



Merri-bek
City Council

COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday 11 March 2026

Commencing 6.30 PM

Bunjil (Council Chamber), Merri-bek Civic Centre,
90 Bell Street, Coburg

Language Link

This is the Agenda for the Council meeting.
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ਇਹ ਕੌਂਸਲ ਦੀ ਮੀਟਿੰਗ ਦਾ ਏਜੰਡਾ ਹੈ। ਏਜੰਡੇ ਦੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਆਈਟਮ ਬਾਰੇ ਮਦਦ ਲਈ, ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 9280 0751 ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Acknowledgement of the traditional custodians of the City of Merri-bek

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, and pays respect to their elders past, present, and emerging, as well as to all First Nations communities who significantly contribute to the life of the area.

Information about Council Meetings

These notes have been developed to help people better understand Council meetings. All meetings are conducted in accordance with Council's Governance Rules.

WELCOME The Mayor, who chairs the meeting, formally opens the meeting.

APOLOGIES Where a Councillor is not present, their absence is noted in the minutes of the meeting. Council may also approve leaves of absence in this part of the meeting.

DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS INTERESTS A Councillor has a duty to disclose any direct or indirect financial or other interests, they may have in any matter to be considered by Council that evening.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES The minutes of the previous meeting are put before Council to confirm the accuracy and completeness of the record.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS At each Council Meeting provision of 10 minutes will be made in the Agenda for the Mayor and Councillors to acknowledge and recognise achievements of local individuals and organisations; and raise matters considered important to Council.

PETITIONS Council receives petitions from citizens on various issues. Council formally accepts petitions at Council meetings.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME This is an opportunity (30 minutes), for citizens of Merri-bek to raise questions with Councillors.

COUNCIL REPORTS Council officers prepare detailed reports, which are considered by Councillors and a Council position is adopted on the matters considered. The Mayor can invite firstly Councillors, secondly Officers, and then citizens in attendance to identify Council reports which should be given priority by the meeting and considered in the early part of the meeting.

NOTICES OF MOTION A motion which has been submitted to the Chief Executive Officer no later than 12 pm (noon) 10 business days prior to the meeting which is intended to be included in the agenda. The motion should outline the policy, financial and resourcing implications.

NOTICE OF RESCISSION A Councillor may propose a motion to rescind a resolution of the Council, provided the previous resolution has not been acted on, and a notice is delivered to the CEO or delegate setting out the resolution to be rescinded and the meeting and date when the resolution was carried. If a motion for rescission is lost, a similar motion may not be put before the Council for at least one month from the date it was last lost, unless the Council resolves that the notice of motion be re-listed at a future meeting.

FORESHADOWED ITEMS This is an opportunity for Councillors to raise items proposed to be submitted as Notices of Motion at future meetings.

URGENT BUSINESS The Chief Executive Officer or Councillors, with the approval of the meeting, may submit items of Urgent Business (being a matter not listed on the agenda) but requiring a prompt decision by Council.

CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS Whilst all Council meetings of Council are open to the public, Council has the power under the *Local Government Act 2020* to close its meeting to the public in certain circumstances which are noted where appropriate on the Council Agenda. Where this occurs, members of the public leave the Council Chamber or Meeting room while the matter is being discussed.

CLOSE OF MEETING The Mayor will formally close the meeting and thank all present.

NEXT MEETING DATE The next Council meeting will be held on Wednesday 8 April 2026 commencing at 6.30 pm, in the Bunjil (Council Chamber), Merri-bek Civic Centre, 90 Bell Street, Coburg. The next Planning and Related Matters meeting will be held on Wednesday 25 March 2026 commencing at 6.30 pm.

WELCOME

APOLOGIES/LEAVE OF ABSENCE

1. DISCLOSURES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTE CONFIRMATION

The minutes of the Council Meeting held on 11 February 2026 and the Special Council Meeting held on 25 February 2026 be confirmed.

3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND OTHER MATTERS

4. PETITIONS

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

6. ITEM TO BE TABLED UNDER THE *LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2020*

In accordance with section 147(4) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, a copy of the Arbitrator's determination and statement of reasons in the matter of Cr Oscar Yildiz and Cr Jay Iwasaki is tabled (**Attached**) and will be recorded in the Minutes of this meeting.

7. COUNCIL REPORTS

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	Nil.	
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	<i>Pursuant to section 3(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2020 this report has been designated as confidential because it relates to Council business information, being information that would prejudice the Council's position in commercial negotiations if prematurely released.</i>	
12.2	CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER EMPLOYMENT MATTERS	
	<i>Pursuant to section 3(1)(f) of the Local Government Act 2020 this report has been designated as confidential because it relates to personal information, being information which if released would result in the unreasonable disclosure of information about any person or their personal affairs.</i>	

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION FOR AN INTERNAL ARBITRATION PROCESS**MERRI-BEK CITY COUNCIL****IAP 2025-20****HEARING PURSUANT TO DIVISION 5 OF PART 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2020**

Applicant: Councillor Oscar Yildiz
Respondent: Councillor Jay Iwasaki
Date of hearing: Friday, 6 February 2026
Place of hearing: Brunswick Town Hall (Civic Centre) at 233 Sydney Road, Brunswick
Arbiter: Simon Heath

DETERMINATION:

Councillor Yildiz has made Application for an Internal Arbitration Process seeking a finding of misconduct against Councillor Iwasaki. The finding is sought in relation to three emails sent by Councillor Iwasaki on 4 June 2025.

I determine that the emails collectively constitute a failure by Councillor Iwasaki to comply with the 'Model Councillor Code of Conduct'. As such, I make a finding of misconduct against him.

I direct that Councillor Iwasaki make a written apology to Councillor Yildiz for the emails.

I also direct that Councillor Iwasaki be suspended from the office of Councillor for a period of one month.

STATEMENT OF REASONS**The Application**

1. The 'Application for an Internal Arbitration Process' is dated 3 September 2025 (**Application**).
2. In the Application, the Applicant seeks a finding of misconduct against the Respondent in relation to alleged breaches of the 'Model Councillor Code of Conduct' (**Code**).
3. The breaches of the Code are alleged to be contained in three emails sent by the Respondent on 4 June 2025 (**emails**). The emails, sent at 3.36 pm, 3.58 pm, and 4.40 pm, relate to a decision by the Council to resurface the gravel car park at De Chene Reserve in East Coburg (**Reserve**).
4. The Reserve is used by the Brunswick Juventus Football Club (**Club**).

5. The first email was sent by the Respondent on 4 June 2025 at 3.36 pm to the Council's Executive and their Assistants, and to Councillors (**first email**). There were 26 recipients, including the Applicant and the Respondent (**recipients**). The recipients were responsible for the Council's operations.

6. The first email was as follows:

"The fact that this club is so well used and has had one occurrence is really reassuring to me, and frequency of this event shows that the carpark may be relatively safe if people parked correctly and the parking area was enforced properly.

I was under the impression that this had occurred multiple times, but in fact that this was human error only highlights the dangers of cars in general and does not support the idea the carpark is dangerous and in need of urgent resurfacing. I am reassured that this was a one-off incident.

What I am more concerned about is the possibility of corruption in this proposal for resurfacing. It has been brought to my attention from other members in the community that Cr Yildiz has a conflict of interest that may actually be substantive, and as such the carpark resurfacing should never have been proposed in the first place.

This is akin to if I proposed money to fund a research group's project that I was friends or affiliated with and then sat out of the vote. I should never have brought up a proposal that I had a conflict of interest with in the first place, especially that I did not disclose to the other councillors, for them to vote on. And particularly since they may not have known what the conflict was in order to discuss the merits of that proposed use of funding that may benefit me or my friends.

I believe due to concerns of corruption, this should absolutely be deferred to be discussed after more details are discussed and the potential conflicts worked through."

7. At 3.40 pm, the Applicant responded to the first email by sending the recipients the following email:

"I suggest anyone using the term "Corruption" be VERY VERY careful because I won't tolerate any such allegation or accusation and I will take legal action to defend any such assertion/s made by anyone."

8. The second email was sent by the Respondent on 4 June 2025 at 3.58 pm to the recipients (**second email**), and was as follows:

"Cr Yildiz is correct. This is potentially very serious. The stated conflict of interest is public record on a personal interest return, has already been picked up on by a community member, and may very well be picked up wider in the media, especially with this huge amount of money.

It would be prudent to defer this decision to make sure Cr Yildiz' proposal is appropriately vetted and to make sure his name is cleared."

9. In response to the first email and the second email, the Mayor sent the following email to Councillors at 4.35 pm:

"I would like to remind you that our emails should be constructive and respectful and if you have a governance matter, please raise it through the appropriate channels e.g. through the CEO or (Manager Governance and Strategy named)".

10. The Respondent sent the third email at 4.40 pm but only to 17 of the 26 recipients, (**third email**). That email was as follows:

"I acknowledge that the word corruption was very strong and what I meant was the possibility of conflicts of interest. I did in no way insinuate there was corruption and withdraw the below unconstructive feedback."

11. The Respondent attempted to call that Applicant at 5.02 pm but the call was not answered.

12. In sending the emails, the Applicant alleges that the Respondent has breached the standards of conduct (**Standards**) included in the Code relating to 'Performing the role of a Councillor', 'Behaviours', and 'Integrity'. Details of those standards are set out below.

Arbiter's jurisdiction

13. I was appointed pursuant to sections 144 and 149 of the *Local Government Act 2020 (Act)*.
14. Section 143 of the Act provides that an Arbiter may hear an application that alleges misconduct by a Councillor.
15. Section 143(3) of the Act provides that an Application "must be made within 3 months of the alleged misconduct occurring". The alleged misconduct occurred on 4 June 2025 so this requirement is satisfied.
16. Pursuant to section 147 of the Act, an Arbiter may determine whether or not a Councillor has engaged in misconduct.
17. "Misconduct" is defined in Section 3 of the Act as follows:
- "...any breach by a Councillor of the Model Councillor Code of Conduct"*
18. Section 139(3)(b) of the Act specifies that the standards of conduct expected to be observed by Councillors in the course of performing their duties and functions are to be included in the Code.
19. The Code is set out in Schedule 1 to the *Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Amendment Regulations 2020*.

20. As required by section 139(4) of the Act, the Code is published on the Council's website, and a copy thereof is attached as Annexure A.

Hearing

21. The internal arbitration process comprised directions made on 12 November 2025, an in-person directions hearing on 20 November 2025, further directions made on 20 November 2025, even further directions made on 3 December 2025, and an in-person hearing on 6 February 2026.

Applicant's evidence

22. The Applicant's evidence comprised the Application, which was comprehensive. The Applicant also made available documents providing context to the matters set out therein.
23. The Applicant gave oral evidence and made submissions at the hearing.

Respondent's evidence

24. The Respondent's evidence comprised an undated written response to the Application as well as documents in support of the submissions in that response.
25. The Respondent also made submissions at the hearing.

Arbiter's findings

26. I determine that the Respondent breached clauses 1, 2 and 4 of the Standards.

Arbiter's reasons

25. The Applicant was the honorary number 1 ticket holder (**role**) of the Club (**Club**) for many years.
26. Several hours before the Respondent sent the emails, the Applicant voluntarily resigned from the role.
27. A letter from the Club dated 2 September 2025 attached to the Application confirms that the Applicant has not benefited "*financially or otherwise*" from the role. I accept that unchallenged evidence.
28. The Club is not situated in the Applicant's ward.
29. I accept the Applicant's evidence that he had declared the role in Personal Interest Returns, had at appropriate times sought governance advice, and had made conflict of interest declarations in relation to matters involving the Club.

- 30 I also accept the evidence of the Applicant and the Club that in addition to the “occurrence” the Respondent refers to in the first email, (when a car rolled from the carpark onto the pitch in 2018), there have been documented concerns about safety issues in relation to the carpark at the Reserve since 2012 and that the first request for resurfacing was made about 2013. In this regard, Council’s Director of Community confirmed in an email on 3 April 2025 to Councillors that the Council had received “a range of complaints over a number of years about the car park” at the Reserve. This was the day before the emails.
- 31 The Applicant did not debate or vote on the Council’s decision on 11 June 2025 to fund the resurfacing at the Reserve.
- 32 Despite the Respondent’s contentions to the contrary, I accept that the emails have caused the Applicant considerable distress. The Respondent misguidedly submitted that it was up to the Applicant to prove that the email caused him ‘severe psychological injury’ rather than addressing the issue of whether the emails to the recipients constituted a breach of the Standards in the Code. In relation to the latter, I record that, at the hearing, the Respondent said the following “I make no defence here of my statements”.
- 33 The Respondent submitted that I ought to dismiss the Application because it is “retaliatory or vexatious” and was made in response to a finding of misconduct against the Applicant in an earlier Internal Arbitration Process brought by the Respondent (earlier IAP). The earlier IAP is dated 7 February 2025 and on 30 June 2025 Arbiter Noel Harvey OAM directed that the Applicant be suspended for one month.
- 34 In addition to the fact that the emails were sent prior to the learned Arbiter’s decision in the earlier IAP, I find that the Application was properly made.
- 35 I was not assisted by both parties raising matters outside the issues in the Application. Clearly the relationship between them is and unfortunately continues to be fractious. I encourage them to avoid personal attacks.
- 36 A significant portion of the Respondent’s response material was unrelated to the scope of the Application which was whether or not the emails constituted a breach of the Standards in the Code. The Respondent’s material included allegations about conduct of the Applicant after the emails had been sent, including an allegation that the Applicant had colluded with another individual to set up a retaliatory Application, an allegation of the Applicant’s poor attendance and inattentiveness at meetings, an allegation of continued bullying and intimidatory behaviour by the Applicant. I advised the Respondent at the directions hearing, and again in the hearing, that these were matters outside the scope of the Application.
- 37 I also advised the Respondent that if he believes that the Applicant’s conduct following the emails has been questionable, it is a matter for him as to whether, and where, to pursue those allegations but it was not appropriate to do so in this Application.
- 38 I do not accept the Respondent’s contention that the first email was “appropriate to my role as a councillor and acting in the community’s interests”.

- 39 In the first email, the Respondent uses *"corruption"* twice. This suggests that the use of the word was not merely incidental.
- 40 It is a serious allegation for the Respondent to suggest that the Applicant is potentially or actually *"corrupt"*. The word connotes dishonesty or illegality of a trusted public power for private gain. In common parlance, the term is associated with criminal conduct, misuse of public office, receiving undisclosed benefits and the like. Accordingly, it would be highly improper to make such an allegation without having substantiating evidence. Despite being invited to do so, the Respondent has not provided any evidence to support that it was appropriate to use *"corruption"*.
- 41 I find that the Respondent's use *"corruption"* in the first email to be unnecessary, inappropriate, inflammatory and damaging.
- 42 I have taken into account that the first email refers to the *"possibility"* of corruption and *"concerns"* of corruption but note the Respondent's concession in the third email that he meant to refer to the *"possibility of conflicts of interest"*.
- 43 In view of the evidence that the Applicant had declared the role, and in view that the resurfacing at the Reserve will benefit the community, the Respondent's analogy in the first email is not 'on all fours'.
- 44 The second email contains a clear acknowledgment by the Respondent that the Applicant's *"stated conflict of interest is public record on a personal interest return"*. Given the Applicant's caution about repeating an insinuation of *"corruption"*, instead of clarifying the first email, the Respondent 'doubles down' by not only maintaining that the resurfacing issue is *"potentially very serious"*, but also noting that it has been picked up by an unidentified *"community member"* and may *"very well be picked up wider in media"*.
- 45 Additionally, the Respondent states in the second email that the Applicant still needed to be *"appropriately vetted"*. I accept the Applicant's submission that, in the absence of any supporting details to support the *"possibility of corruption"*, the second email improperly invites speculation about the Applicant's conduct and, indeed, constitutes an implied threat on the Respondent's part that he might involve the media.
- 46 I do not accept the Respondent's assertion that the second email was an *"apology and an immediate retraction"*. It was nothing of the sort. In any event, the supposed retraction was not sent to all of the recipients.
- 47 The Respondent's claim in the third email that *"I did in no way insinuate there was corruption"* beggar's belief. That is exactly what the Respondent did in the first email and then repeated the insinuation in the second email.
- 48 While acknowledging that the word *"corruption"* was *"very strong"*, the Respondent did not apologise for using it. Further, not all of the recipients were informed that the Respondent had intended to refer to a possible conflict of interest and not corruption on the Applicant's part.

- 49 Clause 1 of the Standards relates to *'Performing the role of a Councillor'* and requires that:
- "A Councillor must do everything reasonably necessary to ensure that they perform the role of a Councillor effectively and responsibly, including by-*
- (a) ...*
 - (b) being fit to perform the role of a Councillor when acting in that capacity or purporting to act in that capacity; and*
 - (c) diligently using Council processes to become informed about matters which are subject to Council decisions; and*
 - (d) ...*
 - (e) ...*
 - (f) ..."*
- 50 I find that the emails constitute a failure by the Respondent to do *"everything reasonably necessary"* to perform the role of a Councillor *"effectively and responsibly"* as well as a failure to *"diligently use council processes"*. As the Mayor appropriately pointed out to the Councillors, emails are not an appropriate channel to raise governance issues. The issue should have been raised privately with Council's governance officer and not in an email to the recipients. The Respondent failed to use *'council processes'* and, as such, the emails are a breach of Clause 1 of the Standards.
- 51 Clause 2 of the Standards relates to *'Behaviours'* and requires that:
- "(1) A Councillor must treat others, including other Councillors, members of Council staff and members of the public, with dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect by-*
- (a) not engaging in demeaning, abusive, obscene or threatening behaviour...*
 - (b) not engaging in behaviour that intentionally causes or perpetuates stigma, stereotyping, prejudice or aggression against a person or class of persons; and*
 - (c) ...*
 - (d) ...*
 - (e) ...*
 - (f) ..."*
- (2) A Councillor, as an individual at the workplace, must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons by-*
- (a) adhering to applicable systems and policies put in place by the Chief Executive Officer to manage risks to health and safety in the workplace; and*
 - (b) ...*
- (3) A Councillor must act in accordance with any policies, practices and protocols developed and implemented under section 46 of the Act that support arrangements for interactions between members of Council staff and Councillors."*
- 52 I find that the Respondent's references in the first email to the resurfacing of the Reserve raised *"the possibility of corruption"* and *"concerns of corruption"*, was a failure by the Respondent to treat the Applicant with *"dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect"*. The evidence confirms that the Respondent knew that the Applicant had previously declared

the role and conflicts of interest yet chose to insinuate to the recipients, absent any details or information, that the Applicant was corrupt. The Respondent has breached Clause 2 of the Standards.

53 Clause 4 of the Standards relates to 'Integrity' and includes the following:

"(1) A Councillor must act with integrity, exercise reasonable care and diligence and take reasonable care to avoid any action which may diminish the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of local government, including by-
(a) ensuring that their behaviour does not bring discredit upon the Council; and
(b) not deliberately misleading the Council or the public about any matter related to the performance of their public duties; and
(c) ..."

54 I also find that the Respondent has breached Clause 4 of the Standards. The first email was unnecessarily sent to 26 recipients. Asserting in emails that a Councillor may have acted corruptly, without providing any supporting details, the Respondent's implication of improper motives on the Applicant's part is a failure to take "reasonable care to avoid any action which may diminish the public's trust and integrity of local government". The Respondent's failure to advise the recipients that he unconditionally withdrew his unsubstantiated insinuations that a Councillor may have been involved in corrupt conduct does not assist in restoring the public's "trust and confidence" in relation to the integrity of Council. Also, in the absence of supporting details, I remain unconvinced that the Respondent has not deliberately misled the Council.

55 Pursuant to section 147(2)(a) of the Act, I direct that the Respondent provide a written apology to the Applicant which acknowledges and apologizes for the emails which failed to treat him with "dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect" and that the Respondent regrets any distressed caused (**apology**). The apology is to be emailed to the recipients by 6 March 2026.

56 Pursuant to section 147(2)(b) of the Act, I also direct that the Respondent be suspended from the office of Councillor for a period of one month (**suspension**). While that section provides for a suspension for a period "not exceeding 3 months", I have taken into account the fact that the Respondent has undertaken governance training since sending the emails. The suspension is to take effect the day after this determination is tabled at the next Council meeting, (presently scheduled for 11 March 2026), or from 12 March 2026, whichever is sooner.

Simon Heath

Arbiter

Dated: 26 February 2026

Model Councillor Code of Conduct

Schedule 1 of the Local Government (Governance and Integrity) Amendment Regulations 2024

Definitions

In this Schedule—

discrimination means unfair or unfavourable treatment of a person on the grounds of an attribute specified in section 6 of the **Equal Opportunity Act 2010**.

Standards of Conduct

1. Performing the role of a Councillor

A Councillor must do everything reasonably necessary to ensure that they perform the role of a Councillor effectively and responsibly, including by—

- (a) representing the interests of the municipal community by considering and being responsive to the diversity of interests and needs of the municipal community; and
- (b) being fit to perform the role of a Councillor when acting in that capacity or purporting to act in that capacity; and
- (c) diligently using Council processes to become informed about matters which are subject to Council decisions; and
- (d) not performing or purporting to perform any responsibilities or functions of the Chief Executive Officer; and
- (e) acknowledging and supporting the Mayor in the performance of the role of the Mayor, including by—
 - (i) respecting and complying with a ruling of the Mayor as the chair of Council meetings (unless dissenting from the ruling in accordance with the Council's Governance Rules); and
 - (ii) refraining from making public comment, including to the media, that could reasonably be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of the Council where the Councillor has not been authorised by the Mayor to make such a comment.

2. Behaviours

- (1) A Councillor must treat others, including other Councillors, members of Council staff and members of the public, with dignity, fairness, objectivity, courtesy and respect, including by—

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- (a) not engaging in demeaning, abusive, obscene or threatening behaviour, including where the behaviour is of a sexual nature; and
 - (b) not engaging in behaviour that intentionally causes or perpetuates stigma, stereotyping, prejudice or aggression against a person or class of persons, and
 - (c) not engaging in discrimination or vilification; and
 - (d) supporting the Council, when applying the Council's community engagement policy, to develop respectful relationships and partnerships with Traditional Owners, Aboriginal community controlled organisations and the Aboriginal community; and
 - (e) supporting the Council in fulfilling its obligation under the Act or any other Act (including the **Gender Equality Act 2020**) to achieve and promote gender equality; and
 - (f) ensuring their behaviours and interactions with children are in line with the Council's policies and procedures as a child safe organisation and obligations under the **Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005** to the extent that they apply to Councillors.
- (2) A Councillor, as an individual at the workplace, must take reasonable care for their own health and safety and take reasonable care that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons by—
- (a) adhering to applicable systems and policies put in place by the Chief Executive Officer to manage risks to health and safety in the workplace; and
 - (b) complying, so far as the Councillor is reasonably able, with any reasonable instruction that is given by the Chief Executive Officer to manage risks to health and safety.
- (3) A Councillor must act in accordance with any policies, practices and protocols developed and implemented under section 46 of the Act that support arrangements for interactions between members of Council staff and Councillors.

3. Good governance

A Councillor must comply with the following Council policies and procedures required for delivering good governance for the benefit and wellbeing of the municipal community—

- (a) the Council's expenses policy adopted and maintained under section 41 of the Act;

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- (b) the Council's Governance Rules developed, adopted and kept in force by the Council under section 60 of the Act, including in relation to—
 - (i) conduct in Council meetings or meetings of delegated committees; and
 - (ii) requesting and approval of attendance at Council meetings and meetings of delegated committees by electronic means of communication; and
 - (iii) the Council's election period policy included in the Council's Governance Rules under section 69 of the Act, including in ensuring that Council resources are not used in a way that is intended to influence, or is likely to influence, voting at a general election or by-election;
- (c) the Council's Councillor gift policy adopted under section 138 of the Act;
- (d) any direction of the Minister given under section 175 of the Act.

4. Integrity

- (1) A Councillor must act with integrity, exercise reasonable care and diligence and take reasonable steps to avoid any action which may diminish the public's trust and confidence in the integrity of local government, including by—
 - (a) ensuring that their behaviour does not bring discredit upon the Council; and
 - (b) not deliberately misleading the Council or the public about any matter related to the performance of their public duties; and
 - (c) not making Council information publicly available where public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest.

Note

See the public transparency principles set out in section 58 of the Act.

- (2) A Councillor must not, in their personal dealings with the Council (for example as a ratepayer, recipient of a Council service or planning applicant), expressly or impliedly request preferential treatment for themselves or a related person or entity.

