management strategies.
5. Explore incentives for managed overnight charging, including off-peak tariffs or rebate programs for users participating in demand-response schemes.

**(2) Whether public charging infrastructure is being installed at a sufficient rate in different parts of Victoria, including established suburbs where most people do not have access to off-street parking**

It is clear that public EV charging infrastructure is not being installed consistently across Victoria. Council supports the development of a coordinated, statewide EV charging strategy with clear targets, co-designed with local governments, DNSPs, and charge-point operators. This plan should prioritise fast charging infrastructure based on demand, while not forgetting equitable access in high-density urban areas, existing apartments, and homes without off-street parking. Implementation of the plan should be supported by co-funding for complex or low-viability sites.

In denser suburbs such as Brunswick, Brunswick East and Brunswick West there are more residents without off-street parking who cannot charge an EV at home. Kerbside space is precious, and uses are often contested in these locations.

The state has a key role to facilitate statewide access to EV charging – particularly in areas where there are barriers (such as suburbs with limited off-street parking).

Recommendations:

6. The state should develop a coordinated, statewide EV charging strategy and targets, co-designed with local governments, DNSPs, and charge-point operators. This plan should prioritise equitable access in high-density urban areas, existing apartments, and homes without off-street parking, supported by co-funding for complex or low-viability sites.
7. Fund precinct charging hubs and enable kerbside options such as pole-mounted (public) and boom-mounted (private) solutions.
8. Fast-track a “Kerbside Charging Code” to ensure safe, accessible and consistent kerbside installation (prohibiting cables across footpaths, establishing consistent guidance for councils for permit pathways for pole, bollard and charging-arm solutions under the Road Management Act). Prioritise established suburbs where there is limited off-street parking.

## (3) The best role for electricity distribution businesses in rolling out EV charging infrastructure

Electricity distributors can often be a significant barrier to the installation of EV charging infrastructure. There is a need to clarify responsibilities so that DNSPs manage enabling infrastructure and transparency of hosting capacity as well as standardised connection processes, while councils and private operators manage site delivery. Network tariffs are not currently aligned to reward charging during solar peaks (e.g. midday) and off-peak periods.

Currently it is necessary for charging operators (and other entities owning public chargers) to pay for applications without being certain whether power upgrades are necessary, or what the cost of such upgrades would be. For example, Merri-bek applied for a DC charger at one suburb in April 2024 and the DNSP took over a year to confirm that a power upgrade would be required, at a cost of $100K. There is no process to easily see which areas would be suitable for a DC charger. In this example, we have still not identified a location in this suburb where a DC charger could be installed without an expensive power upgrade.

Merri-bek believes this is a common experience. DNSPs do not have a good track record of working smoothly with councils. Based on this common experience, it is recommended that DNSP roles are very clear, and do not include rolling out public EV charging infrastructure.

Recommendations:

9. Clarify that the responsibility of DNSPs is to (a) effectively manage enabling infrastructure, (b) provide transparent and accurate information about hosting capacity, and (c) deliver a standardised connection processes. Clarify that councils and private operators manage site delivery.
10. Advocate to the Australian Energy Regulator to set clear performance expectations from DNSPs for the above roles.

## (4) Strategies to facilitate the take-up of EV ownership, including the facilitation of bidirectional charging

"Vehicle-to-everything" (V2X) or bidirectional charging is a key mechanism to reduce pressure on the grid and increase household capacity to run from renewable energy. This is particularly so in apartments.

With more and more people living in apartments, there is a need to support existing apartment buildings to install EV charging infrastructure. State planning reforms are weak when it comes to ESD including EV infrastructure in new developments. As a result, retrofitting existing buildings will become increasingly important over the next decade as charging from home becomes more common and expected.

We are hearing from residents who are looking for ways to innovate and use their own solar power for EV charging. With recent changes to enable vehicle to grid in Australia, there is certainly potential for a bidirectional charging which can be applied at a range of scales and scenarios - from individual homes to fleet depots and community energy hubs.

Events such as the floods in New South Wales and Queensland, where EVs were used to provide power during outages, demonstrate the resilience value of V2X technology. Supporting these capabilities through streamlined grid connection processes, clear technical standards, and pilot programs in partnership with councils would enable communities to harness EVs as mobile energy assets. There is also strong potential for V2X-enabled fleets and community batteries to enhance local emergency response and heatwave resilience.

Recommendations:

11. Provide grants and guidance for apartment and rental retrofits to enable EV charging installation.
12. Embed EV-readiness requirements in the Victoria Planning Provisions across all classes of buildings to future proof-developments. This might include working with Fire Rescue Victoria to establish guidelines and educational programs for Owners' Corporations and developers for safe operation and installation of EV charging and the related fire safety systems, including retrofits. Consider clear "myth-busting" or similar around fire risks of EVs (01 - Home | EV Fire Safe).
13. Support V2X through streamlined connection processes and pilot programs with councils to support communities.
14. Enable V2X fleets and community batteries to support emergency response and heatwave resilience initiatives

## (5) Whether public charging infrastructure is being installed at a sufficient rate in different parts of Victoria

Public EV charging infrastructure is not being installed at a sufficient rate across Victoria to meet state and federal carbon targets.

Local governments control much of the long-term public carparking infrastructure most suitable for charging sites. However, the state been largely absent as a supporter and enabler, and councils face significant barriers to accelerating deployment. Many lack the resourcing and technical capacity to negotiate and manage licence agreements with charging operators, and the financial returns offered are minimal – typically only around five per cent of operator revenue, which provides little incentive for participation.

Targeted funding and guidance would help councils scale installation more effectively. For example, Merri-bek's Russell Street, Coburg, DC charger will achieve a 2.5-year payback period, demonstrating that with adequate support, public chargers can become financially viable and help close the infrastructure gap across Victoria.

Recommendation:

15. State government support councils to introduce more EV charging in public car parks. This might include funding incentives, help to organise licencing to charging operators, and consolidating best practice learnings and templates (e.g., RFQs, licencing agreements) and tools (e.g., estimated revenue calculators) to make it easy for Councils to engage.

**(6) Barriers and opportunities to the manufacture, reconditioning and recycling of EV batteries, or other elements of the EV supply chain, in Victoria**

There is a need to strengthen product stewardship and traceability to retain batteries and/or battery materials within Victoria's circular economy. A good example of the successful re-use of EV batteries is the company My Nu that repurposes EV batteries into trailers of renewably powered batteries for hire. These mobile battery systems demonstrate the potential for second-life applications, offering clean, silent, and low-risk alternatives to diesel generators that could also provide emergency back-up power during outages.

The state has a key role to play in funding and facilitating growth in reuse and recycling of EV batteries. Local governments can also play a facilitative role by aggregating end-of-life batteries from fleets, piloting reuse applications such as stationary or mobile storage, and advocating for regional recycling hubs to capture local economic and employment benefits.

Recommendations:

16. Develop state guidelines for safe reuse of EV batteries as household or community storage, including fire and performance standards.
17. Fund EV recycling initiatives, and second-life community battery demonstrations enabling showcasing of practical, safe, and scalable reuse applications.

We appreciate the Committee's attention to this important issue and welcome opportunities to participate in hearings or provide further evidence.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Victoria Hart, Manager Sustainability and Climate, vhart@merri-bek.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,

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