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77 November 2025

Development Victoria
GPO BOX 2428
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Dear Development Victoria

Submission – former Coburg North TAFE land development strategy

Thankyou for the opportunity to provide feedback on the future of the former Coburg North TAFE at 10, 12–18, and 20–22 Charles Street, 21, 23, 54 Dawson Street, 13-15 French Street, and 29 Williams Road, Coburg North.

This submission is prepared by Council officers in line with Council endorsed policies and positions. There has not been an opportunity to bring this submission to the chamber for formal Council endorsement within the EOI period.

Council supports the redevelopment of the currently vacant site within the Coburg North Employment Precinct, which makes an important contribution to the local and regional economy by housing 3,100+ jobs (ABS Census 2021) and 600+ businesses (ABR data). Future redevelopment of the vacant site should reinforce the precinct's employment focus and align with strategic policies that encourage a diverse range of job and business opportunities.

The site presents an opportunity to attract skills-based, knowledge-intensive and innovation-oriented industries such as advanced manufacturing (including biomed and health tech manufacturing), circular economy enterprises, green technology production, design and creative industries, and business incubation spaces. These uses should generate significant local jobs and contribute to long-term economic resilience. Retaining the current industrial zoning and prohibition of residential uses is essential to achieving these outcomes.

Council encourages continued collaboration between Development Victoria, Council and industry partners to attract innovative enterprises and support high-density employment outcomes aligned with Merri-bek's vision for a resilient, inclusive and future-focused economy.

Council also notes the Merri Community Shed's interest in the site as a potential location for skills-based learning and development and community connection. Council encourages Development Victoria to engage with the group as part of broader consultation.

Background

Regionally significant employment area

The Melbourne Industrial and Commercial Land Use Plan (MICLUP) supports the ongoing employment focus to the former Tafe site, identifying the Coburg North Employment Precinct as Regionally Significant Industrial Land – Existing.

MICLUP outlines these areas as key employment precincts that should be retained and planned to support industrial and complementary commercial uses that contribute meaningfully to both regional and local economies. They are intended to provide long-term opportunities for businesses and industries to grow, diversify, and innovate in well-located, affordable settings.

These precincts may also accommodate emerging business types and higher-amenity employment environments, enabling economic renewal and improved outcomes for workers while maintaining their core employment function and contribution to Melbourne's industrial land network.

Merri-bek's core industrial and employment areas

The Coburg North Employment Precinct is also identified in Council's Moreland Industrial Land Strategy (MILS) as a Category 1 Core Industrial and Employment Area (Precinct 14). Within the MILS framework, Category 1 areas are to be maintained for industry and employment uses and prohibit residential uses to ensure they are not constrained by sensitive uses.

This direction is imbedded in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme in the local and state policy, including in the Municipal Planning Strategy (Clause 2) where local policy directs Council to:

- *Retaining areas identified as Core Industry and Employment Areas as areas for industry and employment.*
- *Maintaining industry and employment uses in areas identified as Employment Areas and potentially transition to a broader business base that contributes to economic regeneration and more diverse employment opportunities.*

Together with the directions set out in MICLUP, it reinforces the site's industrial zoning as appropriate to retain, recognising it as part of an important employment area both now and into the future, not only for Merri-bek but also regionally.

Transitional industrial areas & ongoing prohibition of residential uses

While demand for traditional industrial uses has declined, Merri-bek's industrial land remains highly sought after by a range of businesses and continues to play an important role in supporting local jobs and economic activity. Demand is increasing from a range of sectors including food and beverage manufacturing, design and creative industries and professionals, biomed and health tech start-ups, education and training, live music, and coworking spaces and studios. The Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Clause 02.04) supports this shift by encouraging Core Industry and Employment Areas to transition to broader employment focus outcomes and reinforcing the importance of non-residential outcomes on this site.

As other former industrial areas transition to housing, businesses are seeking new locations. For example, data prepared by id. consulting for Merri-bek in 2023 showed Coburg North to be Merri-bek's fourth most significant SA2 location for design, creative and cultural industries jobs after jobs growth of 8.8% p.a. in the five years prior.

Coburg North, only 10-12km from the city, has therefore emerged as an attractive destination for a diverse range of sectors from creative industries to food manufacturers, offering flexible, affordable premises unconstrained by sensitive uses. The strong take-up of spaces at recent developments, [Coburg Industries](#), [CONO Business Park](#), and the [Newlands Road food manufacturing hub](#), highlights the strength of this demand.

While the Victorian Government is focused on accelerating housing delivery, the success of this precinct depends on maintaining compatible land uses. Rezoning the site for housing would conflict with local and state policy, undermine existing businesses, and diminish the precinct's regional employment role. Merri-bek strongly advocates that residential uses remain prohibited within the site and across the precinct to protect jobs, safeguard investment, and support long-term economic prosperity.

Council's economic development priorities

Merri-bek has one of the lowest rates of residents who work locally. Between 2012 and 2022 Merri-bek's job deficit (the gap between local jobs and employed residents) increased from -37,724 to -52,230. This is an area of concern and focus identified in our Economic Development Action Plan (EDAP).

The EDAP also confirms the importance of Design, Creative and Cultural Industries, which collectively form Merri-bek's fifth largest provider of jobs and economic activity, and the significant growth of Professional, Scientific & Technical services – including an emerging range of biomedical and health tech businesses that seek to be proximate to the Parkville Biomedical Precinct in more affordable locations.

These facts emphasise the critical importance of protecting and fully utilising existing employment land in Merri-bek. Our EDAP includes an explicit priority and action to advocate for better use of vacant government land as follows:

Priority 1.3 Advocate for the better use of vacant and under-utilised government owned infrastructure to deliver local economic and community benefits

Action Investigate the use of underutilised local and state government-owned sites and infrastructure, to identify opportunities for re-use that could support job creation and beneficial economic and community outcomes, including the co-location of social enterprise and/or micro and small businesses.

Redevelopment of the former Kangan TAFE site in Coburg North presents an ideal opportunity to align with this priority by enabling employment-generating uses, supporting job creation, and encouraging innovative uses.

The Merri Community Shed

Council notes the Merri Community Shed's interest in the site as a potential location for skills-based learning, training, and community connection. In March 2025, Council resolved to explore relocation options for existing users of the former Coburg Bowls Club site, including the Shed. The Merri Community Shed is an example of how a local community group can engage large numbers of a diverse community across Merri-bek in a socially connected and inclusive manner. Council acknowledges the Shed's community focus and practical learning orientation and suggests that Development Victoria may wish to engage with the group as part of its broader stakeholder engagement.

Conclusion

Council also welcomes a collaborative approach to redeveloping the site. Council's Planning and Economic Development teams have local knowledge and established relationships with industry that can assist in exploring ideas and opportunities for the site. We welcome you to reach out.

If you have any queries regarding this submission or wish to discuss redevelopment opportunities to the site further, please contact Alayna Chapman via email achapman@merri-bek.vic.gov.au or telephone 03 9240 2470.



Pene Winslade
Director Place and Environment