5. The Model Councillor Code of Conduct does not limit robust public debate

Nothing in the Model Councillor Code of Conduct is intended to limit, restrict or detract from robust public debate of issues in a democracy.

OFFICIAL

7. COUNCIL REPORTS

7.1 CENTRAL COBURG PROGRAM COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

Central Coburg Program

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Thanks the many community members, local businesses and stakeholder organisations who provided feedback on the draft concept for Coburg and the draft framework for central Coburg in late 2025.
2. Notes the feedback provided during the engagement in the draft Concept for Coburg and Framework Plan Engagement Report (Attachment 2).
3. Publishes the draft Concept for Coburg and Framework Plan Engagement Report (Attachment 2) on Council's Conversations Merri-bek page.
4. Receives an updated central Coburg framework plan following community feedback in the coming months.

REPORT

Executive summary

Council undertook a six-week public engagement program from 6 November to 18 December 2025 to hear feedback from community and stakeholders on the draft framework for central Coburg (the draft plan), known as 'Coburg is here'.

The draft plan follows extensive testing of a range of scenarios, and balances the community's and Council's aspirations to:

- Create more jobs and a thriving economy in central Coburg.
- Deliver great design and built form with a vibrant, aesthetically appealing streetscape and identity for Coburg.
- Create beautiful and inviting new parks and open spaces for the community.
- Improve and redistribute public car parks, roads, and pedestrian access to make sure central Coburg is convenient and accessible.
- Provide diverse housing choices for families and other future Coburg residents and contribute to closing Merri-bek's social housing gap.
- Deliver a financially sustainable outcome where revenue from the development funds the delivery of public infrastructure (including open space, community infrastructure, roads, drainage and public realm), as well as enabling the provision of social and affordable housing options.

Community members were encouraged to provide feedback on the themes of the draft framework including open space, housing, access and movement, and the mix of community and commercial spaces proposed in the draft framework.

Council raised awareness of the draft plan by delivering over 1,000 postcards to local residents, door knocking, letters to businesses, social media and media posts.

A range of engagement methods and promotional techniques were used to encourage Merri-bek's diverse communities to participate. These included online polls and surveys, pop-ups, drop-ins, visits to local businesses, roundtable conversations and stakeholder meetings.

Council received over 1,300 feedback contributions which have been analysed and synthesised into a comprehensive engagement summary report (**Attachment 2**). A diverse range of feedback was received from both public participants and private stakeholder meetings.

Throughout the engagement program Council heard a wide range of views that both aligned with and diverged from the draft concept.

Across the range of feedback channels, there was general support for key outcomes including:

- A greener, livelier, cleaner precinct with a diversity of retail
- Ensuring new buildings and urban design meet high quality standards
- Spaces for community organisations and artists in the precinct
- The new library and piazza, and
- Continued engagement with impacted stakeholders including local businesses and adjacent property owners.

There were also areas where there were more divergent views, particularly in relation to:

- the provision, design and management of traffic and car parking, and
- the amount and type of new housing.

The engagement program has helped Council understand that generally, the draft framework plan balances the issues that are important for the community. However, there are areas of further investigation that Council should pursue to implement a project which delivers the best outcomes for the community.

After consideration of the above feedback received from community and stakeholders, the following high-level areas for further investigation have been identified:

- Continue to engage with highly impacted stakeholders
- Review the approach to public parking provision and distribution
- Review the provision of commercial, retail and community use to diversify retail and create affordable spaces for a vibrant community
- Develop design standards to ensure high quality building and urban design outcomes
- Identify preferred bicycle routes and locations for bicycle parking
- Explore opportunities for increased greening in the precinct
- Further thinking on the layout of the streets and managing traffic impacts
- Continue to test and refine the mix of social, affordable and market housing
- Carefully plan out construction and staging to minimise impacts on neighbours, and
- Continue to test and refine building height and car parking provision feasibility modelling.

During the period that the Coburg is Here framework was being developed and consultation undertaken, the State government has been undertaking a wide range of reforms to the planning system. This includes changing settings in Activity Centres including Coburg. These changes have occurred rapidly and will also need to be considered.

The investigation areas identified above, along with updated State policy settings and the full set of feedback received from the community and stakeholders will inform updates to the framework plan to bring the plan to life.

Council is continuing to work with stakeholders to understand their views and explore potential updates. An updated framework plan is planned to be presented to Council in the coming months.

Previous Council decisions

The most recent Council decisions relating to Central Coburg are listed below (for brevity, the full decision text is provided in **Attachment 1**):

Central Coburg Program (Confidential) – 8 October 2025

Central Coburg Program scenario modelling update (Confidential) – 9 July 2025

Central Coburg Program scenario modelling update (Confidential) – 14 May 2025

Coburg Library and Piazza Location – 14 May 2025

Central Coburg Program – Scenarios for Further Investigation (Confidential) – 12 March 2025

The Coburg Library and Piazza project – 12 February 2025

Support for Central Coburg businesses and community – 11 September 2024

The Coburg Conversation engagement findings and precinct objectives – 10 April 2024

1. Policy Context

Council Plan 2025-29

The draft Central Coburg framework plan is consistent with a range of strategies in the Council Plan, including:

1. Care for nature and climate resilience
 - Cool urban environments and beautify public spaces with nature, including seeking opportunities to reduce hard surfaces to increase permeability.
 - Improve parks and facilities to make them welcoming places to share and to enjoy activities.
2. Healthy and inclusive communities
 - Support the housing and wellbeing needs of all in the community particularly those on lower incomes to have access housing in Merri-bek.
3. Beautiful and liveable city
 - Maintain our streets, laneways, and public places so they are adaptive to community needs; places we are proud of and feel safe in
 - Make it easy and safe for people to move around Merri-bek, especially using public and active transport and zero emissions vehicles
4. Thriving economy and culture
 - Facilitate the further development of and investment into key commercial and industrial areas to attract investment and diverse job opportunities.

Council action plan 2025-26

Action 37: Progress plans and projects to revitalise and improve central Coburg.

Community Vision 2025-2035

Council's community vision was refreshed in 2025 by the Community Panel and the Youth Panel and states that:

"Merri-bek leads, and leaves no one behind.

In 2035: We are a welcoming, safe and thriving community. We are sustainable, and our environment is respected. Our community is engaged and informed. Our streets are full of life.

One community, proudly diverse."

The future revitalisation of central Coburg will deliver on the Community Vision in Central Coburg.

Merri-bek Community Engagement Policy 2024

The engagement program was developed and delivered in line with Council's Community Engagement Policy.

2. Background

Place context

Central Coburg is a vibrant and diverse neighbourhood with a strong local identity, popular shopping strips, and excellent access to public transport. Sydney Road and Victoria Street Mall are well-loved for their mix of shops, cafes and restaurants, and the area includes valued community facilities such as the Coburg Library and Leisure Centre. The Bell Street level crossing removal has delivered new open spaces, upgraded shared paths, and a modern station. Council has significant land holdings in the precinct (six sites of around 45,000 square metres), much of which is currently used for at-grade public car parking.

Central Coburg is also home to a retail precinct and a range of commercial businesses, along Sydney Road, Victoria Street Mall, Foleys Arcade, Walkers Arcade, and other popular areas. It hosts three churches, health services, and Council's existing library. To the east, the Russell Street sporting precinct includes the Coburg Leisure Centre, the Bridges Reserve football oval (home of the Coburg Football Club), and in coming years will also host the Aspire Sports Centre (the national base of the Bachar Houli Foundation).

To the North East, the Coburg Health Hub project was confirmed several years ago, with a planning application expected to be advertised for community feedback in the coming months.

Council has recently committed \$60 million to a new library and piazza in the heart of the central Coburg train station precinct, and will shortly be releasing a concept design selected following a design competition. Community engagement on the design is currently planned in early 2026.

Strategic and planning policy context

The Merri-bek Planning Scheme identifies Central Coburg as a Major Activity Centre, highlighting its key role in accommodating a diverse mix of retail, commercial, and cultural uses, supporting employment opportunities, and enabling significant residential growth.

The State Government is currently rolling out reforms to deliver on its Housing Statement including capacity for hundreds of thousands more homes close to public transport, employment and essential services. The reforms include changes to 60 Activity Centres along key public transport lines, including Brunswick and Coburg. The State undertook two rounds of community engagement in 2025 and is expected to introduce new built form planning controls in the Planning Scheme in the coming months.

The draft Central Coburg framework plan is aligned with what we know about the new planning controls so far. Importantly Council's draft framework plan balances economic outcomes, diverse building heights and forms to facilitate great streetscapes, with the aspiration to deliver more well-located, high-quality, and affordable housing.

Draft concept and framework for Coburg

The draft concept for Coburg and the draft framework for central Coburg, the documents which formed the basis for the community engagement are attached for reference (**Attachment 3** and **4**).

3. Issues

Community engagement findings and analysis

A summary and analysis of the engagement findings are organised by the themes of the draft concept the community provided feedback on. The attachment 'Coburg is here - Community Engagement Summary Report' contains further detail on the engagement process and findings. Over 1,300 people took part in the engagement activities, and their detailed feedback is reflected in the report.

A high level summary of feedback themes and common issues is outlined below. The overall program must be feasible to be delivered, and Council will work through all of the feedback to achieve an outcome that balances aspirations and feasibility.

Coburg is community

Local community organisations such as the Presentation of Our Lord, the Coburg Uniting Church, Schoolhouse Studios and the Merri-bek Community Shed are important to Coburg.

Community spaces for non-profits, art galleries and studio spaces should be considered in the concept.

The current Coburg Library is outdated and the community welcomes the new library and piazza.

Coburg is accessible

Future car parking provision, design and management is a highly divisive issue. Whilst local businesses and community services rely on nearby public parking, some said that the current car parking areas feel unsafe and contributes to poor environmental outcomes.

The proposed increase in population in the area should be supported by the inclusion of some private parking for residents and improved public transport facilities in particular, the State Government's proposal to increase services on the Upfield Line.

Safer cycling and pedestrian infrastructure should be included in the concept by identifying preferred routes and bicycle parking locations.

Coburg is home

Whilst Coburg should have more housing options including social and affordable housing, some feedback expressed concerns about providing community housing, and other feedback was fearful that gentrification could price out existing residents. There were some concerns that new buildings should not be unsightly.

There were divergent views shared about the proposed affordable and social housing targets, with some noting adequate nearby community services should also be included in the concept.

Some were concerned that there about adequate car parking provision for new residents, causing wider parking and traffic impacts.

Coburg is thriving

Whilst community participants like Coburg for being Coburg, a key concern raised was a lack of diversity of shops available in Coburg, including nighttime options. Lygon Street, Brunswick East was cited as a positive example of a mix of older and newer shops.

The Central Coburg Business Association generally support the vision for a renewed activity centre. The CCBA expressed concerns regarding car parking provision, and development sequencing (including trader access and construction impacts).

Coburg is open

There is a lack of green space in Coburg and there could be even more greening opportunities in the concept. This could include vertical greening opportunities on new buildings.

Safety and cleanliness of the area should be improved, particularly on Sydney Road and Victoria Street Mall.

Opportunities for play and recreation should be included in new open spaces.

Coburg is evolving

There are a range of views on urban intensification. The concept should ensure high design quality in both new buildings and open spaces.

Some stakeholders are concerned with potential impacts during construction and phasing of the project.

Understanding issues and exploring updates to the Central Coburg plan

Council is continuing to work with stakeholders to understand their views and explore potential updates to the draft framework plan. Revisions and updates to the draft plan need to provide community benefit as a whole.

This includes exploring options for the location and integration of the new Coburg Library and Piazza with the existing buildings and uses. Council is exploring opportunities to further strengthen connections between existing central icons in the heart of Coburg, and to respond to feedback about access, parking, cycling routes and the location of built form.

The diagram below illustrates the opportunities being explored.



Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

While this report is simply a summary of community engagement and not a decision report, it summarises a range of community feedback which values the importance of green spaces and quality design. The Coburg is Here framework also values environmentally sustainable design, good water sensitive urban design, and the creation of green and liveable urban environments.

Legal and risk considerations

Engagement on the draft framework plan was a non-statutory engagement. Releasing the engagement report ahead of the updated plan is good practice to demonstrate and share what Council heard from the engagement.

Human Rights consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and satisfies the right to taking part in public life (section 18) which stipulates the protection of rights such as attending a public forum to help make decisions on local issues. The engagement program provided ample opportunities for interested and impacted people to express their opinions and contribute to the next steps of the project.

4. Community consultation and engagement

An intensive community engagement program was undertaken to obtain feedback on the draft Central Coburg framework plan. It was held over a six-week engagement period, incorporating a mix of online and in-person activities to reach a wide audience. We engaged local residents, potential future residents, businesses, shoppers, workers, community organisations, and other key Council stakeholders. Ongoing targeted conversations with key stakeholders will ensure they play an active role throughout the process.

The engagement process also provided us an opportunity to check in with the community to see if their 2023 feedback is still consistent today. The engagement acknowledged previous engagement and was clear about scope for the next phase of the project. For example, the overall amount of housing is shaped by feasibility and is not open to significant change. However, there is greater scope for input on matters such as new parks, street upgrades, and how these public spaces can best serve local needs.

Engagement also explained the feasibility challenge and the need for trade-offs to balance different public benefit outcomes. It also outlined potential staging, timing and future work.

In early 2026, there will be a separate community engagement on a draft concept design for the Library and Piazza.

Engagement activities

Online

Conversations Merri-bek was used as the central hub, providing access to project information, documentation, visualisations, and opportunities to give feedback. There was interactive polls including a 'trade-off's activity and questions This was supported by a digital campaign across Council's social media, e-newsletters, and targeted online advertising.

In-person

In person meetings, pop-ups and site walkthroughs allowed people to engage directly, including those less active online. At these sessions, 3D models were available via QR codes or VR headsets, giving people the chance to visualise proposed changes in place.

Council also met with leaders of local community groups and organisations to present the proposal, and request that the leaders share key information with their networks.

Table 1: Summary of engagement activities

Engagement activity	Target audience	Level of engagement	No. participants
Pop-up events	Broad community, including those who don't visit central Coburg	Consult	284
Drop-in sessions	Coburg Library and Leisure Centre users, families with children.	Consult	149
Walking tours	Those interested in learning more about the draft framework.	Inform	7
Roundtables	Community organisations and special interest groups	Consult	9
Targeted discussions	Key stakeholder groups including State Government, Central Coburg Business Association and Wintringham residents	Consult	140
Local business visits	Local business owners and employees in central Coburg	Inform/consult	180
Letters and submissions	We heard from local residents, interest groups and peak bodies	Consult	53
First Nations targeted engagement	Traditional Owners and First Nations communities	Consult	10
Online survey	Broad community	Consult	550
TOTAL			1382

Communications

Communications was delivered through both online and non-digital channels to ensure broad reach.

Online

Social media, e-newsletters, online advertising, and campaign materials were used to expand awareness and encourage participation. This included in-language social media advertising in Greek, Arabic Italian and Turkish.

Print and non-digital

Signage, flyers, and postcards were be distributed through Council venues, local businesses, and direct mail. Innovative methods such as night-time projections in Victoria Mall were also used.

Affected persons rights and interests

The public engagement process has provided an opportunity for all community members to provide feedback on the draft framework plan.

Highly impacted and interested stakeholder groups including Central Coburg Business Association, The Presentation of Our Lord and Schoolhouse Studios were also proactively consulted and Council will continue to consult as the project progresses.

5. Officer declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and resources implications

There are no major financial or resource implications associated with sharing the community engagement findings and the other recommendations of this report.

The 2025-2026 budget allocation allows for the revision of the draft framework to incorporate feedback.

7. Implementation

Should this set of recommendations be endorsed, the following will occur:

- Publication of 'Coburg is Here – Community Engagement Summary Report' (attached) on our project webpages and promotion through a variety of communications channels to report back to the community on what we heard.
- Continue detailed feasibility work to update the central Coburg framework plan informed by the findings of the engagement program. This is expected to be presented back to Council in the coming months
- Preparation of a precinct business case to inform implementation and delivery.
- Ongoing communications and engagement activities with the community and key stakeholders as the central Coburg program progresses.

Attachment/s

1	Previous Council decisions	D26/84931
2	Coburg is here - Community Engagement Summary Report (March 2026)	D26/78640
3	A draft concept for the future (November 2025)	D26/84990
4	A draft framework for Central Coburg (November 2025)	D26/84996

Central Coburg Program (Confidential) – 8 October 2025

Central Coburg Program scenario modelling update (Confidential) – 9 July 2025

Central Coburg Program scenario modelling update (Confidential) – 14 May 2025

Coburg Library and Piazza Location – 14 May 2025

That Council:

1. *Endorses the south-eastern portion of the Waterfield Street West site as the location for the Coburg Library and Piazza.*
2. *Following the adoption of this resolution, makes points 1, 2 and 3 of the resolution and this report publicly available and publishes the report on Council's website.*

Central Coburg Program – Scenarios for Further Investigation (Confidential) – 12 March 2025

The Coburg Library and Piazza project – 12 February 2025

That Council:

1. *Endorses the vision, objectives and scope for a new Coburg Library and Piazza as outlined in Attachment 1.*
2. *Investigates the southern part of the Waterfield Street West site as the potential preferred location for the Coburg Library and Piazza.*
3. *Receives a report at the April 2025 Council meeting on the outcomes of further site location exploration and a recommended site for the Coburg Library and Piazza.*
4. *Endorses the indicative financial modelling to be undertaken for the upcoming Council 10-year Financial Plan which supports a fundings strategy of up to \$60 million, and;*
 - a. *Notes that the fundings strategy comprises of a mixture of reserves and borrowings and explores opportunities to derive revenue from the existing library site once it is no longer needed as a library building, either through sale or long-term commercial lease utilising the proceeds as a part of the funding strategy.*
 - b. *Refers the indicative funding strategy of up to \$60 million to the 2025-2029 budget process.*
5. *Endorses the commencement of a design competition to procure the Coburg Library and Piazza concept design, and notes that a draft concept design will be returned for*

Council consideration and endorsement following the design competition and prior to community engagement.

6. *Continues to advocate to Federal and State Government, as well as any other appropriate funders, for grants and funds to realise the project.*

Support for Central Coburg businesses and community – 11 September 2024

That Council:

1. *Notes the long-term planning underway to revitalise Central Coburg, as kickstarted by the recent Coburg Conversation community engagement.*
2. *Notes Council's existing and strengthening relationship with the Central Coburg Business Association, recognising the importance and value of thriving local businesses for economic development, placemaking and creating a sense of community.*
3. *Notes the complex and intersectional needs of some of the people frequenting the Victoria Street Mall and acknowledges that punitive approaches to managing complex needs does not resolve issues.*
4. *Organises a meeting for Council officers, local businesses, Victoria Police and the Central Coburg Business Association and any other relevant stakeholders to discuss possible short and medium-term interventions to increase both actual and perceived safety and create a more inviting space for the Coburg community in Victoria Mall and receives a report on the outcomes of this meeting, officer recommendations and possible next steps in the first half of 2025.*

The Coburg Conversation engagement findings and precinct objectives – 10 April 2024

That Council:

1. *Notes the feedback provided from the community about the future of central Coburg captured in 'The Coburg Conversation – Summary of Community Engagement for Revitalising Coburg' (Attachment 2).*
2. *Thanks the many community members, local groups, businesses and organisations who took the time to share their views and ideas for the future of the area.*
3. *Amends objective 5 on page 29 in Attachment 1 to this report adding the italicised words to read:*
Safe, green, inviting and accessible journeys that link key destinations and open space, and all types of transport to, from and within the precinct, giving clear priority to pedestrians, cyclists and those living with mobility issues.
4. *Includes the concept of a community centre as part of the Coburg Library project in the next round of community consultation on Revitalising Coburg. Such a community centre would include a kitchen that the public is allowed to use, a shower and lockers, an additional meeting room or rooms, which could facilitate the Library opening up this additional space during extreme heat periods.*
5. *Adopts 'Revitalising Coburg: Objectives', that sets out Council's high-level objectives for achieving the revitalisation of central Coburg, (Attachment 1) and will act as a guide for the next stage of detailed planning for this program.*



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Executive summary

Council thanks all the participants who shared their views on the draft concept for central Coburg – the draft concept.

Council heard from many different voices on a range of issues and there were different perspectives.

There were different ways in which we reached out to people and heard from people. From a postcard letterbox drop, walking around, pop-ups and online engagement activities.

The draft concept is ambitious renewal of Council's land holdings and we worked hard to present the proposed change and the balancing act of what the community wants and what is feasible. We can only proceed if we have a financially viable project that delivers community benefits.

Overall, whilst we heard a range of diverse views on the details of the concept and way the concept is achieved, there was general support Council's plan to revitalise the central Coburg area.

Engagement program snapshot

To seek feedback on the draft concept from Merri-bek's diverse communities, Council ran a six-week engagement program from 6 November to 18 December 2025.

This included 19 face-to-face public engagement sessions, over 20 stakeholder meetings held in Coburg, Fawkner and Brunswick and drop ins to 180 local businesses.

Council also ran online engagement on the interactive Conversations Merri-bek website which attracted high volumes of visitors and contributors. A snapshot of participation is below.



Engagement findings snapshot

Throughout the engagement program Council heard a wide range of views that both aligned with and diverged from the draft concept.

Across different feedback there was general support for:

- a greener, livelier, cleaner precinct with a diversity of retail
- ensuring new buildings and urban design meet high quality standards
- spaces for community organisations and artists in the precinct
- the new library and piazza, and
- continued engagement with impacted stakeholders including local businesses and adjacent property owners.

There were areas where there were more divergent views regarding:

- the provision, design and management of traffic and car parking, and
- the amount and type of new housing.

What is Council doing with the feedback?

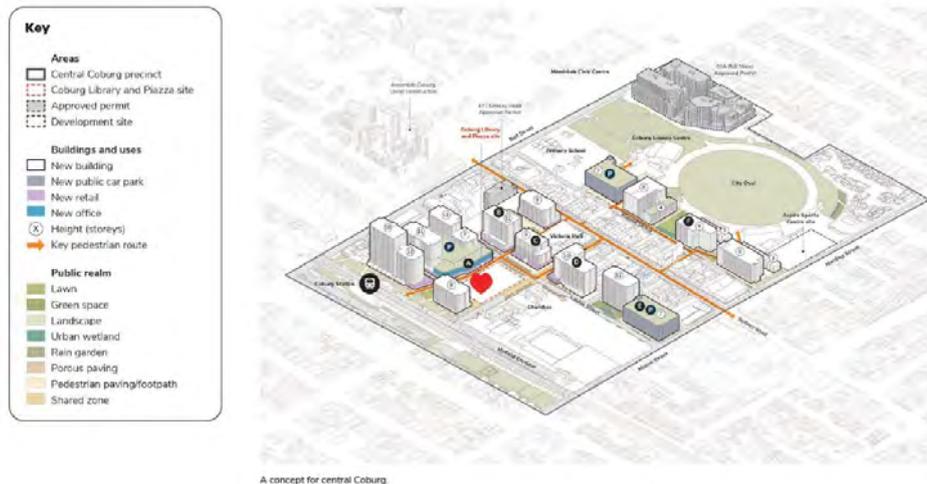
After consideration of the above feedback received from community and stakeholders, the following high-level areas for further investigation have been identified:

- continue to engage with highly impacted stakeholders
- review approach to public parking provision and distribution
- review the provision of commercial, retail and community use to diversify retail and create affordable spaces for a vibrant community
- develop design standards to ensure high quality building and urban design outcomes
- identify preferred bicycle routes and locations for bicycle parking
- explore opportunities for increased greening in the precinct
- further thinking on the layout of the streets and managing traffic impacts
- continue to test and refine the mix of social, affordable and market housing
- carefully plan out construction and staging to minimise impacts on neighbours, and
- continue to test and refine building height and car parking provision feasibility modelling.

Project background

Council is planning to redevelop its land holdings in central Coburg to transform the area into a vibrant economic, retail and cultural hub.

The proposed concept for central Coburg includes a new Coburg Library and Piazza, a thriving economy with new office and retail precincts, and a mix of market-price, affordable and social housing.



Project context

While this is not the first time Council has attempted to revitalise our landholdings in central Coburg, we believe the time is right for a new chapter for Central Coburg.

The State Government’s Activity Centre program is progressing, Coburg Health Hub will be delivered in the coming years, and we have heard from the community that change is needed.

Council has chosen to begin with a new library and piazza in the heart of Coburg. The design competition for this project is underway and will be announced in early 2026.

Now Council is focusing on six sites and have investigated scenarios that achieve economic, housing and public realm outcomes.

Council has previously heard how much the local community values the rich culture and history of Coburg and are excited for the future.

The draft concept brought was informed from the engagement program undertaken in late 2023 where Council heard from over 1,300 community members on their aspirations for the future of central Coburg in an engagement program called the Coburg Conversation.

From this engagement, the six objectives for central Coburg endorsed by Council were:

- a new library in the heart of Coburg
- new inviting public spaces
- more greening and cooling
- new high-quality housing, including social and affordable housing
- people friendly streets, and
- thriving diverse local economy.

These findings helped to inform the development of the draft concept and framework for Coburg, the documents which formed the basis for this engagement program.

Report disclaimer

This report is not conclusive and aims to provide a summary of the feedback received during engagement program which focused on the draft concept. Analysis was undertaken independently by Global Research.

Engagement overview

Why did Council engage?

The draft concept proposes some big changes for the central Coburg area and therefore requires suitable community input. Our aims for the engagement program were to:

- encourage ongoing community input into the proposed plans for central Coburg
- gain community feedback to inform the next iteration of plans for the future of central Coburg, and
- engage broadly to reflect the many views of Coburg's diverse communities.

When was the engagement?

Council ran a formal six-week engagement program from 6 November to 18 December 2025. Some consultation meetings with key stakeholders were held before and after this period.

How did Council engage?

Council provided a range of engagement opportunities for participants including proactive stakeholder engagement, in-person activities and online activities. These are outlined below:

In-person	Online
<p>In person engagements sought to reach people in Coburg by going to them and creating the opportunity for feedback as well as planned meetings.</p> <p>In person engagement opportunities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 x drop-in sessions at Coburg Library and Coburg Leisure Centre • 2 x walking tours of the precinct • 180 x business drop-ins • 2 x roundtable meetings • 7 x pop-up engagement sessions at Victoria Street Mall, Russell Street Car Park, Fawkner Senior Citizens' Centre, Coburg Night Market and Balam Balam Place (Brunswick) • 20+ stakeholder meetings 	<p>Merri-bek's online engagement platform, Conversations Merri-bek was used to provide information and collect feedback in multiple ways throughout the engagement program.</p> <p>Online engagement opportunities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive project map • Documents for download • Virtual Reality tour • Survey questions and polls • Interactive Q&A • Submission portal • Contact information • Translated project materials • Submissions via e-mail

The pop-up engagement sessions attracted good participation, and 284 feedback comments were collected by Merri-bek staff. Flyers were also handed out and participants asked questions of the project team.



A group of walking tour participants standing outside Coburg Library.



A group of participants engaging in pop-up activities at Victoria Street Mall, Coburg.

Who did Council engage with?

Council was delighted to speak with a diverse range of communities represented both at in-person engagement activities and online. By providing a range of engagement opportunities at various locations and times, as well as translating project materials into the municipality's top languages other than English, a broad range of people were encouraged to participate. Online participants were also able to translate the survey into their preferred language. Council also ensured the most impacted and interested stakeholders were proactively consulted. A demographic breakdown of the online participants and a stakeholder list can be found at the end of this report.

Inclusive engagement

The project team proactively visited stakeholder groups who face barriers to engagement such as time, access and language barriers. This included drop-ins to 180 local businesses and visits to Wintringham Aged Care and Fawkner Senior Citizens' Centre. A briefing was held with Merri-bek's Community Connectors who represent the diversity of languages spoken in Merri-bek. These language groups were:

- Italian
- Turkish
- Urdu
- Vietnamese
- Persian (Farsi)
- Hindi

More than 50 copies of in language flyers were also distributed by Community Connectors in person in Turkish, Nepali, Arabic, Italian and Greek.

There was also proactive engagement with the local Greek community including several meetings with the Presentation of Our Lord, and at pop-up engagements in Coburg and Fawkner.

Community led campaigns

As well as the community engagement activities led by Merri-bek City Council, some community groups led their own campaigns, requesting Council consider their particular interests when finalising the plan for central Coburg. Merri-bek City Council will continue to work collaboratively with these organisations throughout the project.

Parish of the Presentation Of Our Lord

Council has had a number of meetings with the Parish of the Presentation of Our Lord leadership leading up to and during the consultation period. A wide range of issues were raised in these discussions – broad support was expressed for development of the area as well as a range of concerns such as access to outside spaces for large events, access to parking, and growing demand for services the Church auspices for the wider community, and the importance of working together.

In November 2025, the Ypapanti Committee, representing the Presentation of Our Lord and broader Greek community, launched a petition on change.org about the draft concept. The petition¹ calls for Council to revise the proposed high-rise building opposite to the church property with concerns about overshadowing and the loss of at-grade parking which is used for important cultural celebrations.

The petition contains seven specific requests. Most of these (such as detailed traffic and solar plans) will be fully addressed as part of subsequent stages of the Coburg is here proposal. However, a key request to alter the concept is that Council:

“Abandon the 8-storey tower immediately opposite the church and redistribute height to other parts of the precinct..”

The petition also requests that Council continue to engage in genuine consultation with the Church Committee. No other formal submission has been received from the Church, but meetings with the Church leadership are continuing.

Schoolhouse Studios

Schoolhouse Studios is a tenant of the former supermarket building that is leased by Coles. It is a not-for-profit organisation that leases “meanwhile” spaces (vacant spaces that are available for lower rent on a short-term basis) to create affordable workspaces for artists and creatives.

Schoolhouse Studios released a campaign during the consultation period, asking its supporters to give feedback to Council about the importance of spaces for the arts in Coburg. Several submissions and comments were also received in support of Schoolhouse Studios’ request for space in the future precinct via a social media post. The submissions stress the importance of providing affordable spaces for artists who contribute to the economic and cultural vitality of the area.

¹ There are approximately 4,100 signatures at the time of reporting (February 2026); the petition has not yet been tabled with Council.

Engagement key findings

The below section outlines the high-level key findings on the draft Concept are grouped under the engagement headings of the program. These have been developed by combining analysis of the community engagement comments with excerpts of the feedback from key stakeholders. It also outlines Council's proposed response to the feedback, in addition to revising the draft concept. Further details of the feedback received on each theme area can be found in the next section.

Coburg is community

Council heard:

Local community organisations such as the Parish of the Presentation of Our Lord, Schoolhouse Studios and the Merri-bek Shed are important to Coburg and should be protected in the concept.

Community spaces for non-profits, art galleries and studio spaces should be included in the concept.

The current Coburg Library is outdated and the local community welcome the new library and piazza.

Council will:

- continue to engage with highly impacted stakeholders, and
- review the provision of commercial, retail and community use to diversify retail and create affordable spaces for a vibrant community

Coburg is accessible

Council heard:

Feedback on future car parking provision, design and management was highly varied. Many local businesses and community services emphasised that they rely on nearby public parking. Others said that the current car parking areas feel unsafe and contribute to poor environmental outcomes. There were also some stakeholders who indicated they would like to see less parking.

The proposed increase in population in the area should be supported by the inclusion of some private parking for residents and improved public transport facilities – in particular, the State Government's proposal to increase services on the Upfield Line.

Safer cycling and pedestrian infrastructure should be included in the concept by identifying preferred routes and bicycle parking locations.

Council will:

- review approach to public parking provision and distribution
- identify preferred bicycle routes and locations for bicycle parking, and
- further thinking on the layout of the streets and managing traffic impacts.

Coburg is home

Council heard:

Whilst most people who engaged said that Coburg should have more housing options including social and affordable housing, there were different views. Some people were against the provision of social and community housing in central Coburg, and others were eager to see more. Some people were also fearful that gentrification could price out existing residents. There were also some concerns that new buildings might be unsightly.

There are divergent views on the proposed affordable and social housing targets, with some noting adequate nearby community services should also be included in the concept.

Some were concerned that there wouldn't be adequate car parking provision for new residents, causing wider parking and traffic impacts.

Council will:

- continue to test and refine the mix of social, affordable and market housing
- develop design standards to ensure high quality building and urban design outcomes, and
- continue to test and refine building height and car parking provision feasibility modelling.

Coburg is thriving

Council heard:

Whilst community participants like Coburg for being Coburg, a key concern raised was a lack of diversity of shops available in Coburg, including limited night-time options. Lygon Street, Brunswick East was cited as a positive example of a mix of older and newer shops.

As a key business stakeholder, the Central Coburg Business Association (CCBA) generally supported the vision for a renewed activity centre. However, CCBA indicated that many of their members have material concerns regarding car parking provision and development sequencing, trader access and construction impacts.

Council will:

- review approach to public parking provision and distribution, and
- review the provision of commercial, retail and community use to diversify retail and create affordable spaces for a vibrant community.

Coburg is open

Council heard:

There is a lack of green space in Coburg and there could be even more greening opportunities in the concept. This could include vertical greening opportunities on new buildings.

Safety and cleanliness of the area should be improved, particularly on Sydney Road and Victoria Street Mall.

Opportunities for play and recreation should be included in new open spaces.

Council will:

- explore opportunities for increased greening in the precinct.

Coburg is evolving

Council heard:

There are a range of views on urban intensification. The concept should ensure high design quality in both new buildings and open spaces.

Some stakeholders are concerned with potential impacts during construction and phasing of the project.

Council will:

- carefully plan out construction and staging to minimise impacts on neighbours,

- continue to engage with highly impacted stakeholders, and
- continue to test and refine building height and car parking provision feasibility modelling.

Theme area analysis

This section further details the analysis of comments received throughout the engagement program by the key theme areas of the framework and concept. The feedback has been separated by community and stakeholder feedback, as stakeholder feedback was often specific to the interests of that group.

The community participants sections contain analysis of the Conversations Merri-bek feedback and poll results, in-person engagement feedback and public submissions received throughout the engagement period. Independent analysis of this feedback was undertaken in by Global Research.

The stakeholder participants sections contain excerpts from stakeholder meeting minutes, submissions and other channels received by specific stakeholder organisations who are potentially most impacted by the project.

Quotes are used to demonstrate the voices of those who participated directly. These are clearly marked using quotation marks.

Coburg is community

Proposal: A community gathering place where the library, piazza and Victoria Street Mall will form the heart of central Coburg.

Community participants

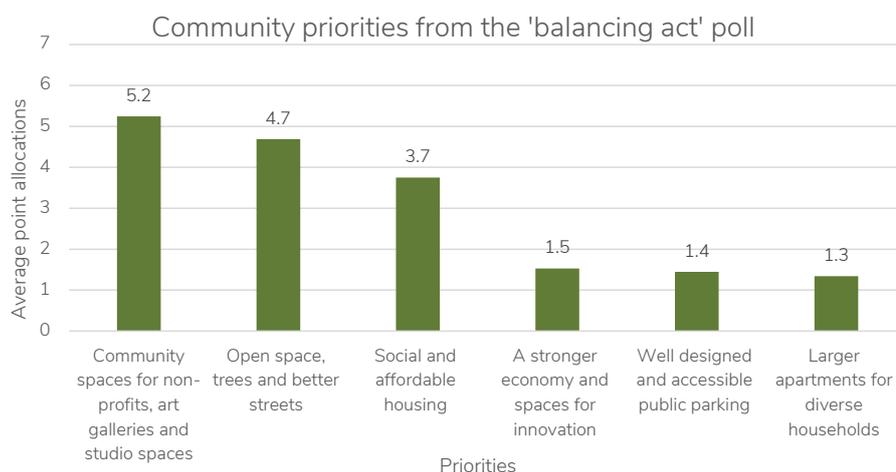


Chart showing average point allocations of online participants priorities for central Coburg (n=306).

The above chart shows that community spaces for non-profits, art galleries and studio spaces were allocated an average of 5.2 points by community participants, the highest of the options provided. This demonstrates the importance of community space in central Coburg from community participants.

A substantial number of community participants raised the importance of supporting the arts by creating and maintaining community and performance spaces for creatives, artists and community groups. Several comments specifically mentioned support for retaining Schoolhouse Studios and the Merri Shed. Participants also voiced interest in seeing more investment into spaces for arts and cultural communities.

"School house studios is a meeting place for cultural activities, Coburg's only gallery space, multiple arts studios and small businesses run from here and it's got endless potential. It's an asset to our community.."

"I am concerned about there being affordable spaces for artists to rent. Coburg is one of the last inner city areas where there are still options for creatives. That also can mean having easy car access/parking for transporting equipment, materials, setting up for exhibitions etc. The inner north is noted for its strong creative community but there needs to be places for artists if the community is to continue to thrive."

Most library comments supported the development of the new library and its space for the community although a couple of comments questioned the need for a new library. Reference to the Glenroy Hub as a positive example of new community infrastructure was also made. A small number of comments identified the need to upgrade the Victoria Street Mall, noting safety concerns.

"The mall needs work - and can sometimes be scary."

A considerable number of community participants noted concerns with the proposal to build high-rise buildings on the Waterfield West site opposite the Presentation of Our Lord church site. Participants were also concerned with the proposal to remove car parking from the area, noting that this would raise accessibility concerns for elderly church attendees and people with mobility challenges. Feedback noted the church's important role in the community and there were concerns about access to community programs during construction. A couple of comments noted that the Church doesn't own the carpark and should pay for access.

"This church means a great deal to our community, and maintaining the space around it is clearly in the public interest."

Community comments included concerns with how the development will affect community facilities. There were a few requests for an upgraded Coburg Leisure Centre. A couple of community participants also raised concerns with the current school being unable to support the intake of more children.

Stakeholder participants

Traditional Owner participants asked the project to seek opportunities for further First Nations engagement on ceremonial spaces, plantings, public art and building design, ensuring it's a welcoming space for First Nations people and multicultural communities alike.

The Presentation of Our Lord raised a range of concerns about how the project could impact community outreach services and community events. This includes the Our Daily Bread program, which the Parish indicated provides around 350 food relief services a week. A key issue for the Parish is storage space required to provide these services.

"Our precinct is not a small local chapel, it is a major metropolitan community centre, generating weekly and annual attendance that far exceeds most civic venues in Coburg, including festivals, schooling, exams, event hire, addiction recovery programs, and welfare to the homeless."

Merri-bek's Community Connectors received feedback from their communities to provide more community infrastructure to meet current and future needs. One suggestion was to include more spaces to run some activities and play board games for retired men in Coburg to socialise. There were also suggestions to provide more youth-focused spaces to engage young people to keep them away from devices.

Mostly all the stakeholder groups consulted were supportive of the new library and piazza. Community organisations stressed the importance of inclusive programming, flexible spaces and late opening hours for the new facility to provide the most community benefit. There was also discussion that some service providers and libraries offerings often overlap and this should be considered in the planning of the new library.

Community service providers and other stakeholder organisations stated it would be ideal to retain the function of Schoolhouse Studios in the area as a community arts offering.

Coburg is home

Proposal: A family-friendly place to live where jobs, shops, public transport, public spaces, schools and community facilities are all nearby.

Community participants

Housing is a key part of the Coburg is here proposal. A range of comments were received from community participants which question the definition of affordable housing or even requesting public housing to be included in the plan over social housing.

"What is meant by 'affordable housing'? If this is just 75-80% market rate then this is not affordable. Genuine affordable housing must be affordable for low-income people."

Just over 60% of community participants commented in support of more density. They generally noted the importance of locating development centrally and close to public transport. A moderate number of community participants in favour of increased density specifically expressed support for more housing in Coburg.

"The proposal to build housing for roughly 2000 people is amazing and would allow more people to live where they want, near transport, services, and community connections."

Those opposed were concerned about the effect on existing residents due to increased congestion and pollution, as well as the effect on the character of the area. Several community participants considered the scale of the development generally to be too much.

"The development proposals for Merri-bek are predicated on a growth model that preferences non-residents and developers over existing residents and communities. Large blocks of flats are not wanted. They diminish quality of life by removing open spaces and increasing congestion."

Stakeholder participants

Traditional Owner participants supported the proposal's housing diversity targets with the importance of affordable housing emphasised.

Community Housing Industry Association Victoria provided a submission which supports the proposal form Council:

"We welcome Council's proposal to include 1,000 new apartments and townhouses in the Central Coburg precinct, and congratulate Council on proposing to include 23-30% social and affordable housing, with a minimum of 90 social housing homes. This ambitious target is a clear demonstration of Merri-bek's ongoing commitment to ensure that Merri-bek residents have a safe, secure and affordable home."

They also strongly suggest that Council partners with Community Housing Organisations to deliver affordable housing outcomes as they are experienced in tenancy allocation, property management and community development.

The Presentation of our Lord raised doubts about market demand for three- and four-bedroom apartments for families and were concerned these may become student sublets. They also suggested that affordable housing could increase demand for the social outreach services they provide.

There was a desire for innovative models of housing which could eventually mean ownership for residents who are renting from community organisations and active transport groups.

YIMBY, a grassroots advocacy organisation, support the plan to provide more housing in the context of Greater Melbourne's housing crisis.

"Council's concept plan, which involves building 850-1150 new dwellings on council owned land in central Coburg is more than welcome - it is essential to the future of the area"

They also suggested that flexibility is key when providing housing, supporting the transformative potential of the project to provide thousands of people new homes and contribute to addressing homelessness. In their submission they request Council look at increasing the social housing target and employ innovative funding models:

"Ideally, Council will be able to secure 23-30% social and affordable housing, and funding for proposed car parks and any additional infrastructure or public realm improvements."

Vincent Care expressed that affordable housing definitions aren't always clear to purpose and people still face barriers to accessing these dwellings.

"Affordable housing doesn't always mean it is affordable for everyone. Do the homework on this"

Coburg is accessible

Proposal: An accessible place where people will comfortably walk, cycle, catch public transport or drive and park their car.

Community participants

Car parking was a major point of discussion for community participants when it came to accessibility. Participants raised general concerns about car parking changes, including the difficulty of using multi-deck parking structures, questions about cost, and the importance of accessible parking close to shops.

A considerable number of participants raised general concerns about the importance of car parking. A couple of comments specifically noted issues around difficulty of using multi-deck parking structures. A small number of community participants specifically noted the importance of parking close to shops to ensure accessibility for older people. A couple of comments highlighted the need to stage the development so that car parking is made available before, or at the same time, housing is built.

"Concerned about multi-deck parking looking terrible, hard for larger vehicles to park in, quantity of accessible parking (not enough at the moment)."

A slightly higher number of community participants commented in support of more parking rather than less. Comments in support of more parking noted that some people rely on cars and that parking is important for supporting local businesses. Increased demand for parking associated with an increase in population was also noted.

Participants who supported fewer car parks considered that car parking wasn't a good use of space and supported initiatives to incentivise mode shift to cycling.

"I am very supportive of changes to improve pedestrian and cycling accessibility and make the streets in Coburg central nicer to spend time on."

Participants emphasised the importance of developing improved and safer cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, identifying Sydney Road and Louisa Street as priority areas. There was discussion around improving accessibility options for pedestrians and raised concerns about the safety of pedestrians.

"In particular, pedestrian safety on Bell Street remains a serious concern. The absence of pedestrian overpasses or other safe crossing solutions poses a significant risk, especially as foot traffic increases."

The need for improved public transport services was commonly raised in comments made by participants. Participants put forward specific suggestions for the duplication of the Upfield Line. The need to try to reduce car usage was a common sentiment shared between participants.

A considerable number of community participants noted that higher density is likely to increase traffic congestion, noting that traffic on Sydney Road can already be challenging.

"..I have concerns about the increase in traffic that will be in place when introducing thousands of new residents to a small area."

Stakeholder participants

Car parking was a major concern for the Presentation of Our Lord throughout the engagement, particularly due to perceived loss of access to the church property for parishioners and impacts to large scale events and services:

"..the current proposal removes practical parking used daily by the aforementioned programs, as well as parish services like conducting funerals, weddings and chaplaincy."

The Presentation of our Lord Parish also raised concerns about traffic. Congestion on Bell Street is already problematic and respondents were concerned that the proposal could further impact traffic flow in the precinct. There was a request for further traffic modelling to support the proposal.

The Central Coburg Business Association also expressed strong concerns regarding parking provision throughout the sequence of the project, as well as access to businesses and other potential construction impacts:

"[the Association] strongly supports the requirement that multi-level car parking be delivered before, or at the same time as, the first residential buildings. Replacement parking must be in place prior to any loss of existing supply to protect business viability, customer access and staff parking."

Merri-bek Bicycle Users Group, in their submission, requested that the framework prioritises the integration of movement on bicycles in street design and public space activation in central Coburg, not as an afterthought but as an integrated core transport mode. They also recommend including targets for sheltered bicycle parking to be provided at key destinations in the precinct including the new library.

There was a strong sentiment from active transport advocacy groups against the use of shared bicycle and pedestrian zones in the area, with the preference for separated bike lanes:

“Ensure that public spaces are designed to accommodate cycling flows where appropriate – with clearly designated routes, surface treatments, and spatial priority that supports ease of movement for cyclists, without compromising pedestrian comfort and safety.”

YIMBY suggest council fund new car parking construction by charging for parking across the municipality.

“Council could engage in cost recovery by charging users for both newly constructed, and existing on-street parking.”

Coburg is thriving

Proposal: A thriving place where diverse businesses will complement each other and create new life and energy.

Community participants

A key concern raised by community participants was a perception of a lack of diversity of shops available in Coburg. A few community participants raised concerns that existing local business are not considered in the proposal. Several participants highlighted the importance in seeing a greater diversity of shops in the area.

“.. We don't need another Coles, Woolworths or Aldi.”

A small number of community participants raised concerns for how the development will affect existing local businesses and wish to see them protected. Some participants expressed interest in opening businesses in Coburg and raised questions about the staging of the development and how parking will be impacted.

“Businesses need to be able to afford to stay in Coburg, no point doing and then all that can stay is Coles and Woolies and chains.”

A small number of participants commented on their interest in reviving the nightlife in Coburg and suggested having businesses open later into the evening.

“..a night-time economy will be a welcome change, as the strip is basically a dead zone after 8pm..”

Stakeholder participants

Traditional Owner participants discussed models of local business support for First Nations products and services in the area. Nighttime economy and places to go out at night were also discussed. There was support for more nightlife options in the area, including places for live music and dancing.

Whilst being generally supportive of the concept for Coburg, the Central Coburg Business Association raised several concerns about the draft concept. These mainly relate to access to car parking (outlined further in the 'Coburg is accessible' section of this report), project staging, construction impacts and trader engagement.

"This submission does not constitute endorsement of the draft concept and reflects the need for further detail, commitments and trader engagement prior to progression to development stages."

The Merri-bek Community Connectors noted the importance of the multicultural businesses in Victoria Street Mall and raised concerns rent could increase for them as a result of the proposal.

Other stakeholder groups commonly supported a balance of old and new businesses in the area, with a common concern of not eroding the existing character of Coburg too much especially from businesses and community organisations. Lygon Street Brunswick East was often cited as a positive nearby example of a lively retail precinct across stakeholder groups.

Coburg is open

Proposal: An open place where streets and parks provide comfortable, shady meeting points for the community.

Community participants

Many community participants expressed their general support for the addition of more open spaces around central Coburg. The importance of green spaces and planting more native vegetation were noted, as well as support for the potential addition of wildlife corridors around the river, and concern about how the proposed surrounding apartment buildings will affect the open spaces.

A substantial number of community participants raised the importance of more trees, green spaces and open spaces in Coburg. A considerable number of comments specifically related to the need for ensuring more green spaces are developed and included in the plan.

"Make nature and greenery a part of the tender process when working with developers."

A moderate number of community participants discussed the importance of trees and plants, specifically retaining trees in the Russell Street carpark and in Victoria Mall. Several comments requested more open spaces/third spaces – both maintaining existing spaces and creating new ones.

A small number of community participants requested community gardens, outdoor spaces that were kid/family friendly i.e. with playgrounds, or rainwater harvesting infrastructure.

Stakeholder participants

Traditional Owner participants asked that Council recognise the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung through naming of new streets and parks and designing parks to celebrate culture. The group also suggested reuse of any trees which may require removal into seating, play equipment or art features in the open spaces. There was also a strong sentiment to provide spaces which encourage intergenerational connection. Connection to nature was also discussed with ideas like including bird baths in the open space designs.

Local sporting clubs were interested in how the concept could provide further opportunities for sports and recreation in the area, and ideas such as a dedicated running track were floated.

The Presentation of Our Lord Parish was complimentary of the open space and providing places for people to meet in, including for their cultural events. They were also supportive of vertical greening of buildings and structures stating that this has worked well in the city.

Community service providers discussed the importance of providing community garden spaces in the precinct for social cohesion and food security outcomes.

There was a desire to see water captured and used for irrigation of the new public open spaces from sustainability organisations. These groups also supported the idea to include vertical greening on new structures in the area.

Coburg is evolving

Proposal: A place where plans turn into action, with projects moving from vision to delivery.

Community participants

The staging and delivery of the project was of interest to community participants. There were many questions received about potential delivery models and how long the concept could take to deliver.

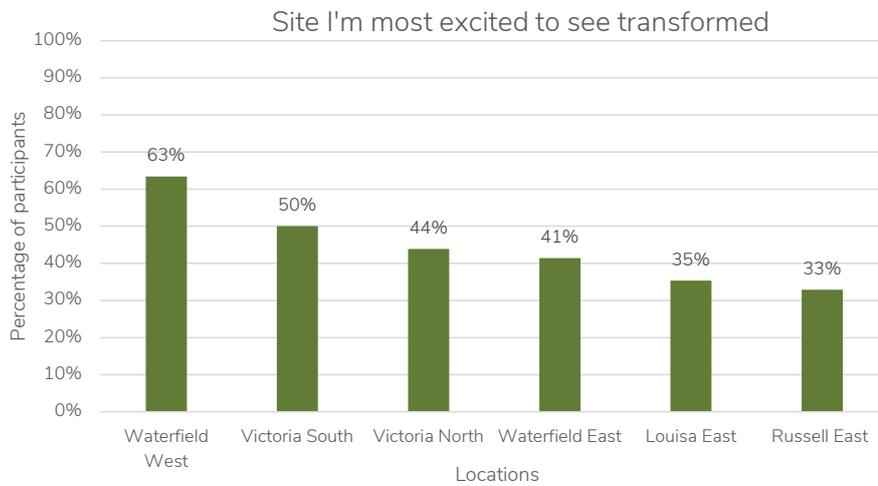
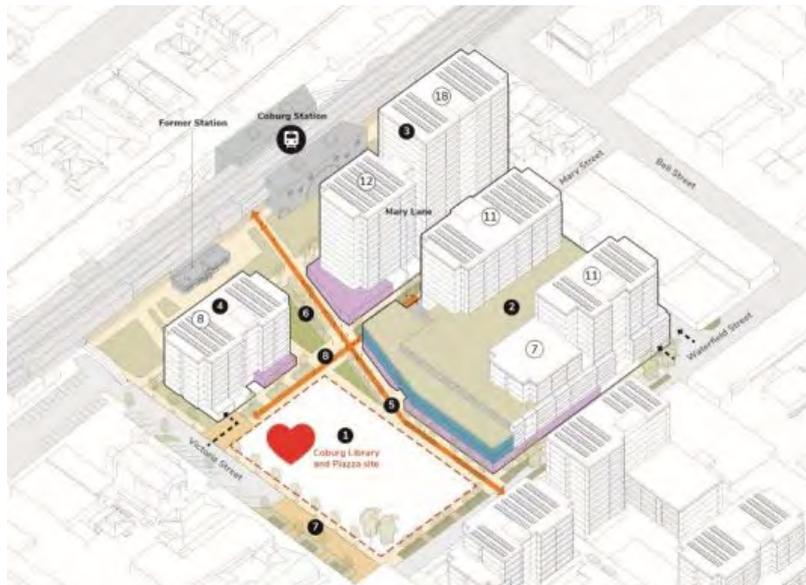


Chart showing online participants response to 'What sites are you most excited about seeing transformed?' (n=82)

The above chart shows that most online participants were most interested in seeing the Waterfield West site (see below diagram) developed. Followed closely by Victoria South and Victoria North.



A diagram of the Waterfield West site and adjacent library and piazza site from the draft 'Coburg is here' framework.

Many community participants expressed concerns with the proposed building heights. These participants were primarily concerned that high rise apartments would be a significant change in character for Coburg and would dominate the area. Community participants also noted concerns with access to light and the creation of wind tunnels with higher building heights. Pentridge and Brunswick are mentioned as negative examples of high-rise buildings.

"If Central Coburg is redeveloped in a way that prioritises height, density and abstract planning ideals over character, access and usability, the area risks losing what makes it distinctive and successful."

Several community participants supported the proposed building heights. A couple of community participants noted that buildings could be higher.

"Coburg is incredibly close to the CBD and we shouldn't be afraid to embrace a skyline that reflects that."

Several community participants noted that intensification and population increase would change the character of the area. Community participants noted that the design should reflect the local character, and the need to retain the 'working class heart' and concerns about gentrification were raised.

"Worried about gentrification and higher socio-economic people in the area and change the feel and culture of the area."

"Keep the old but add the new without ruining the feel of the area."

Several community participants raised concerns about increased population and how this could put pressure on infrastructure. Most were concerned that an increase in population would lead to more cars on the road and more traffic congestion. Issues with already overcrowded public transport were also raised, as was concern for the primary school already at capacity, healthcare, emergency services, and the post office.

"Density must be planned alongside the utilities, services, and community infrastructure required to support the people who will live here. Redevelopment that focuses solely on housing numbers risks overlooking what makes an area liveable, economically active, and culturally resilient."

A small number of community participants expressed concerns with gentrification, referencing Brunswick and Northcote. The importance of protecting the current community and small businesses was highlighted.

"Yes it's a great location with diverse people cultures incomes. But if it turns into the new Brunswick or Northcote, everyone will be priced out. It is essential the good community spaces, including art spaces, and cheap housing (especially public housing) is maintained and strengthened to maintain this diversity."

Stakeholder participants

The staging of the project was a key area of interest for stakeholder organisations. There were many questions regarding parking provision and construction impacts, as well as the length of time the concept would take to deliver.

The Presentation of Our Lord raised concerns around impacts to operations (funerals, weddings, baptisms, daily services) during construction. There was a request for building condition surveys be undertaken before and after works, to ensure any potential property damage is identified and repaired.

Central Coburg Business Association asserted that traders require transparency regarding construction staging, duration and mitigation measures to minimise disruption and support business continuity during development.

The group of sustainability advocates were very supportive of the idea of demountable carpark structures and vertical greening, also rooftop gardens. There was a further discussion about ensuring future proofing of buildings for sustainability also.

Next steps and areas of further investigation

As outlined in this report, there are a range of diverse views in response to the draft concept and framework for central Coburg. Whilst the findings in the report will inform a revised concept, there are also several areas of further investigation which have been identified throughout the engagement process. Some of these may be separate pieces of work which sit outside the revised framework.

After consideration of the above feedback received from community and stakeholders, the following high-level areas for further investigation have been identified:

- continue to engage with highly impacted stakeholders
- review approach to public parking provision and distribution
- review the provision of commercial, retail and community use to diversify retail and create affordable spaces for a vibrant community
- develop design standards to ensure high quality building and urban design outcomes
- identify preferred bicycle routes and locations for bicycle parking
- explore opportunities for increased greening in the precinct
- further thinking on the layout of the streets and managing traffic impacts
- continue to test and refine the mix of social, affordable and market housing
- carefully plan out construction and staging to minimise impacts on neighbours, and
- continue to test and refine building height and car parking provision feasibility modelling.

Council will explore the areas for investigation and update the concept.

An updated concept will be presented to Council for consideration. In addition Council will be preparing a precinct-wide business case to inform next steps.

Communications

To ensure those most interested and impacted were notified about the project and the opportunities to provide feedback, a promotional campaign was delivered. A wide range of channels were used both physical and online including translated materials.

Printed collateral



Merri-bek City Council has developed a proposed concept that sets out a vision to realise the potential of our landholdings in central Coburg.

To learn more or share your feedback

-  Scan the QR code
-  Call us on 9240 1111
-  Go to conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/central-coburg
-  Visit us at 90 Bell Street, Coburg



Consultation closes on 18 December, 2025.

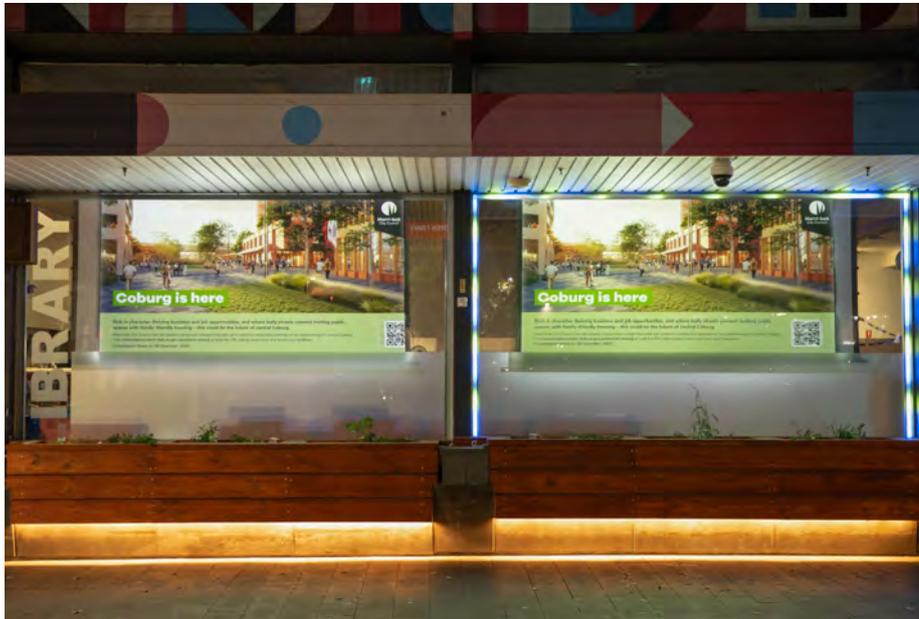


Flyers that were distributed throughout the engagement program and delivered to nearby homes and businesses.

Around 6,400 flyers were delivered to homes and businesses in a 1km radius of the Coburg Library. An additional 394 local property owners received a letter informing them of the engagement.

Projections at Coburg Library

As part of an arts program, the Coburg Library used the window space in the evenings for projections including local business promotion and artwork. As part of the cycle of images, “Coburg is here” promotional imagery was shown throughout the engagement program (see image below).



Promotional projections at Coburg Library.

Signage

Eight promotional corflute signs were erected at high foot traffic locations in the central Coburg area. The signage featured QR codes to the Conversations Merri-bek page, contact details and information in Arabic, Italian, Greek and Turkish (see below image).





Merri-bek
City Council

Coburg is here

Artist Impression

Rich in character, thriving business and job opportunities, and where leafy streets connect inviting public spaces with family-friendly housing – this could be the future of central Coburg.

Merri-bek City Council has developed a proposed concept that sets out a vision to realise the potential of our landholdings in central Coburg.

To learn more or share your feedback

-  Scan the QR code
-  Call us on 9240 1111
-  Visit us at 90 Bell Street, Coburg
-  Go to conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/central-coburg



Consultation closes
18 December 2025

Italian | Italiano | 9280 1911

L'Amministrazione Comunale di Merri-bek ha messo insieme una serie di idee per progettare il futuro di Coburg. Per saperne di più e contribuire le tue idee, visita il sito web qui sotto o scansiona il QR codice.

Turkish | Türkçe | 9280 1914

Merri-bek Belediyesi Coburg'un geleceğini hayal etmek için bazı fikirler oluşturdu. Bu proje hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak ve düşüncelerinizi paylaşmak için aşağıdaki websitesini ziyaret edebilirsiniz ya da QR kodu okutabilirsiniz.

Greek | ελληνικά | 9280 1912

Ο Δήμος Merri-bek συγκεντρώνει προτάσεις και ιδέες για να φανταστούμε όλοι μαζί το μέλλον του Coburg. Για να μάθετε περισσότερα και να μοιραστείτε τις απόψεις σας, επισκεφθείτε την παρακάτω ιστοσελίδα ή σκανάρετε τον κωδικό QR.

Arabic | العربية | 9280 1913

تعمل بلدية ميري-بيك على رسم ملامح مستقبل كوبرج، وتدعوكم لتكونوا جزءاً من هذه الرؤية للمزيد من المعلومات ومشاركة أفكاركم، يرجى زيارة الموقع الإلكتروني أدناه أو مسح رمز التسجيل QR.

conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/central-coburg/your-language



Promotional signage used throughout the central Coburg area.

Augmented Reality



Augmented Reality decals and signage used throughout the central Coburg area.

In addition to the promotional signage, three ground decals and signs were installed at locations which featured an Augmented Reality tour. Users could scan a QR code and visualise the scale of the proposal in a 3D model in situ.

Social media

A social media campaign was delivered to promote the engagement which included paid and organic posts on popular platforms and in the Merri-bek e-newsletter. The highest performing post was on Facebook and received over 19,000 impressions.

Further online promotion was delivered through the Conversations Merri-bek platform.

Additionally, an in-language social media campaign ran from 25 November to the 14 December 2025 targeting locals who speak Turkish, Arabic, Greek and Italian.

Overall, around 8,500 people saw these ads and of those, 605 people clicked through to the Conversations Merri-bek page. 48.7% of these people were age 65 and over.

Media coverage

As well as promotion via Council's channels, several media outlets ran stories about the project and engagement. This included:

- The Age newspaper
- Two letters to the editor in The Saturday Age newspaper
- ABC Radio
- Neos Kosmos (Greek news)

Council's new vision for the heart of Coburg

Adam Carey
Senior city reporter

Six council-owned sites in the centre of Coburg that are mostly expanses of car parking would be redeveloped into more than a dozen housing towers ranging from seven to 18 storeys under a renewal plan.

Merri-bek City Council wants to build more than 1000 apartments and townhouses in Coburg's concrete heart, as well as office spaces, shops, pocket parks, wetlands and a \$60 million library and public piazza.

The council's vision for central Coburg, which is being unveiled today, seeks to replace the sprawling single-level car parking areas on either side of the Sydney Road shopping strip with 15 buildings that would be home to thousands of residents. Multi-deck indoor car

is financially feasible, but only by a fine margin. There is little room to move, which means adding more to the wish list will involve trade-offs."

There is no cost estimate for the urban renewal project other than stage 1, the \$60 million construction of a library and public piazza, by 2029. The full vision could take 10 to 15 years to realise.

The proposed renewal comes almost 15 years after the collapse of the council's last attempt to partner with developers in central Coburg. The area has had no significant investment or renewal since the council cancelled its partnership with the Grollo family-owned Equiset in 2011 because of financial differences.

Merri-bek Mayor Helen David

streets and laneways, 8000 square metres of shops and businesses and 2000 square metres of office space. Power lines will be underground, and the popular outdoor Victoria Mall will be redeveloped.

Rob McGauran, a principal at MGS Architects who has advised Merri-bek Council on its plans, said the heart of Coburg needed to be changed into a less car-dependent, greener place.

"We all know things are heating up," he said. "More than a third of the area of central Coburg is just bitumen at the moment, at-grade bitumen car parks.

"We can't afford to have just these big expanses of bitumen into our future on a climate basis, let alone as an efficient leverage of the assets the communities have got in

Expert of 'Council's new vision for the heart of Coburg', The Age 6 November 2025

Demographics of community participants

This section outlines the demographic data collected from the Conversations Merri-bek website. Demographic data was not collected at in person engagement activities.

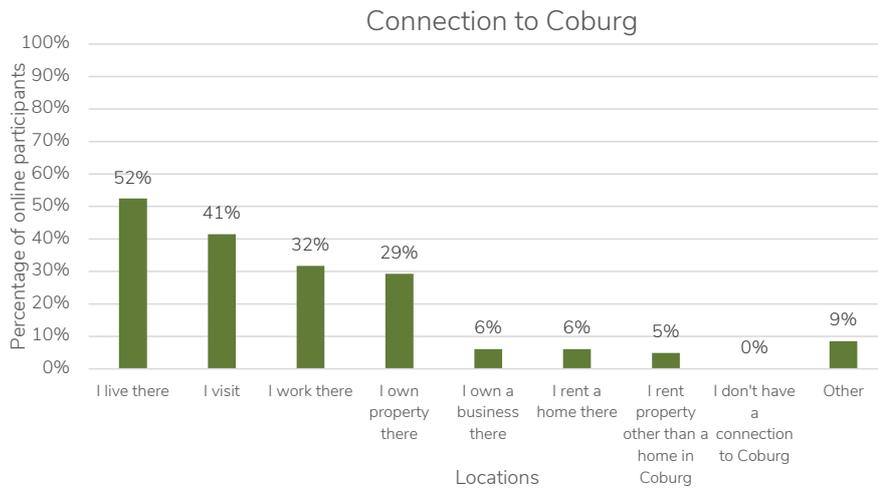


Chart showing online participants primary connection to Coburg (n=82).

The above chart shows the connection to Coburg of online participants. Most of the participants (52%) were people who live in Coburg, followed by visitors and workers to the area. Nearly 30% of online participants own property in Coburg.

Online participants were also asked if they don't currently live in Coburg, would they consider living there in the future. Of the 42 participants who chose to respond, 79% said 'yes', 5% said 'no' and 17% said 'maybe'.

Most online participants told us the suburb they live in was Coburg. The suburb with the next highest proportion of participants was Brunswick followed by Pascoe Vale and Coburg North.

The most common option selected by online participants as their connection to Merri-bek was 'Resident', with 65% of participants selecting this option. The least common option selected was 'Student', which was selected by 1% of participants.

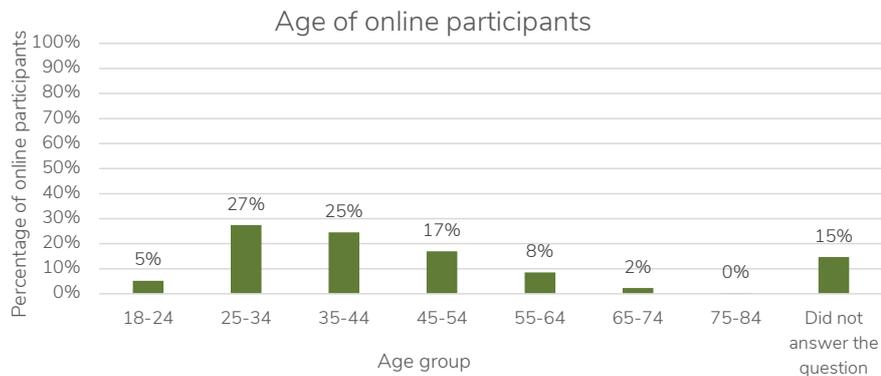


Chart showing the age group breakdown of participants of an online activity (n=306).

The most common age range of online participants was 25-34 years, making up 27%. The following most common age bracket of online participants was 35-44 years, which made up 25% of participants.

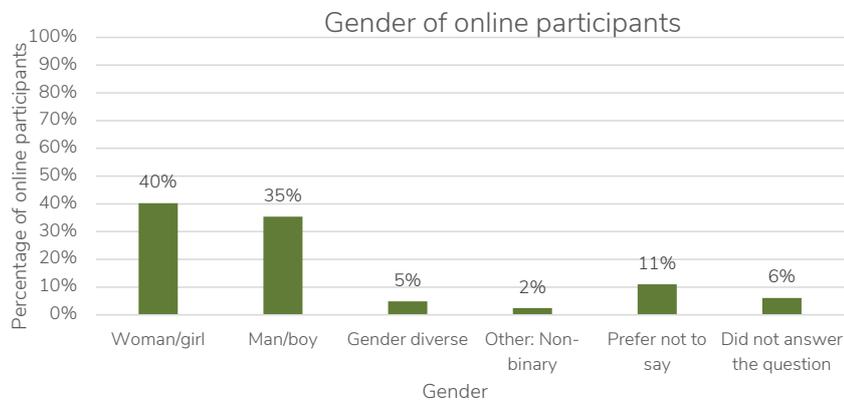


Chart showing the gender breakdown of online participants (n=82).

The above chart shows the gender of online participants. Just under half of online participants identified as Woman/girl, making up 47% of participants. 33% of 'online participants identified as Man/boy. 7% of participants identified as Gender diverse or non-binary.

Stakeholders

Throughout the engagement program we engaged with the following stakeholders – some through multiple conversations. Many stakeholders provided submissions. The stakeholders whose feedback is included in this report are as follows:

Traditional Owners

- Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

Nearby stakeholders

- Bachar Houli Foundation
- Central Coburg Business Association
- Coburg Common
- Coburg Football Club
- Coburg Harriers Athletics Club
- Coburg Primary School
- Coburg Uniting Church
- Coles Group (Council tenant)
- Greek Orthodox Parish Of The Presentation Of Our Lord (Presentation Of Our Lord)
- Schoolhouse Studios

Community groups

- Climate Action Merri-bek
- Merri-bek Bicycle User Group
- Merri-bek Community Connectors
- Walk on Merri-bek

- YIMBY

Peak bodies

- Community Housing Industry Association Victoria
- Social Enterprise Finance Australia
- Urban Development Institute of Australia
- Victoria Planning and Environmental Law Association

Community service providers

- Holstep Health
- Launch Housing
- Wintringham
- Merri Food Hub
- Open Table
- Reynard Street Neighbourhood House
- Vincent Care

Creative industries

- Melbourne Art Library
- Next Wave

Government

- Department of Transport and Planning
- Homes Victoria

A note on statistical representativeness

This report does not present definitive findings.

The engagement did not seek a statistically representative cross-section of the wider population which is typical of most Council engagements. Instead, the results reflect the views of a subset of community members who chose to respond during the engagement period and stakeholder groups who were proactively engaged.

Although not statistically representative, this engagement data provides valuable insight into community interests, values, and priorities that are directly relevant to the draft concept.

All online questions and polls were not mandatory for users to complete and therefore each activity has a different number of participants and this is annotated in polls used in this report.

Coburg is here

A draft concept for Coburg

November 2025



Coburg is here

Merri-bek City Council is planning to redevelop its land holdings in central Coburg to transform the area into a vibrant economic, retail and cultural hub.

Our proposed concept for central Coburg includes a new Coburg Library and Piazza, a thriving economy with new office and retail precincts, and a mix of market-price, affordable and social housing.

Let us know what you think of the concept – together, we can create a thriving future for central Coburg where people can live, work, shop and connect.

We know that you love Coburg as Coburg

Central Coburg is known for its diverse, family friendly community, its dynamic mix of historic and modern buildings, and its rich character. There's a lot to love about Coburg, but we believe there is an opportunity to ensure its future is even better.

Council has looked at its land holdings in central Coburg to see how it can play a role in providing family friendly housing, fostering a thriving local economy, and delivering places for the community to shop, dine and connect.

Now is an important time to do this. The State Government is introducing planning changes in activity centres like Coburg and Brunswick to address the housing crisis. We have an opportunity to shape what the inevitable growth in Coburg looks like.

Merri-bek's central Coburg development concept balances growth with the preservation of Coburg's character and environment. Our concept manages the impact of taller buildings by setting back upper levels, providing lots of public spaces, and protecting public spaces from overshadowing and wind impacts. Balancing the need for more housing and businesses with the preservation of Coburg's rich character is key to our development concept.

Acknowledgment of Country

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Coburg. We are grateful for their care of this Country and for the ongoing contributions of all First Nations communities to present day Coburg.



Key

Areas

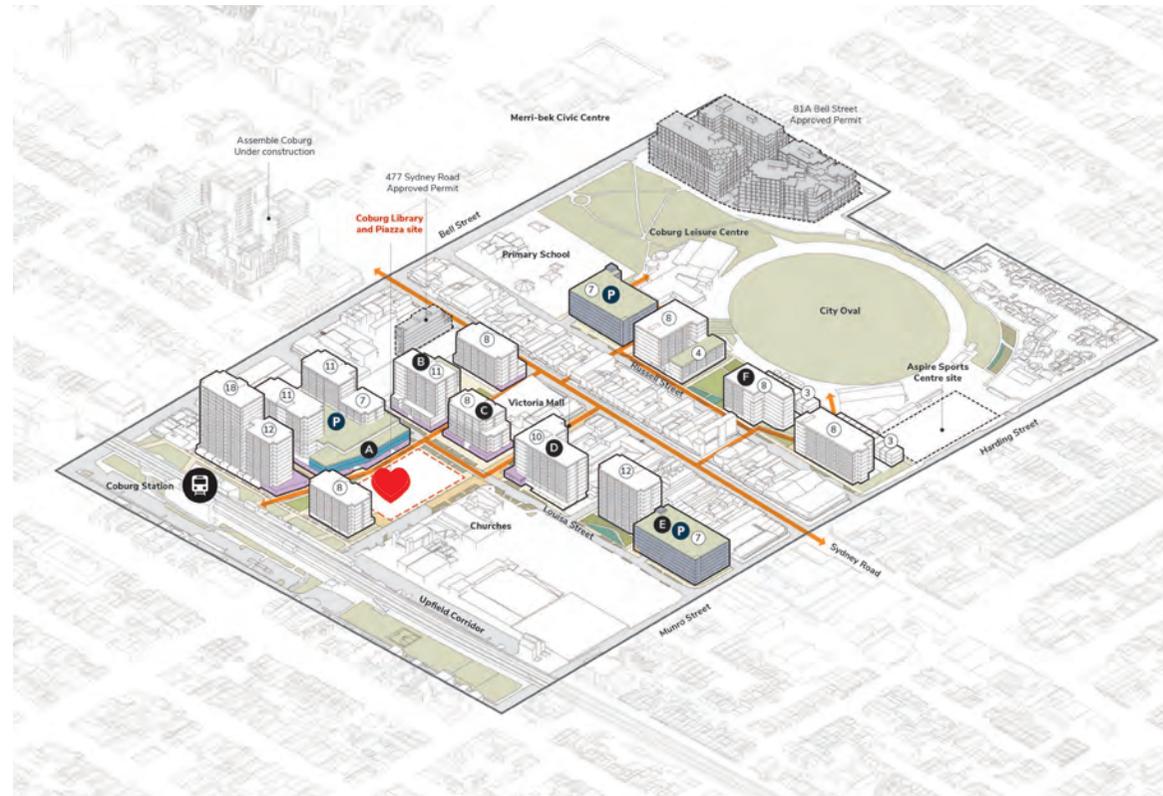
- Central Coburg precinct
- Coburg Library and Piazza site
- Approved permit
- Development site

Buildings and uses

- New building
- New public car park
- New retail
- New office
- X Height (storeys)
- ➔ Key pedestrian route

Public realm

- Lawn
- Green space
- Landscape
- Urban wetland
- Rain garden
- Porous paving
- Pedestrian paving/footpath
- Shared zone



A concept for central Coburg.

It's a balancing act

We've heard you tell us

We heard how much you value the rich culture and history of Coburg and are excited for the future.

In late 2023, we heard from over 1,300 community members on their aspirations for the future of central Coburg. The key themes were:

- Enthusiasm about potential for change in central Coburg.
- Better, safer, more pleasant journeys in and around the centre.
- Excellence in design and sense of place.
- A welcoming, accessible and multipurpose library that is a place for refuge, connection, culture and life-long learning.
- The importance of environmental performance and sustainability.
- Desire for more variety in local shops and businesses, including night-time economy.
- A strong desire for trees and greenery and greening of public spaces.
- Flexible public and gathering spaces that provide different opportunities for respite, play and social connection.
- High-quality housing that is available to a wide variety of people.

A new chapter for central Coburg

While this is not the first time Council has attempted to revitalise our landholdings in central Coburg, we believe the time is right for a new chapter for Central Coburg.

The State Government's Activity Centre program is progressing, Coburg Health Hub will be delivered in the coming years, and we have heard from the community that change is needed.

We have chosen to begin with a new library and piazza in the heart of Coburg. The design competition for this project is underway.

Now we are focusing on six sites and have investigated scenarios that achieve economic, housing and public realm outcomes.

It's a balancing act

Our concept for Coburg is designed to deliver on as many community aspirations for Coburg as possible, while also ensuring the design is achievable and financially sustainable.

We've carefully crafted the concept for Coburg to balance the needs of different people, interests and aspirations within the bounds of Council's financial capacity and resources. Put simply, the concept for Coburg needs to stack up financially.

So, what's on the wish list?

These are some great ideas that we want to deliver:

- A stronger economy and spaces for innovation.
- More open space, more trees and better streets.
- The inclusion of social and affordable housing.
- Well designed and accessible public parking
- Larger apartments for diverse households.
- Community spaces for non-profits, art galleries and studio spaces.

At present, the framework is financially feasible, but only by a fine margin. There is little room to move, which means adding more to the wish list will involve trade-offs.

For example...

- The allocation of more space for office, commercial and retail purposes needs to be balanced with demand and different financial returns.
- To increase social housing, more dwellings need to be sold at market rate to cover the subsidy.
- To create new housing sites, public car parking must be relocated. Parking solutions themselves come with challenges.
- Basement parking is expensive due to the ground conditions in Coburg, while aboveground parking must be carefully designed to ensure an attractive experience from the street and public open spaces.
- Building heights need to be balanced against the quality of the street environment, minimising wind and overshadowing while still creating space for housing and parking.
- Public realm upgrades and managing existing flood risks also adds to costs.

Feasibility can change with:

- Construction costs
- Interest rates
- State and Commonwealth funding grants
- Changing market conditions

The pitch

Central Coburg is an iconic destination, rich in culture and history. With Victoria Street Mall and Sydney Road at its centre, the area is known and loved for food, fashion, arts, and culture from across the globe.

The last few years have been challenging and parts of the area need refreshing. Efforts to breathe new life into central Coburg includes the removal of the level crossing and the planning for the Coburg Health Hub, a major strategic project identified in the 2012 Masterplan, which is now on track to be delivered.

Now is the time for us to take the next steps to maximise central Coburg's potential as a cultural, economic and retail hub in Melbourne's inner-north. Leveraging the unique opportunity presented by Merri-bek City Council's ownership of several undeveloped sites in the centre of Coburg, we have developed a proposed concept that will deliver on community aspirations for the future.

These are the big ideas that will shape the future of Coburg.

Central Coburg will be a beautiful, welcoming and vibrant place for people to work, visit and live. There'll be six new parks, better quality streets and more than 200 new trees.

It will continually adapt to the needs of a growing community, while building on the unique character of Coburg.

Our new library will form the heart of the precinct alongside a piazza that welcomes all to gather, play and rest. A new network of leafy, public spaces will support different activities and play a vital role in managing water, restoring habitats and cooling the area.

More shops, offices and a refreshed supermarket will complement existing businesses and breathe new life into the area, creating activity day and night.

Around 2,000 new residents will call Coburg home in around 1,000 new dwellings, close to public transport, shops and services.

Balancing the needs of active transport users with those that drive will ensure central Coburg is accessible for everyone. Greener and safer streets will make walking and cycling more attractive options when visiting the area. For those that need to drive, public parking will be relocated into multi-deck carparks, designed to prioritise accessibility and safety.

Around 900 public car parks will be redistributed to keep the centre accessible while making room for new homes, businesses and public spaces.



Artist's impression of an upgraded Victoria Street Mall.

Coburg is community

Coburg’s heart needs some love. The current library is ready for an update. Asphalt dominates central Coburg and there aren’t clear connections.

We propose...

A community gathering place where the library, piazza and Victoria Street Mall will form the heart of central Coburg.

We imagine a future that brings community together. The new library and piazza will strengthen Coburg’s civic heart, and will be a welcoming place where people gather, connect and celebrate.

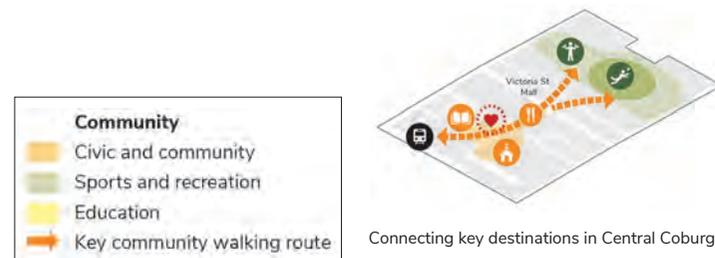
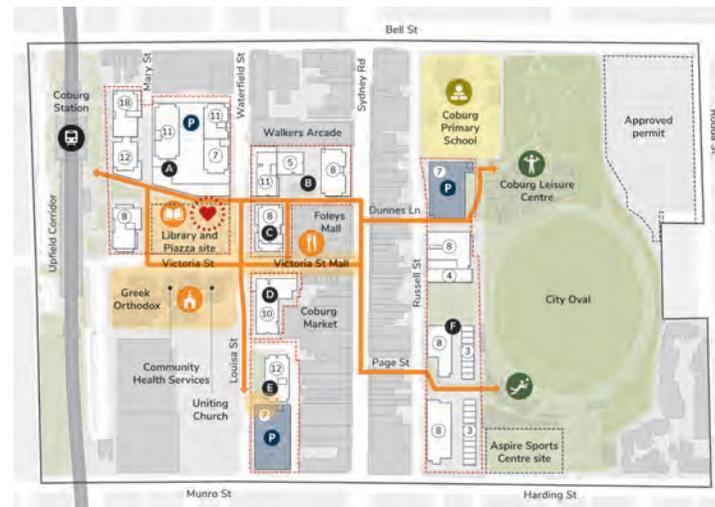
Moving through the area will be easier and more enjoyable, with a network of inviting new laneways lined with diverse businesses, linking Coburg Station, Victoria Street Mall and Sydney Road.

Upgrades to Victoria Street, Waterfield Street, Louisa Street and Russell Street will create greener and more comfortable routes, complementing the new laneways and supporting a lively and accessible heart for Coburg. Together, these changes will bring more life to people’s everyday

experiences in Coburg, whether it is grabbing a coffee on the way to the station, meeting friends in the piazza or heading to a game in the sports precinct.

We balanced

- Creating new laneways and connections with the need to support functional development sites. This approach ensures the centre not only works well but also feels like home for the community.
- Supporting existing and proposed community anchors as the project progresses such as schools, churches and sporting clubs, including the proposed Aspire Sports Centre. or within buildings.



Connecting key destinations in Central Coburg.

Coburg is thriving

Coburg has great shops and health services. But so many locals do their shopping elsewhere. Coburg residents only spend 11% locally.

We propose...

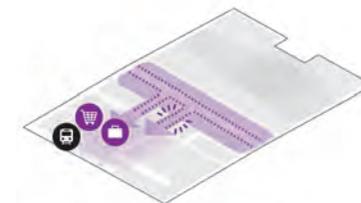
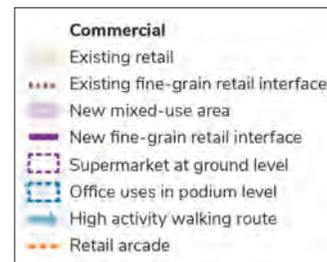
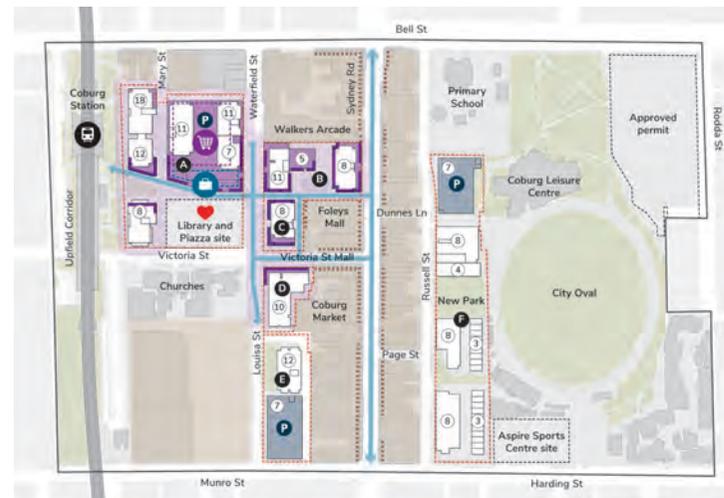
A thriving place where diverse businesses will complement each other and create new life and energy.

New retail at the ground floor, particularly on new streets and walks, will connect people from the train station to the heart of Coburg. There's an opportunity to replace the supermarket and an office building. The ground floor retail at the base of buildings will vary in size from small 'hole in the wall' shops to larger premises. These new retail and commercial spaces will support more night-time activity.

Almost 11,000 square metres of commercial space will be dedicated to office and retail.

We balanced

- Increasing retail and commercial space while ensuring there is sufficient demand.
- Prioritising retail on the primary foot traffic routes. Secondary routes could potentially have destination commercial uses.
- Footprints of different retail uses including a supermarket.
- Market conditions and pricing changes over time for land uses which impacts on feasibility.



Expanding the commercial heart of Coburg.

Coburg is accessible

Coburg has a new station with the level crossing removal, and an improved north-south shared path. There's over a 1,000 public car parks that dominate the place.

We propose...

An accessible place where people will comfortably walk, cycle, catch public transport or drive and park their car.

Parking is important, and we will provide around 900 public car park spaces in convenient locations across central Coburg. It's a key asset for both visitors and local businesses. It is important to continue to provide sufficient parking spaces. All parts of central Coburg will be within a short, two-minute walk.

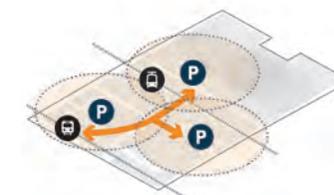
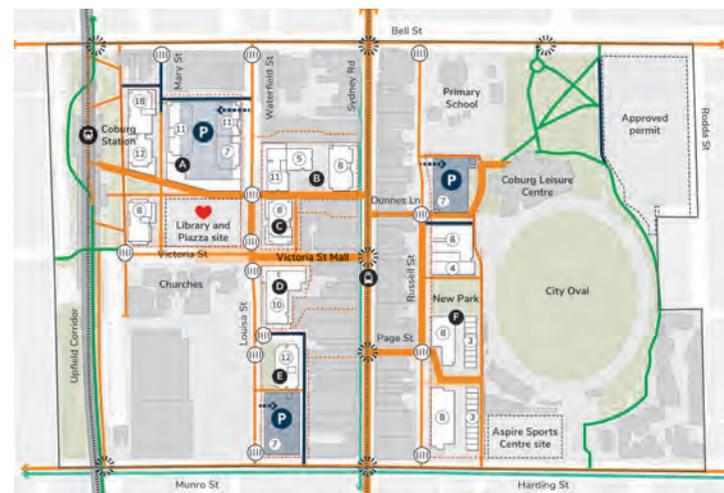
The streets will be prioritised for accessible parking, loading and short-term parking. There's an opportunity for upper levels of car parking buildings to be set aside for traders and long term parking. Some people living in central Coburg in the future will not want or need a car park with their apartment, given the proximity to the train station, buses and the Sydney Road tram. We'll reduce the parking requirements, which should also make the apartments more affordable.

The current dominance of asphalt carparking contributes to urban heat

in central Coburg. These car parks will be re-worked into more beautiful carparking structures that include greenery and community uses. Three new leafy and appropriately-lit laneways will make it easier and cooler to move around central Coburg, whether walking, wheeling or cycling. Merri-bek will continue to advocate for the improved accessibility of the Sydney Road tram stops.

We balanced

- What is the appropriate public car parking amount for current and future uses.
- Different needs for parking such as for deliveries and loading but also for traders and community users.
- The cost of providing car parking in different structures such as basements or within buildings.
- How car parking demand may change over time.



Providing public parking within a two-minute walk to all parts of central Coburg.

Coburg is home

There is a clear need for diverse, high-quality housing in Central Coburg to meet the needs of the growing population in Melbourne.

We propose...

A family-friendly place to live where jobs, shops, public transport, public spaces, schools and community facilities are all nearby.

We want to meet the needs of our growing community. Our analysis indicates we need an additional 2,600 dwellings by 2036 to meet housing demand.

We also need more affordable housing – currently in Merri-bek, over 4,341 households require affordable housing, with 84% considered to be low or very-low income households.

We want Coburg to be family friendly. We want a range of dwellings to suit different families and households, not just one and two-bedroom apartments. We are planning for 1,700-2,300 new people to call Coburg home, where they will live in 850-1,150 dwellings.

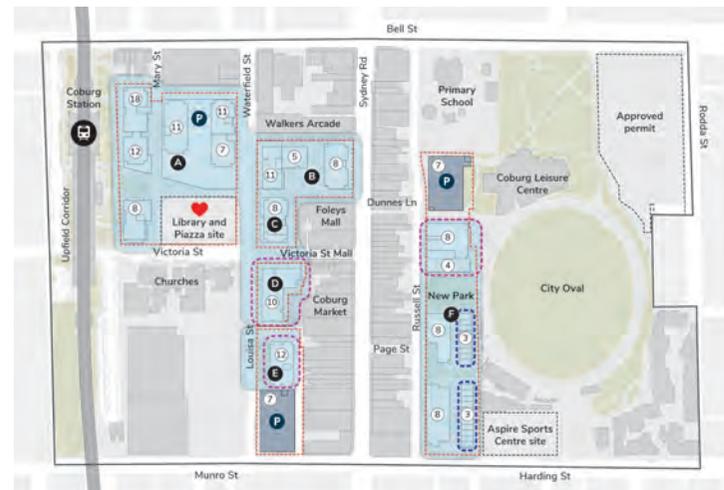
We want apartments with flexible designs, so they meet the needs of

the community. For example, having two two-bedroom apartments that can be combined to create a larger family apartment.

All tiers of government have a role to play in addressing housing gap, we want to play our part. That is why we are proposing that subsidised housing comprises more than 20% of the new dwellings, including at least 90 social housing dwellings.

We balanced

- Increasing heights to accommodate more dwellings with increased private parking requirements and overshadowing impacts.
- Providing increased social and affordable housing with financial feasibility.



Delivering diverse housing options in central Coburg.

Coburg is open

There are gaps in the provision of local public spaces. The new piazza, spilling into Victoria Street, will provide space for cultural expression and a central meeting place.

We propose...

An open place where streets and parks provide comfortable, shady meeting points for the community.

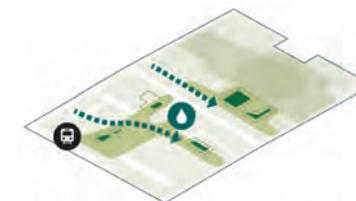
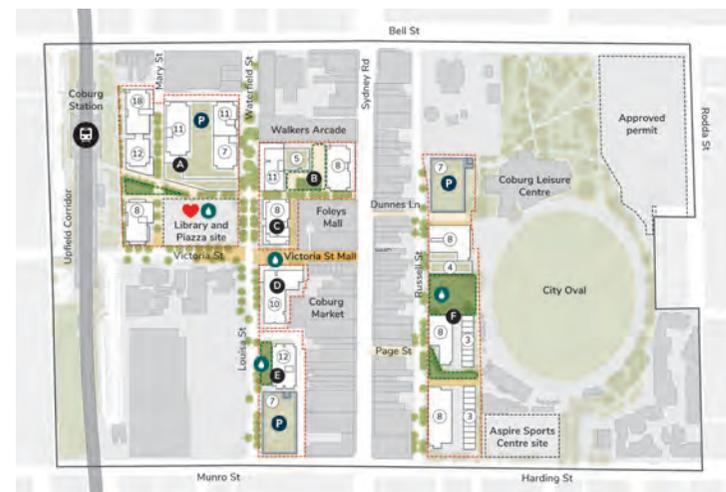
Coburg will be greener, cooler and leafier, with over 6,000sqm of new public open space. Building heights of between 3-18 storeys are arranged to protect sunlight access to existing and new public open spaces and key pedestrian streets. Upper levels of buildings set back from the street will create a more open and inviting pedestrian environment.

Victoria Street Mall will also get a facelift. Placing powerline underground powerlines will make space for more tree canopy, which will reduce the urban heat island effect.

Six new parks including a piazza, an urban courtyard, neighbourhood park, linear park and two pocket parks will provide space for more than 200 new trees.

We balanced

- Ensuring there is solar access to open spaces with building heights.
- Managing overland flow from peak rainfall events.



Creating a new network of open spaces irrigated by water captured and reused from City Oval.

Coburg is evolving

The State Government’s activity centre program proposes new controls for Coburg. Several sites, including Pentridge, are being developed. We need central Coburg to offer more. We are also moving forward with the library and piazza to create a new heart.

We propose...

A place where plans turn into action, with projects moving from vision to delivery.

Things are happening: the Coburg Health Hub is in progress, a project initiated in 2017 and Council is committed to a new library and piazza as a catalyst.

As the precinct changes, we will do our best to minimise disruption along the way. For example, by carefully managing the impact of construction and relocating carparking when as different stages of the project are delivered.

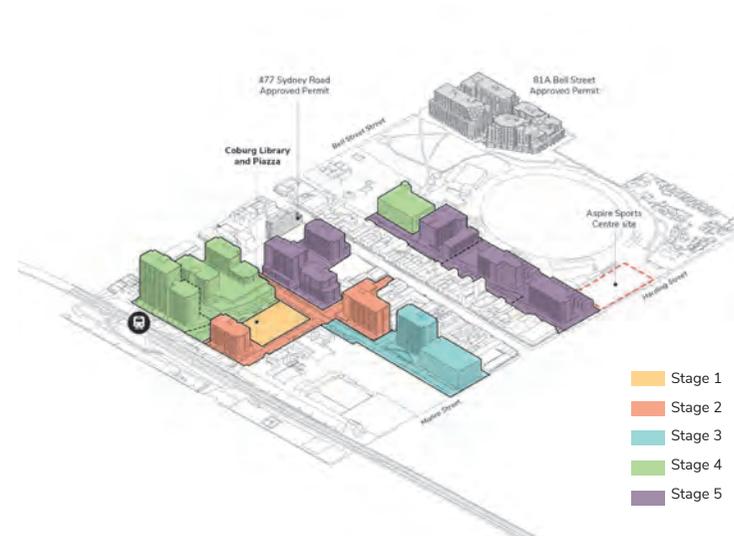
We have prioritised

- The feasibility of stage 2 following the delivery of the library and piazza
- Delivering public realm investment in early stages where practical

- Exploring the potential for social and affordable housing as independent projects
- Allowing the concept to adapt over time as context changes

We balanced

- Not everything can happen at once.
- Some sites can't be developed until uses are relocated (such as the existing library site) and we need to balance the staged relocation of car parking.
- Delivering public realm upgrades alongside the redevelopment of sites to make sure construction doesn't damage the public realm in future stages.
- We will be working through the opportunities for the existing library site.



Potential staging plan.

Coburg is for everyone

This plan for central Coburg is informed by past community engagement. It is important that the plan reflects community needs and wants, is clear and easy to understand, and has the support of the community before it moves forward.

It is now entering a new phase of community engagement.



Share your thoughts at Conversations Merri-bek



Share your thoughts in your language at Conversations Merri-bek

We need to hear from you

- Have we got the balance right?
- What's more important for you?
- Did we miss anything?

We ask you to

Visit the Coburg is Here landing page on Conversations Merri-bek to find out more about the project, learn about engagement opportunities, ask questions, and offer feedback.

Complete a survey and provide feedback online, or by visiting your local customer service centre or library, or by joining us at a pop-up.

Visit us at one of our six pop-ups to explore the future precinct with virtual reality and chat to people in the know.

These pop-ups will be at various locations throughout the precinct, on these dates:

- Saturday 8 November
- Saturday 15 November
- Wednesday 26 November
- Saturday 29 November
- Saturday 6 December
- Thursday 11 December

Stay tuned for the designs on the new Coburg Library and Piazza! These are expected for consultation in early 2026.



Artist's impression of a new park on Russell East.

Council acknowledges the work of our primary advisors: Bridge42, SGS Economics and Planning, MGS Architects, GLAS Landscape Architects, Sibling Architecture, Traffix Group, Design Flow, Rain Consulting and Zinc Cost Management. First Nations Cultural Narratives prepared by Greenshoot Consulting. Renders prepared by Narrative.

Coburg is here

**A draft framework for central Coburg
November 2025**



Acknowledgment of Country

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Coburg. We are grateful for their care of this Country and for the ongoing contributions of all First Nations communities to present day Coburg.

Contents



People gather in Victoria Street Mall. Source: Simon Aubor

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Introduction

Central Coburg is an iconic destination, rich in culture and history. With Victoria Street Mall and Sydney Road at its heart, the area is known and loved for food, fashion, arts, and culture from across the globe.

However, the last few years have been challenging for both the strip and the Coburg activity centre. Efforts to breathe new life into central Coburg include the removal of the level crossing and the Coburg Health Hub, a major strategic project identified in the 2012 Masterplan which is currently in progress.

Now is the time for us to take the next steps to maximise central Coburg's potential as a cultural, economic and retail hub in Melbourne's inner-north.

Leveraging the unique opportunity presented by Merri-bek City Council's ownership of several undeveloped sites in the centre of Coburg, we have designed a draft framework that will deliver on community aspirations for the future.

Featuring a new Coburg Library and Piazza, a thriving economy with new office and retail precincts, and a mix of market, affordable and social housing. Our framework will proactively meet the needs of a growing local community and play an active role in shaping the evolution of Coburg into a vibrant place for people to live, work, shop and connect.



Artist's impression of an upgraded Victoria Street Mall.

The six sites

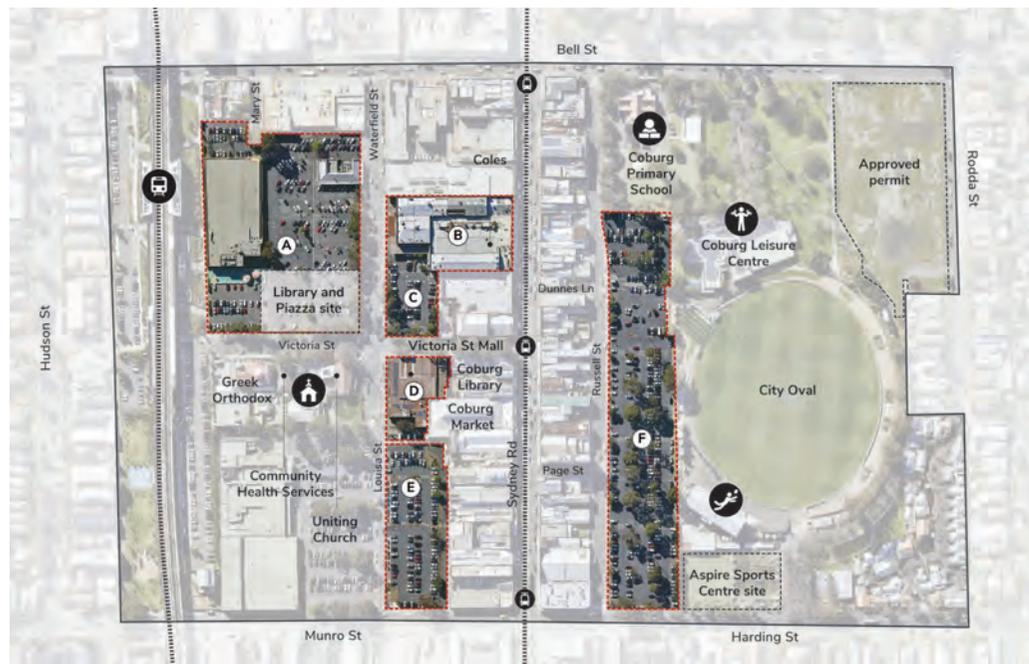
Merri-bek owns six large sites in central Coburg:

- A. Waterfield West
- B. Waterfield East
- C. Victoria North
- D. Victoria South
- E. Louisa East
- F. Russell East

These sites were purchased over several decades with the ambition to deliver better outcomes for central Coburg. A long-term vision to transform the six sites was developed 15 years ago, but then paused. We are now ready to move forward with an updated vision.

The Coburg Conversation

In late 2023, Council had a new conversation with the community about the future of central Coburg. The Coburg Conversation engaged over 1,300 community members about their aspirations. Council has now developed a draft framework plan that responds to these ideas.



Central Coburg existing context and six sites.

Key

- Central Coburg precinct
- Sites under consideration
- Development site
- Coburg Station
- Tram stop (Route 19)

Executive summary

Vision

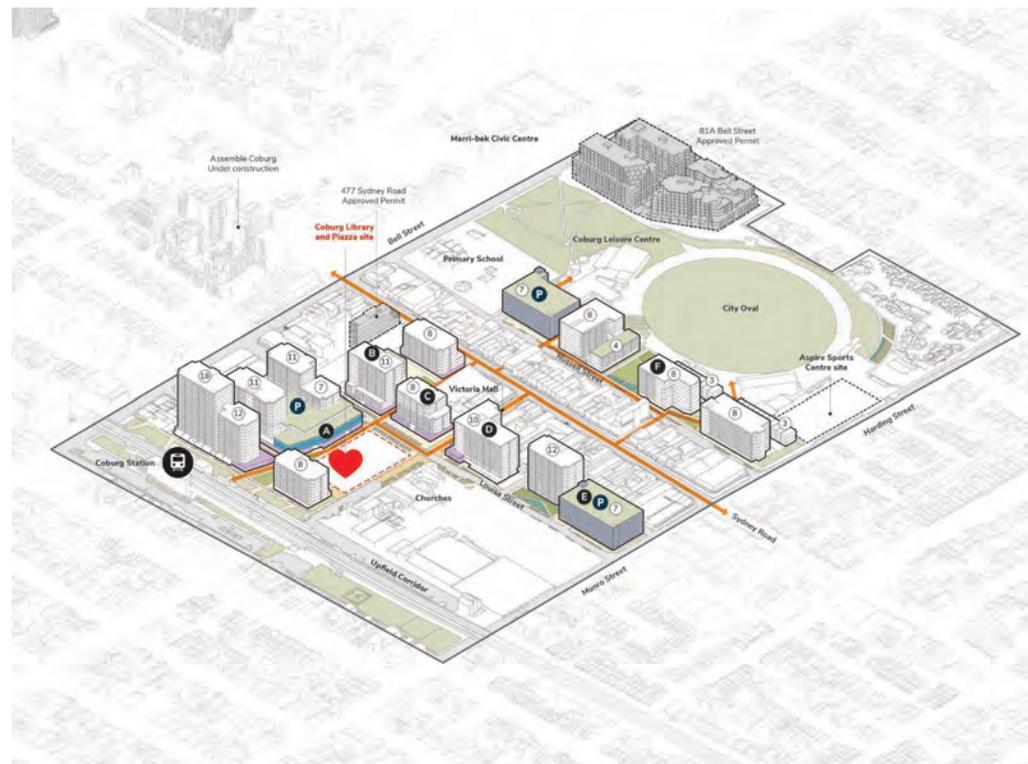
Central Coburg will be a welcoming and vibrant place for people to work, visit and live, full of parks and green spaces. As the precinct changes over time, it will continually adapt to the needs of a growing community, while building on the unique character of Coburg.

A new inspiring library building will form the heart of the precinct, alongside a piazza that welcomes all to gather, play and rest. A new network of public spaces will be designed to support different activities; they will also play a vital role in managing water, restoring habitats and cooling the area.

More shops, businesses, cafes, restaurants, bars, services and a new supermarket will complement existing businesses and breathe new life into the area, creating activity day and night.

Around 1,000 new dwellings will allow people to live in close proximity to public transport, shops and services.

Safer streets full of trees will make walking and cycling more attractive options when visiting the area. For those who need to drive, public parking will be relocated into multi-deck car parks, designed to prioritise accessibility and safety while integrating greenery and other uses.



A draft framework for central Coburg (indicative image only).

Key outcomes

Our ambition is to deliver the community's aspirations and vision for Coburg.



A community gathering place where the library, piazza and Victoria Street Mall will form the heart of central Coburg.

A new library and piazza between Coburg Station and Victoria Street Mall. More community and arts spaces. Better and more streets to provide safe and vibrant connections between community destinations from Coburg Station through to the Coburg Leisure Centre.



A thriving place where diverse businesses will complement each other and create new life and energy.

Over 10,000m² of new retail, office and community spaces located along key pedestrian streets. A diversity of different types of businesses such as non-profits, community providers and arts organisations supported by spaces of different shapes and sizes.



An accessible place where people will comfortably walk, cycle, catch public transport or drive and park their car.

Over 6,000m² of new streets and laneways that make it easier to move around. Existing public parking relocated into three accessible locations within a two-minute walk to all parts of central Coburg.



A family-friendly place to live where jobs, shops, public transport, public spaces, schools and community facilities are all nearby.

Around 1,000 new places to live including apartments that support families and larger households. This includes 23-30 per cent social and affordable housing (at least 90 social housing dwellings).



An open place where streets and parks provide comfortable, shady meeting points for the community.

Over 6,000m² of public spaces and over 200 new trees. Waterfield Street, Louisa Street, Victoria Street, Victoria Street Mall and Russell Street all upgraded. Buildings designed to minimise wind and overshadowing impacts.

The Coburg Conversation

Coburg is already a vibrant place with many strengths, making it the perfect location for more people to live, work, and visit. During The Coburg Conversation, we heard your aspirations for the future and have tried to reflect them in this plan.

We heard that...	So we...
The Coburg community is excited about the future and want a plan that focus on design, sustainability and retaining a sense of place.	Created a forward thinking plan that centres design excellence with change catalysed by a design competition for the new library and piazza.
Coburg is rich in culture and history and it is important to recognise the ongoing contribution of immigrant communities and First Nations culture.	Celebrated Victoria Street Mall as the historically important centre of the precinct and worked with Traditional Owners to record cultural narratives for central Coburg.
Coburg is a unique and diverse place where people can gather, share and connect. Its important that it retains its community feel.	Kicked off the library and piazza project first, creating important community spaces and made sure the plan creates housing that welcomes diverse households.
Trees and greenery are important to the community. Shared spaces are fundamental as they provides places for respite, play and social connection.	Included six new open spaces and greener streets that make space for plants. Integrated water into the landscape to mitigate flooding and improve biodiversity.
Coburg should be accessible, safe and welcoming for all. An attractive destination for visitors and locals alike.	Provided new streets and laneways, upgraded existing streets and relocated public parking into three accessible locations to make sure people can easily walk, cycle, catch public transport or drive.



Artist's impression of new park on Russell Street.

Balancing outcomes

We heard how much you value the rich culture and history of Coburg and are excited for the future. In late 2023, we heard from over 1,300 community members on their aspirations for the future of central Coburg.

The key themes were:

- Enthusiasm about potential for change in central Coburg.
- Better, safer, more pleasant journeys in and around the centre.
- Excellence in design and sense of place.
- A welcoming, accessible and multipurpose library that is a place for refuge, connection, culture and life-long learning.
- The importance of environmental performance and sustainability.
- Desire for more variety in local shops and businesses, including night-time economy.
- A strong desire for trees and greenery and greening of public spaces.

- Flexible public and gathering spaces that provide different opportunities for respite, play and social connection.
- High-quality housing that is available to a wide variety of people.

A new chapter for central Coburg

While this is not the first time Council has attempted to revitalise our landholdings in central Coburg, we believe the time is right for a new chapter for Central Coburg

The State Government's Activity Centre program is progressing, Coburg Health Hub will be delivered in the coming years, and we have heard from the community that change is needed.

We have chosen to begin with a new library and piazza in the heart of Coburg. The design competition for this project is underway.

Now we are focusing on six sites and have investigated scenarios that achieve economic, housing and public realm outcomes.

It's a balancing act

Our concept for Coburg is designed to deliver on as many community aspirations for Coburg

as possible, while also ensuring the design is achievable and financially sustainable.

We've carefully crafted the concept for Coburg to balance the needs of different people, interests and aspirations within the bounds of Council's financial capacity and resources. Put simply, the concept for Coburg needs to stack up financially.

So, what's on the wish list?

These are some great ideas that we want to deliver:

- A stronger economy and spaces for innovation.
- More open space, more trees and better streets.
- The inclusion of social and affordable housing.
- Well designed and accessible public parking.
- Larger apartments for diverse households.
- Community spaces for non-profits, art galleries and studio spaces.

At present, the framework is financially feasible, but only by a fine margin. There is little room to move, which means adding more to the wish list will involve trade-offs.

For example...

- The allocation of more space for office, commercial and retail purposes needs to be balanced with demand and different financial returns.
- To increase social housing, more dwellings need to be sold at market rate to cover the subsidy.
- To create new housing sites, public carparking must be relocated. Parking solutions themselves come with challenges.
- Basement parking is expensive due to the ground conditions in Coburg, while aboveground parking must be carefully designed to ensure an attractive experience from the street and public open spaces.
- Building heights need to be balanced against the quality of the street environment, minimising wind and overshadowing while still creating space for housing and parking.
- Public realm upgrades and managing existing flood risks also adds to costs.

Feasibility can change with:

- Construction costs
- Interest rates
- State and Commonwealth funding grants
- Changing market conditions

Have we got the balance right?

We are seeking feedback on the draft framework. When responding, we encourage the community to take the time to understand the compromises that need to be made. Its important that the future plan for Coburg balances community aspirations with the financial realities of delivering a project of this scale and ambition.



Waterfield West car park. Source: Simon Auber.

Place context

Place identity

Coburg is a unique suburb with a bustling heart. Over generations of immigration, Coburg has become a centre for cultural exchange and a place where differences are celebrated.

A part of Wurundjeri Country, Coburg was historically a wetland and today remains ecologically rich with the important waterway Merri Creek to the east.

The diversity of Coburg's community is part of what makes the suburb so special. With over 30 per cent of Coburg's population born overseas, and more than 60 per cent of Coburg's population having one or both parents born overseas, the area has a rich cultural tapestry woven over a long history of immigration.

Gathering spaces like Victoria Street Mall are often full of people mingling, socialising and sharing meals. The three local churches also allow the community to gather, connect and reflect, and the library, set to be updated in coming years, is also a hub of activity. There are many public artworks, murals, artist studios and workshop spaces across central Coburg, which reflect the area's artistic and creative spirit.

Its commercial heart, defined by Sydney Road and Victoria Street Mall, is celebrated for its diverse and multicultural food offerings, specialised retail, and lively community gathering spaces. Many businesses in the area have been in the area for years, are much-loved by the community, and are woven into Coburg's cultural history.



Victoria Street Mall is an important gathering space. Source: Simon Auber.



Old heritage station.
Source: Simon Auber.



Much loved local foods.
Source: Simon Auber.

Place context

Coburg is already a vibrant place with many strengths, making it the perfect location for more people to live, work, and visit.

A hive of economic activity

Central Coburg is a busy economic precinct, with Victoria Street Mall and Sydney Road at the centre. A mixture of retail, grocery and dining line the streets, with cheap, delicious and varied food of all kinds and specialty stores including gold retailers at the northern end of Sydney Road attracting many visitors to the area.

A place of multiple centres

The cultural heart of Sydney Road and Victoria Street Mall is complemented by the Pentridge precinct to the north-east, which includes housing, retail and entertainment options such as bars, restaurants and a cinema.

A hub of community services

There are multiple community anchors in and around central Coburg, all of which provide essential services to the community. It hosts the Merri-bek Council Offices, the Coburg Library, the Coburg Leisure Centre, numerous health organisations and a number of places of worship. The Coburg Health Hub will soon be delivered, bringing additional health organisations and community uses to central Coburg.

A well-connected location

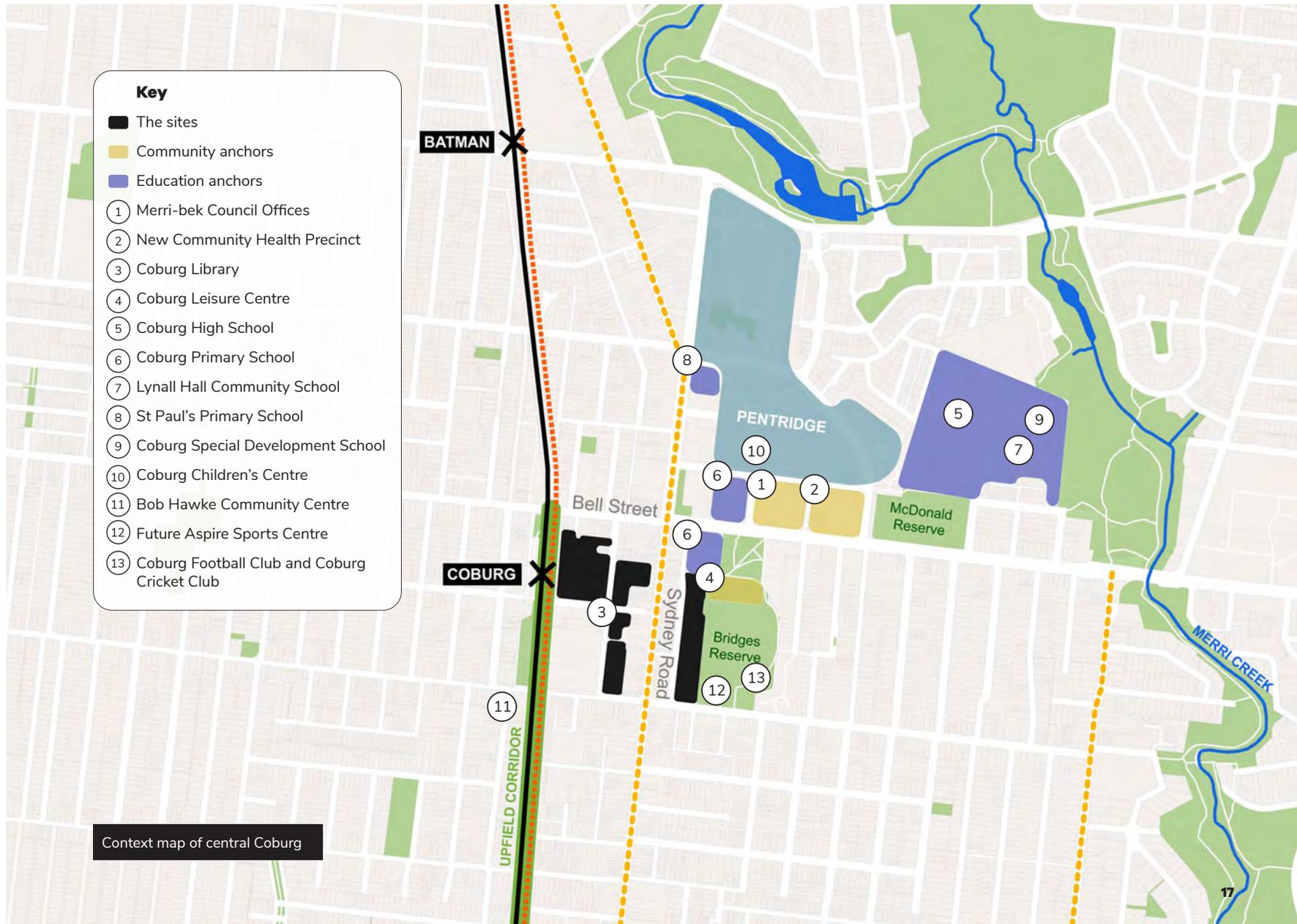
Central Coburg is well-connected and is strategically located on the Upfield Rail Corridor, the Route 19 tram, and multiple bus routes (Bell Street, Sydney Road, Harding/Munro Street). The Upfield Corridor provides an important north-south cycling route, connecting to Parkville in the south and Fawkner in the north. This means a wide range of job opportunities are available to those that live in Coburg.

A centre of education

There are many educational anchors in and around central Coburg including Coburg High School, Lynall Hall Community School, Coburg Primary School, St Paul's Primary School and the Coburg Special Development School. The not-for-profit Coburg Children's Centre provides valuable childcare and kindergarten service to support families living in the area.

A place for play

There are several green and recreational facilities in the centre including City Oval, McDonald Reserve and East Coburg Tennis Club, as well as a number of recreational spaces along the Upfield Corridor. These facilities are well used by sporting clubs such as the Coburg Football Club. These outdoor spaces are complemented by the indoor Coburg Leisure Centre with its gymnasium, pools, spa and sauna. There are also plans underway to expand the sports precinct by delivering the new Aspire Sport Centre to the south of City Oval.



Designing for Country

Coburg used to have many wetlands, lagoons, rivers and creeks. Merri Creek, Edgars Creek and Merylston Creek remain important waterways with strong cultural associations for First Nations people. Waterways have been important places of connection for social and ceremonial gatherings, trade, initiation, marriage, and lore business for tens of thousands of years.

The ambition for central Coburg is to embed First Nations cultural narratives into the design of streets, public spaces and buildings.

To achieve this, Merri-bek have worked alongside Wurundjeri Elders to record First Nations Cultural Narratives for central Coburg. The purpose of these cultural narratives is to allow those delivering projects in central Coburg to embed First Nations storytelling into the urban fabric.

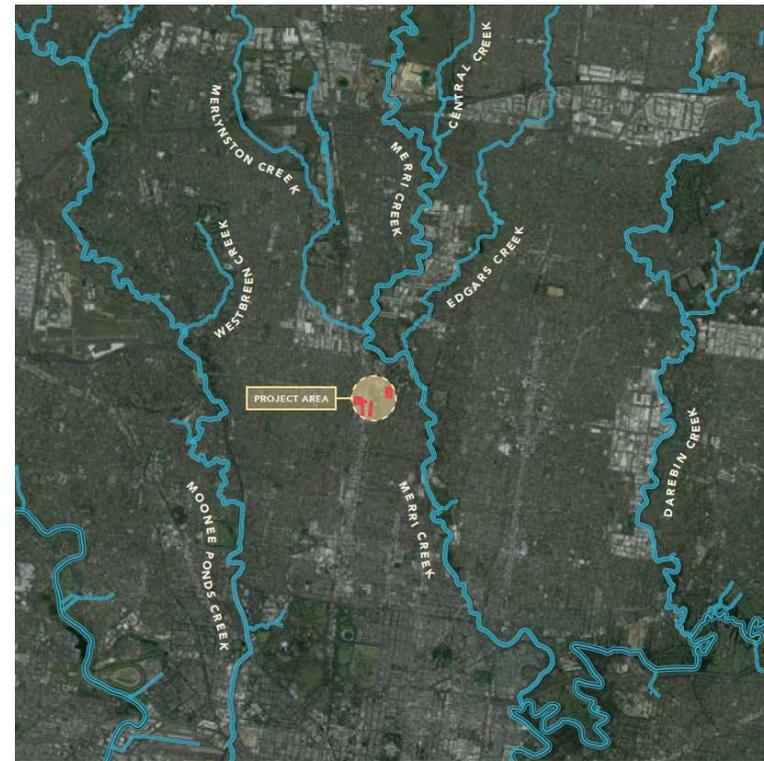
This is about taking a country-centred approach to design. A country-centred approach encourages designers to move away from considering projects within a hierarchy where people are at the top, towards an interconnected view where all beings and all things, animals, plants water, sky, and people, have equal place and importance. This shift in thinking invites us to design not just for people, but with Country in mind, recognising that humans are one part of a much larger living system.

There are six cultural narratives for central Coburg:

1. Honouring ancestral connections and creation stories.
2. Truth-telling, knowledge sharing and public understanding.
3. Supporting ceremony and cross-cultural exchange.
4. Contemporary representations of culture.
5. Cultural knowledge transfer and intergenerational learning.
6. Connecting to Country: ecological and cultural heritage.



Wurundjeri Country.



Within a network of waterways.

The six sites

Merri-bek is considering six sites in central Coburg, each with a unique character and particular qualities. This creates an opportunity to create distinct and exciting new places on every site, responding to the specific opportunities of each.



Waterfield West

Open air public car park next to Coburg Station. It is home to a former supermarket building, currently occupied by Schoolhouse Studios.



Waterfield East

Coles supermarket and small businesses, fronting Sydney Road and accessible from Waterfield Street.



Victoria North

Open air public car park fronting Victoria Street Mall and Waterfield Street.

Source: Participants in The Coburg Conversation photo walk.



Victoria South

Home to the current Coburg Library which opened in 1983 after the renovation of an existing supermarket. The new library will be on the Waterfield West site.



Louisa East

Open air public car park that is directly behind the Coburg Library and Coburg Market. As well as car parks, there are trees and a small seating area on the site.



Russell East

Open air public car park next to City Oval and the Coburg Leisure Centre. As well as car parks, there are trees, pathways and a public toilet on the site.

Source: Participants in The Coburg Conversation photo walk.

Delivering the vision

The draft framework plan

The plan includes...

- Six new public spaces, over 200 new trees and a new library and piazza right in the heart of Coburg.
- Flexible spaces for new businesses and offices, supported by about 2,000 new residents and increased visitation to the area.
- Buildings from three to 18 storeys designed to respond to context and protect existing and new public spaces from overshadowing and wind.
- Around 1,000 apartments and townhouses of all sizes that support the different living arrangements of new residents.
- A new network of streets and laneways and a direct connection between Coburg Station and Sydney Road.
- Three centralised parking locations at the edges of the area, two multi-deck car parks and one above ground car park integrated into the site next to Coburg Station.



**New open spaces
are co-located with
mature existing trees**

**Diverse plants that
provide habitats for
birds and insects**

**Wetlands used
to celebrate and
treat water in the
landscape**

Artist's impression of a new park on Russell East.

Key

Areas

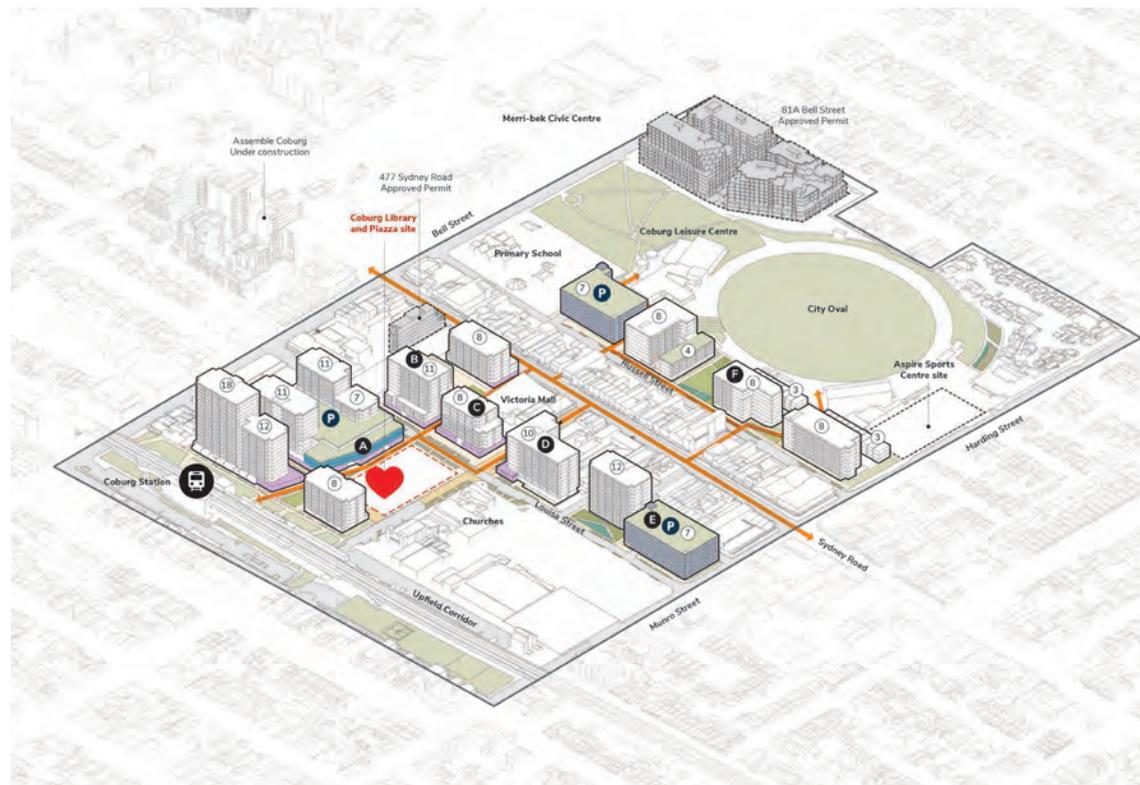
- Central Coburg precinct
- Coburg Library and Piazza site
- Approved permit
- Development site

Buildings and uses

- New building
- New public car park
- New retail
- New office
- Height (storeys)
- Key pedestrian route

Public realm

- Lawn
- Green space
- Landscape
- Urban wetland
- Rain garden
- Porous paving
- Pedestrian paving/footpath
- Shared zone



A draft framework for central Coburg (indicative image only).

Key

Areas

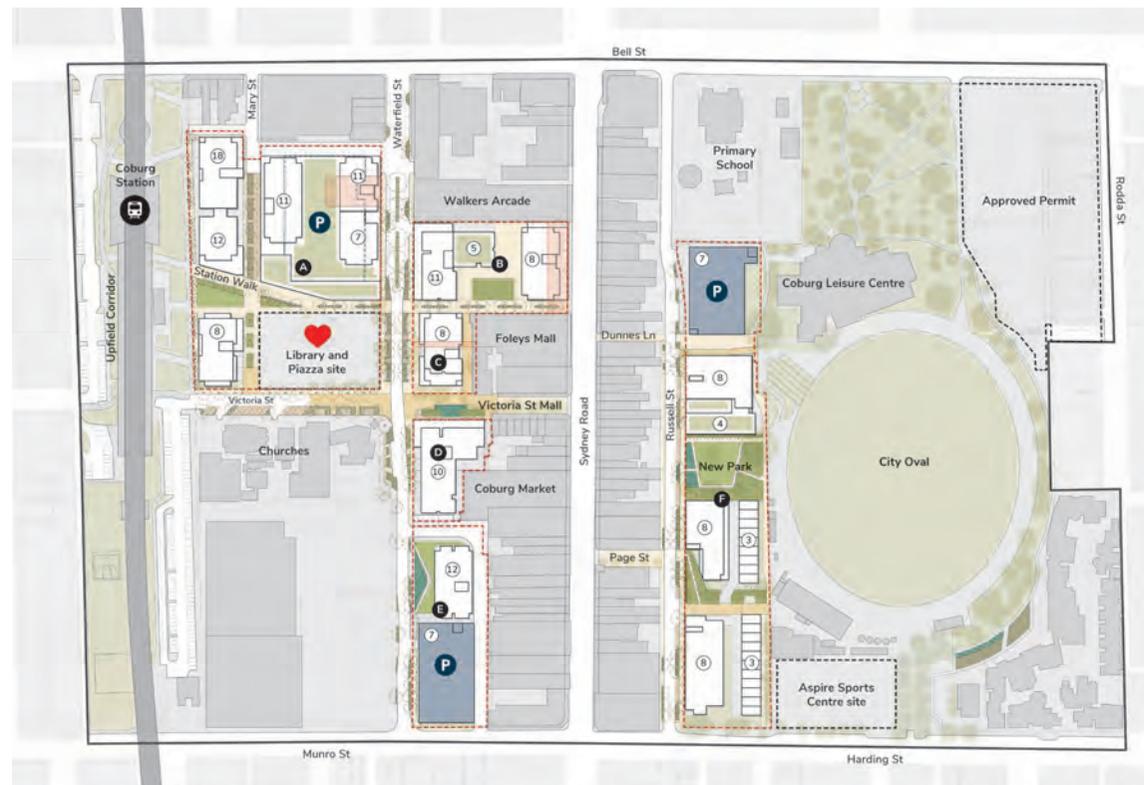
- Central Coburg precinct
- Site under consideration
- Development site
- Private land

Buildings

- Existing building
- New building
- New public car park
- New podium car park
- Height (storeys)

Public realm

- Lawn
- Green space
- Landscape
- Urban wetland
- Rain garden
- Porous paving
- Pedestrian paving
- Shared zone
- New/upgraded footpath
- Retained tree
- New tree



A draft framework plan for central Coburg (indicative image only).



Connecting key destinations in central Coburg.

Coburg is community

A community gathering place where the library, piazza and Victoria Street Mall will form the heart of central Coburg.

Key outcomes

- Library and piazza projects already underway.
- Direct link between Coburg Station, Victoria Street Mall and Sydney Road, fronted by diverse businesses.
- New streets and laneways including an extension of Mary Street that connects through to Victoria Street in the south.
- Smaller block sizes that make it easier to walk.

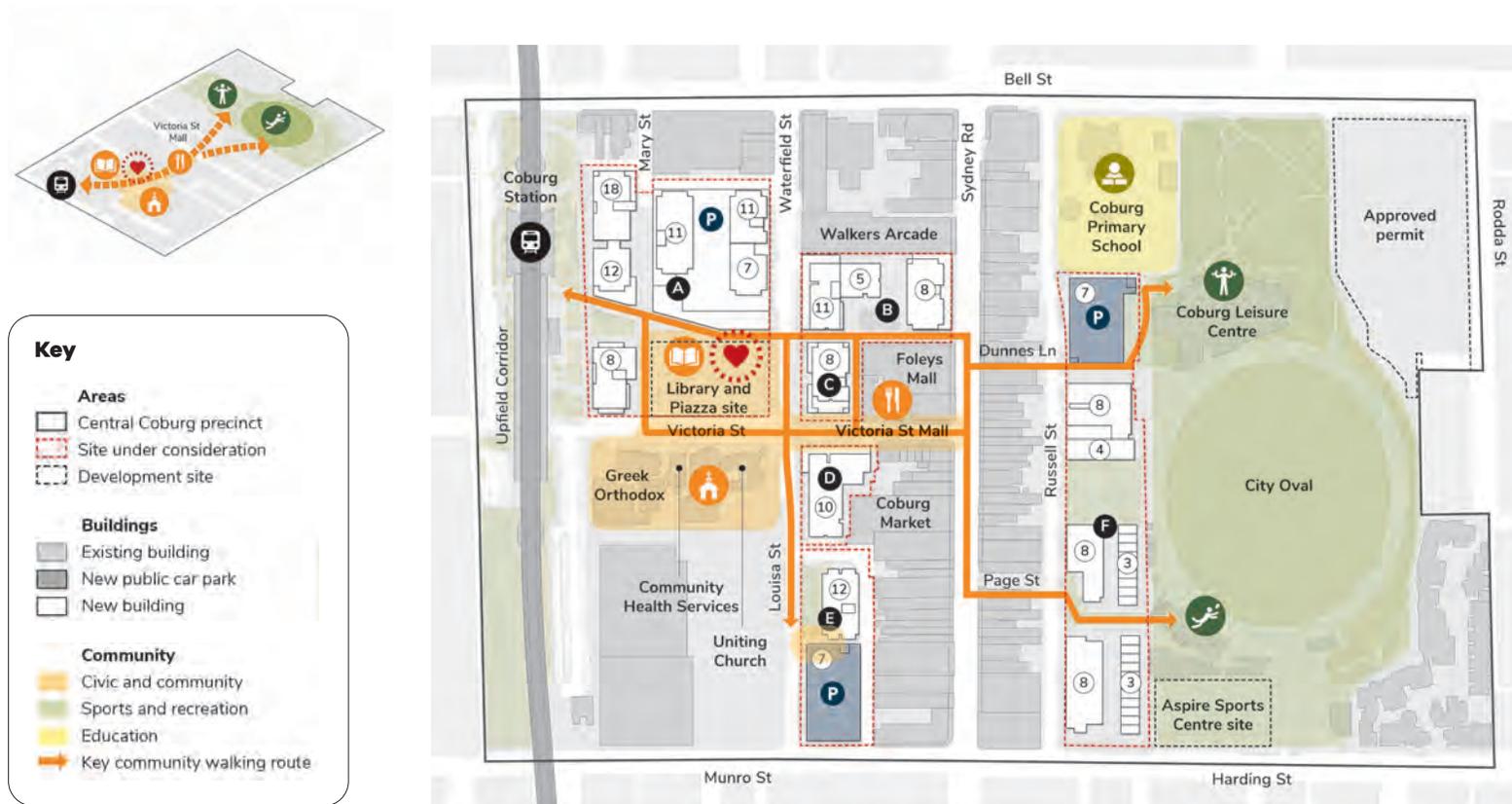
We imagine a future that brings community together. The new library and piazza will strengthen Coburg’s civic heart, and will be a welcoming place where people gather, connect and celebrate.

Moving through the area will be easier and more enjoyable, with a network of inviting new laneways lined with diverse businesses, linking Coburg Station, Victoria Street Mall and Sydney Road.

Upgrades to Victoria Street, Waterfield Street, Louisa Street and Russell Street will create greener and more comfortable routes, complementing the new laneways and supporting a lively and accessible heart for Coburg. Together, these changes will bring more life to people’s everyday experiences in Coburg, whether it is grabbing a coffee on the way to the station, meeting friends in the piazza or heading to a game in the sports precinct.

We balanced

- Creating new laneways and connections with the need to support functional development sites. This approach ensures the centre not only works well but also feels like home for the community.
- Supporting existing and proposed community anchors as the project progresses such as schools, churches and sporting clubs, including the proposed Aspire Sports Centre. or within buildings.





Coburg is thriving

A thriving place where diverse businesses will complement each other and create new life and energy.

Key outcomes

- Over 8,000m² of new businesses and shops including a supermarket.
- Over 2,000m² of office space.
- Flexible ground floor spaces that support businesses of different sizes, located along key pedestrian routes.

New retail at the ground floor, particularly on new streets and walks, will connect people from the train station to the heart of Coburg. There's an opportunity to replace the supermarket and an office building. The ground floor retail at the base of buildings will vary in size from small 'hole in the wall' shops to larger premises. These new retail and commercial spaces will support more night-time activity.

Almost 11,000 square metres of commercial space will be dedicated to office and retail.

We balanced

- Increasing retail and commercial space while ensuring there is sufficient demand.
- Prioritising retail on the primary foot traffic routes. Secondary routes could potentially have destination commercial uses.
- Footprints of different retail uses including a supermarket.
- Market conditions and pricing changes over time for land uses which impacts on feasibility.



Expanding the commercial heart of Coburg.

Key

Areas

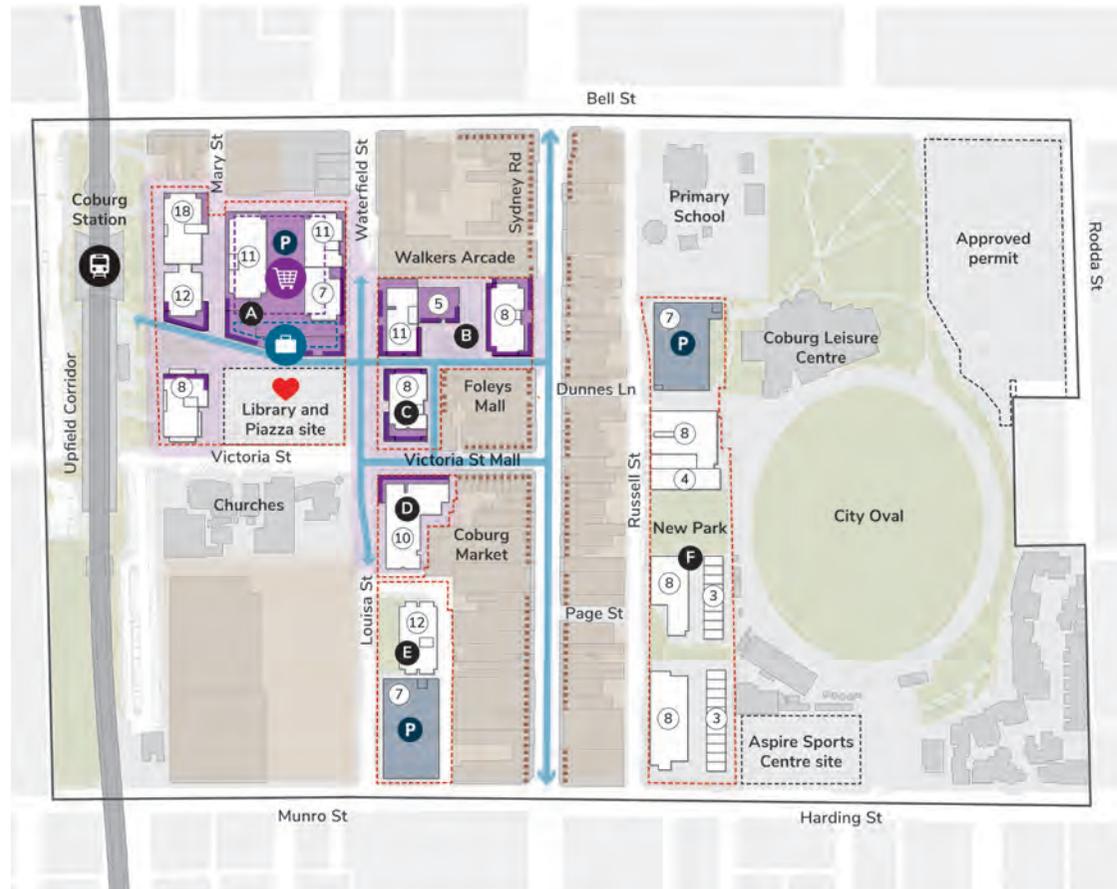
- Central Coburg precinct
- Site under consideration
- Development site

Buildings

- Existing building
- New public car park
- New building
- New commercial at ground level
- Height (storeys)

Commercial

- Existing retail
- Existing fine-grain retail interface
- New mixed-use area
- New fine-grain retail interface
- Supermarket at ground level
- Office uses in podium level
- High activity walking route
- Retail arcade





Coburg is accessible

An accessible place where people will comfortably walk, cycle, catch public transport or drive and park their car.

Key outcomes

- Over 6,000m² of new streets and laneways.
- Direct link between Coburg Station, Victoria Street Mall and Sydney Road, fronted by diverse businesses.
- Upgrades to Waterfield Street, Victoria Street, Victoria Street Mall, Louisa Street and Russell Street.
- Around 900 car parks located in three accessible locations within a two-minute walk to all parts of central Coburg.

Parking is important, and we will provide around 900 public car park spaces in convenient locations across central Coburg. It's a key asset for both visitors and local businesses. It is important to continue to provide sufficient parking spaces. All parts of central Coburg will be within a short, two-minute walk.

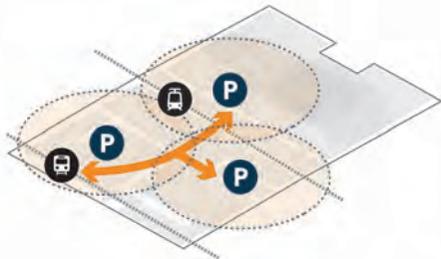
The streets will be prioritised for accessible parking, loading and short-term parking. There's an opportunity for upper levels of car parking buildings to be set aside for traders and long term parking. Some people living in central Coburg in the future will not want or

need a car park with their apartment, given the proximity to the train station, buses and the Sydney Road tram. We'll reduce the parking requirements, which should also make the apartments more affordable.

The current dominance of asphalt carparking contributes to urban heat in central Coburg. These carparks will be re-worked into more beautiful carparking structures that include greenery and community uses. Three new leafy and appropriately-lit laneways will make it easier and cooler to move around central Coburg, whether walking, wheeling or cycling. Merri-bek will continue to advocate for the improved accessibility of the Sydney Road tram stops.

We balanced

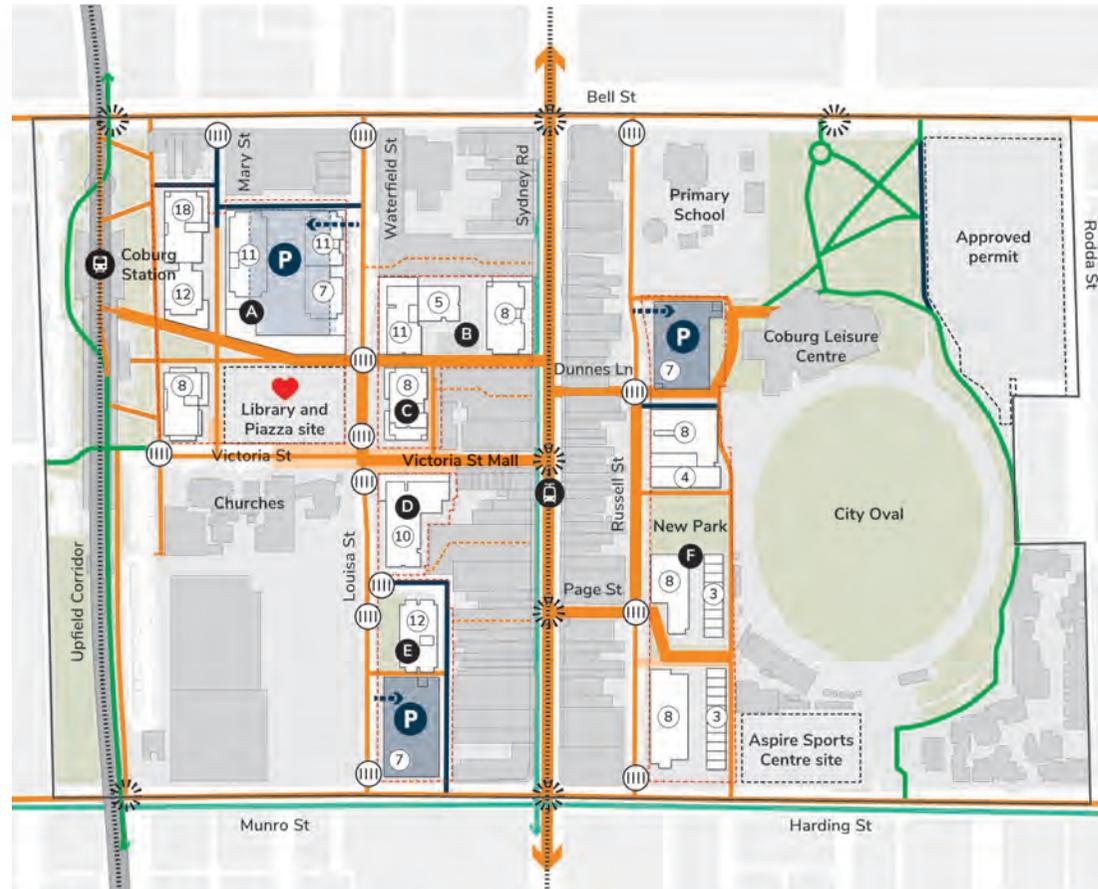
- What is the appropriate public car parking amount for current and future uses.
- Different needs for parking such as for deliveries and loading but also for traders and community users.
- The cost of providing car parking in different structures such as basements or within buildings.
- How car parking demand may change over time.



Providing public parking within a two-minute walk to all parts of central Coburg.

Key

- Areas**
 - Central Coburg precinct
 - Site under consideration
 - Development site
- Buildings**
 - Existing building
 - New building
 - New public car park
 - X Height (storeys)
- Movement and access**
 - Key pedestrian route
 - Pedestrian route
 - Arcade
 - Shared zone
 - Shared path
 - Principal bicycle route
 - Laneway
 - ➔ Access to public car park
 - ⦿ Signalised crossing
 - ⦿ Zebra crossing





Coburg is home

A family-friendly place to live where jobs, shops, public transport, public spaces, schools and community facilities are all nearby.

Key outcomes

- About 1,000 new apartments and townhouses to live in.
- Apartments that support families and larger households with a target to provide 40 per cent three or four bedroom dwellings.
- 23-30 per cent social and affordable housing, with at least 90 social housing dwellings.

We want to meet the needs of our growing community. Our analysis indicates we need an additional 2,600 dwellings by 2036 to meet housing demand.

We also need more affordable housing – currently in Merri-bek, over 4,341 households require affordable housing, with 84% considered to be low or very-low income households.

We want Coburg to be family friendly. We want a range of dwellings to suit different

families and households, not just one and two-bedroom apartments. We are planning for 1,700-2,300 new people to call Coburg home, where they will live in 850-1,150 dwellings.

We want apartments with flexible designs, so they meet the needs of the community. For example, having two two-bedroom apartments that can be combined to create a larger family apartment.

All tiers of government have a role to play in addressing housing gap, we want to play our part.

We balanced

- Increasing heights to accommodate more dwellings with increased private parking requirements and overshadowing impacts.
- Providing increased social and affordable housing with financial feasibility.



Delivering diverse housing options in central Coburg.

Key

Areas

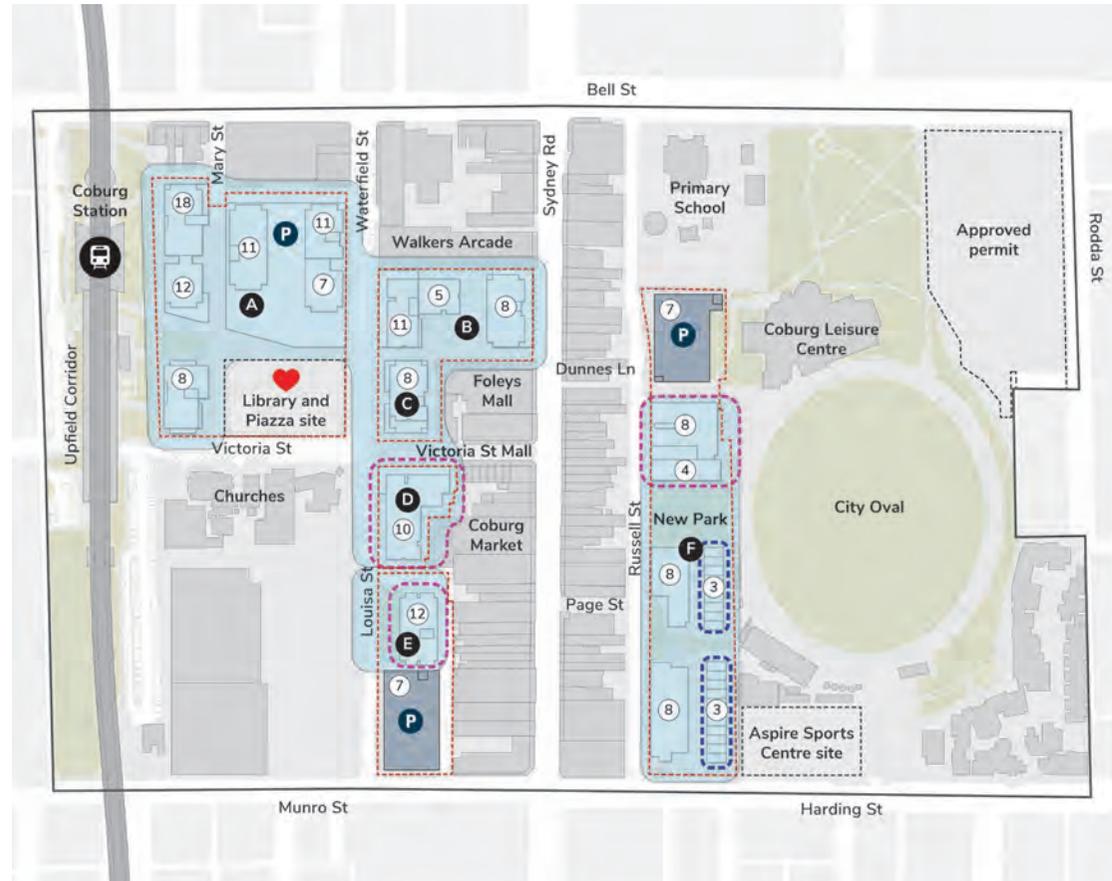
- Central Coburg precinct
- Site under consideration
- Development site

Buildings

- Existing building
- New public car park
- New building
- X Height (storeys)

Housing

- New housing
- Potential social and affordable housing
- Townhouse





Coburg is open

An open place where streets and parks provide comfortable, shady meeting points for the community.

Key outcomes

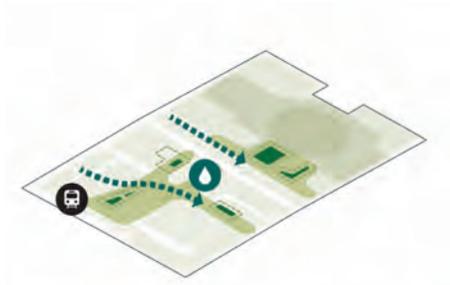
- Over 6,000m² of public space.
- Six new public open spaces all irrigated with water captured and reused from City Oval.
- New open spaces co-located with existing mature trees.
- Diverse plants that provide habitat for birds and insects.
- More than 200 new trees and undergrounded power lines to allow for additional tree canopy .
- Buildings designed to minimise overshadowing and wind impacts to public space.

Coburg will be greener, cooler and leafier, with over 6,000sqm of new public open space. Building heights of between 3-18 storeys are arranged to protect sunlight access to existing and new public open spaces and key pedestrian streets. Upper levels of buildings set back from the street will create a more open and inviting pedestrian environment.

Victoria Street Mall will also get a facelift. Placing powerline underground powerlines will make space for more tree canopy, which will reduce the urban heat island effect.

We balanced

- Ensuring there is solar access to open spaces with building heights.
- Managing overland flow from peak rainfall events.



Creating a new network of open spaces irrigated by water captured and reused from City Oval.

Key

Areas

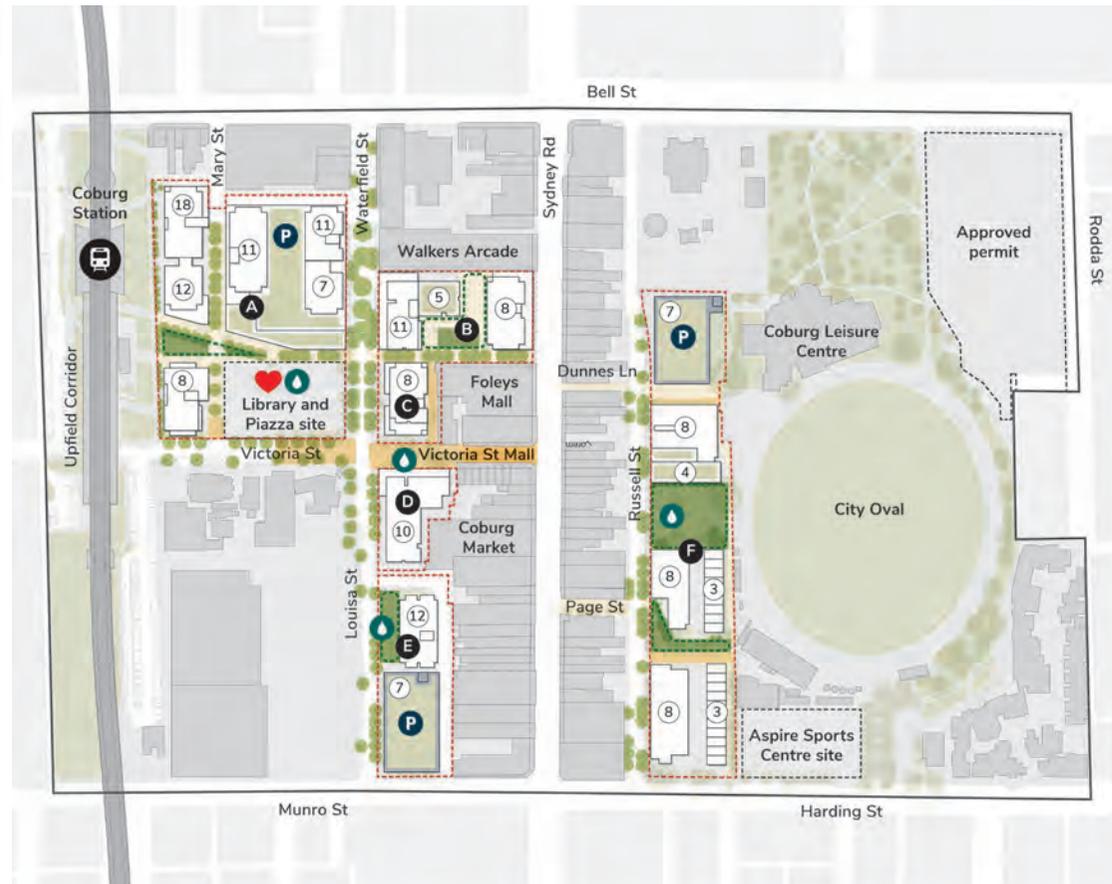
- Central Coburg precinct
- Site under consideration
- Development site
- New open space

Buildings

- Existing building
- New building
- (X) Height (storeys)

Public realm

- Existing green space
- New green space
- New green roof
- Victoria Mall
- Shared zone
- Pedestrian
- Existing tree
- New tree
- (A) Water storage



The plan for each site

The six sites

Each of the six sites presents a unique opportunity for localised transformation. They come in different shapes and sizes and have different neighbouring uses. For this reason, they require their own tailored design responses.

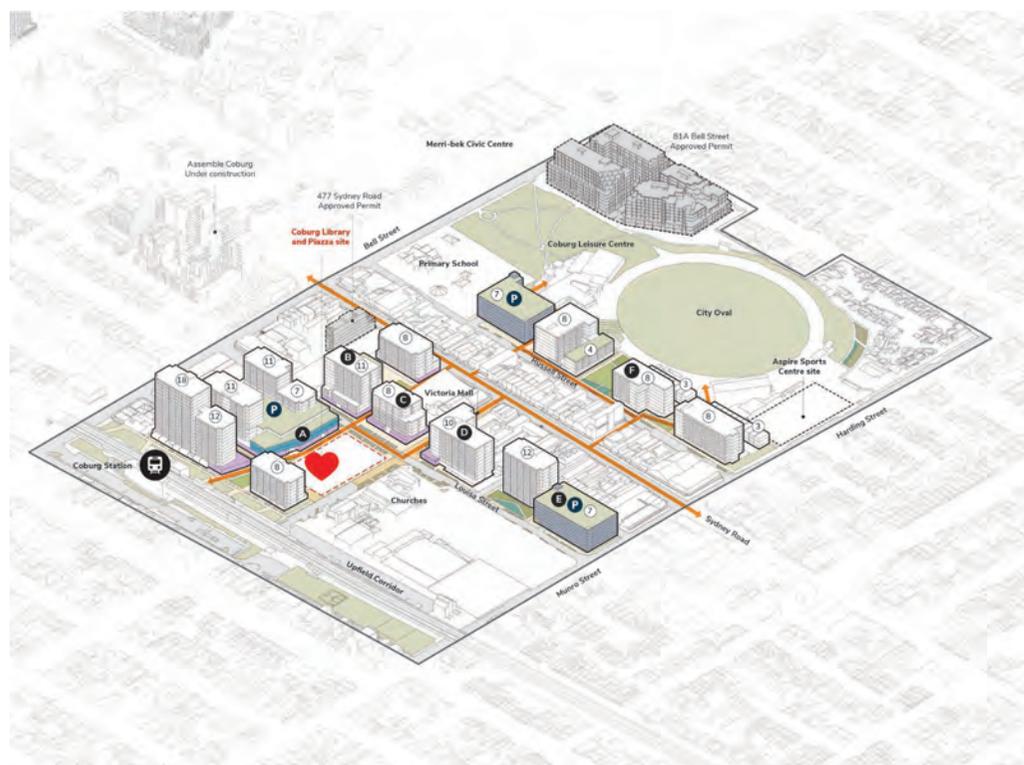
Waterfield West (A) is a great location for housing, shops and offices because it is conveniently located right next to Coburg Station and the Upfield Corridor, making it easy to access by public transport or when cycling or walking.

Waterfield East (B) is right on Sydney Road and a short walk from the station, making it a great location for retail and urban living.

Victoria North (C) and Victoria South (D) are right in the heart of the precinct, opening up onto Victoria Street Mall with new shops at the ground floor to complement existing businesses.

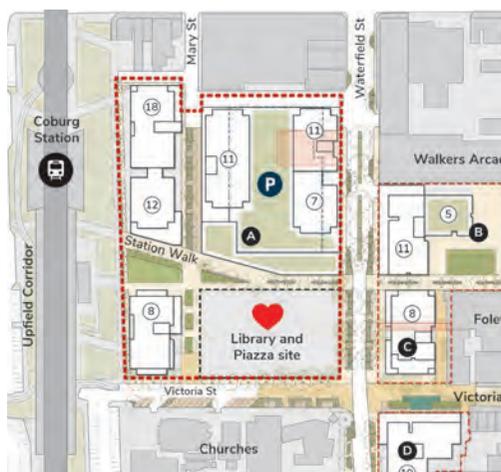
Louisa East (E) will include a new public space to give residents of the new building refreshing views of greenery and open space.

Russell East (F) residents will be able to watch the sunrise across City Oval in the morning.



A draft framework plan for central Coburg (indicative image only).

Waterfield West



Waterfield West.

Waterfield West (A) is home to the new Coburg Library and piazza, housing, offices, retail and a new supermarket.

A new library and piazza will hold pride of place in the precinct. The library will provide a welcoming space, services and resources for the local community, and the piazza will provide a green outdoor space for recreation, relaxation and events.

The project is already underway, and a design for the new library and piazza will be presented to the community for feedback in early 2026.

New streets will link Coburg Station and Waterfield Street, and Mary Street and Victoria Street. A new public space outside of the old heritage station will welcome people into the area from the Upfield Corridor.

Buildings range in height from 8-18 storeys with heights lower towards Victoria Street and to the north of the public space to protect it from overshadowing.

A purpose-built supermarket space will take up the northern end of the ground floor, with public parking provided above.

Key outcomes

- 1 New 3,000m² Library and 2,000m² Piazza.
- 2 Eleven storey mixed use building with a supermarket on the ground floor, surrounded by smaller shops and businesses facing the street, and podium parking, office space and housing above.
- 3 Twelve and 18-storey apartment building with shops and businesses facing the new laneway and pocket park.
- 4 Eight storey apartment building with shops and businesses facing the new laneway and pocket park.
- 5 New laneway connecting Coburg Station and Waterfield Street.
- 6 New 600m² pocket park next to Coburg Station.
- 7 New shared zone south of the Piazza.
- 8 New laneway connecting Mary Street and Victoria Street with rain gardens, plantings and street design to help improve comfort and manage water.

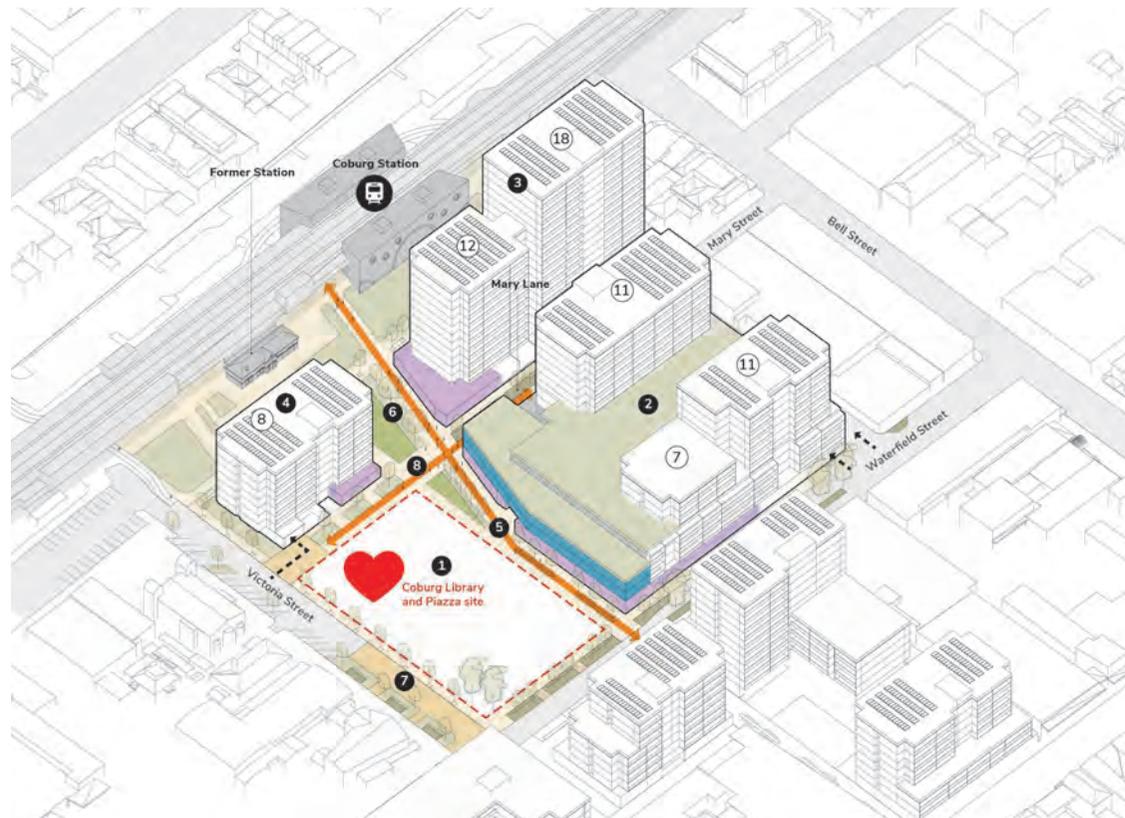
Key

Buildings and uses

-  New building
-  New retail
-  New office
-  Height (storeys)
-  New pedestrian link

Public realm

-  Lawn/Green space
-  Landscape
-  Rain garden
-  Porous paving
-  Pedestrian paving/footpath
-  Shared zone



Waterfield West (indicative image only).

Waterfield East and Victoria North



Waterfield East (B) and Victoria North (C) are places to live, shop and gather, with public laneways that connect to Sydney Road and Victoria Street Mall.

A central open space provides a place to gather and creates high quality views for those living at Waterfield East and Victoria North. An underground car park provides parking for new residents and businesses on site.

Buildings range in height from 5-11 storeys, and are lower in height to the north of Victoria Street Mall and the new open space to ensure these important spaces are protected from overshadowing.

At ground level, flexible retail spaces create new opportunities for businesses and generate activity along laneways.

A new laneway provides a direct connection between Waterfield Street and Sydney Road, stitching the site into central Coburg and making it easier to move through the area.

Key outcomes

- 1 Eight storey apartment building with shops and businesses facing streets and laneways.
- 2 Eleven storey apartment building with shops and businesses facing Waterfield Street, the new laneway and the new central public space. Lower building heights to the north to protect space from overshadowing.
- 3 Eight storey apartment building with shops and businesses facing Sydney Road and the new central public space.
- 4 New 1,000m² urban courtyard with deep soil planting zones to support tree canopy and landscaped areas for retail/hospitality.
- 5 New shared zone connecting Victoria Street Mall to the new laneway and public space.
- 6 Waterfield Street upgrades with rain gardens, plantings and street design to improve comfort and manage water.
- 7 New laneway connecting Waterfield Street and Sydney Road.

Waterfield East.

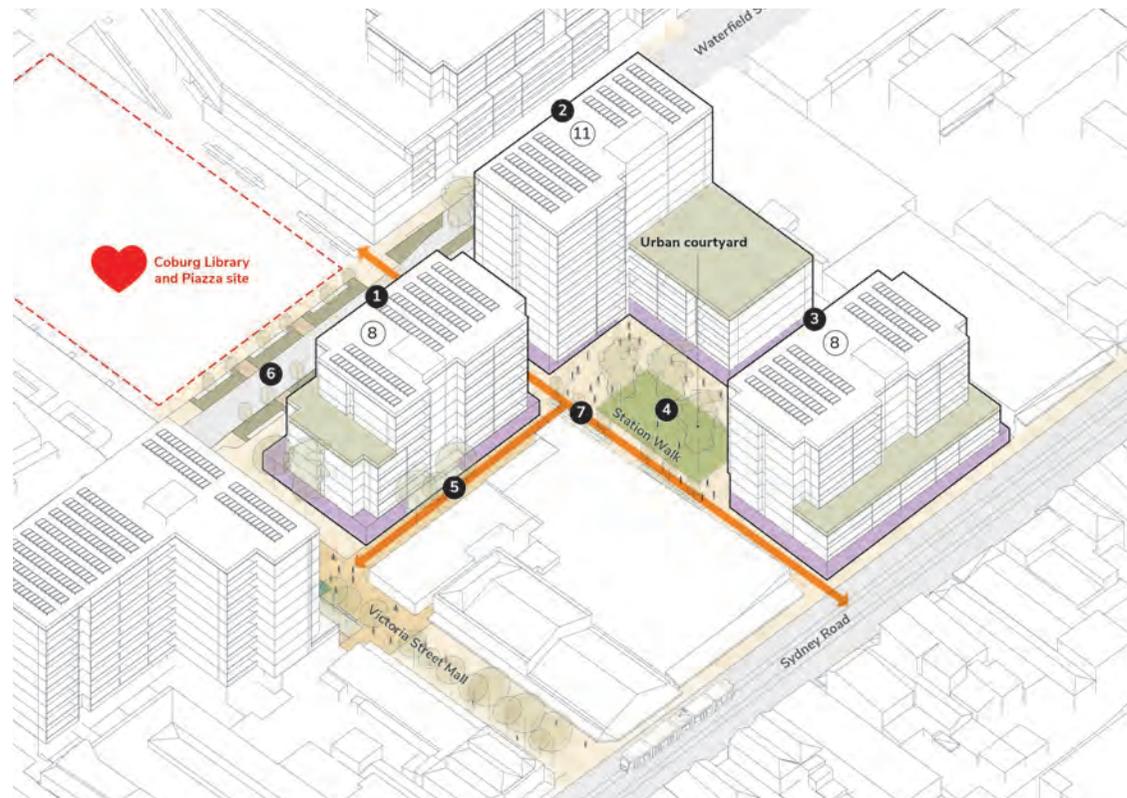
Key

Buildings and uses

-  New building
-  New retail
-  Height (storeys)

Public realm

-  Lawn/Green space
-  Landscape
-  Urban wetland
-  Rain garden
-  Porous paving
-  Pedestrian paving/footpath
-  Shared zone



Waterfield East (indicative image only).

Victoria South



Victoria South (D) is a place to live and shop right on Victoria Street Mall.

New shops at the west of Victoria Street Mall will complement the diversity of existing well-loved and much-visited businesses on the street.

Housing at the upper levels will give people a place to live right in the middle of central Coburg.

The building is ten storeys, but with upper storeys setback from the street to respect the scale of buildings along the mall.

Alongside this development, Victoria Street Mall will be upgraded, respecting and celebrating the much loved character of the mall.

Key outcomes

- 1 Ten storey apartment building overlooking Victoria Street Mall, with active fine-grain retail at ground level facing Victoria Street and Louisa Street.
- 2 Upgrades to Victoria Street including a new shared zone with upgraded paving, lighting, seating and an urban wetland.
- 3 Louisa Street upgrades including rain gardens, landscaping and tree canopy planting.
- 4 Improved market loading including deeper loading zones for trucks to support Coburg Market and a new pedestrian pathway aligned to the market entrance.

Victoria South.

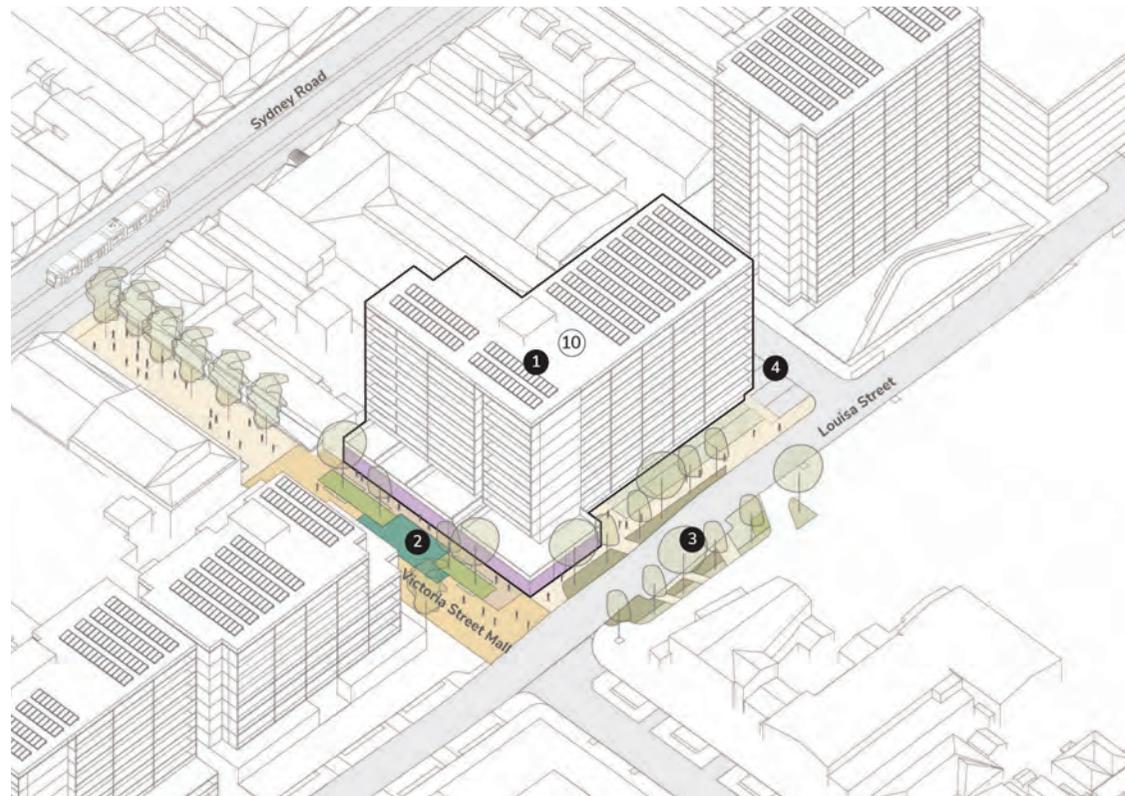
Key

Buildings and uses

- New building
- New retail
- ⓧ Height (storeys)

Public realm

- Lawn/Green space
- Landscape
- Urban wetland
- Rain garden
- Porous paving
- Pedestrian paving/footpath
- Shared zone



Victoria South (indicative image only).

Louisa East



Louisa East (E) includes housing, a multi-deck car park, and a new public space.

To the north of the site, a new 12 storey residential building will look out over a green public space which includes an urban wetland. The wetland not only provides a unique green space for the community to enjoy but also plays an important role in sustainably managing water.

To the south, a new seven storey multi-deck car park consolidates existing public parking in a convenient location a few minutes walk from Victoria Street Mall and Sydney Road.

The multi-deck integrates community uses at the ground level, greening on the roof and greening on the facade, with further design detail to be decided in future stages.

A new laneway between the buildings provides connections through the centre of the site.

Key outcomes

- 1 Twelve storey apartment building with outlook to new pocket park.
- 2 Seven storey multi-deck car park with community uses, green roof and green facades.
- 3 Louisa Street upgrades with rain gardens, landscaping and tree canopy planting.
- 4 New 550m² pocket park and urban wetland to manage and celebrate water.
- 5 A new pedestrian laneway that connects through to the rear of Sydney Road shops.

Louisa East.

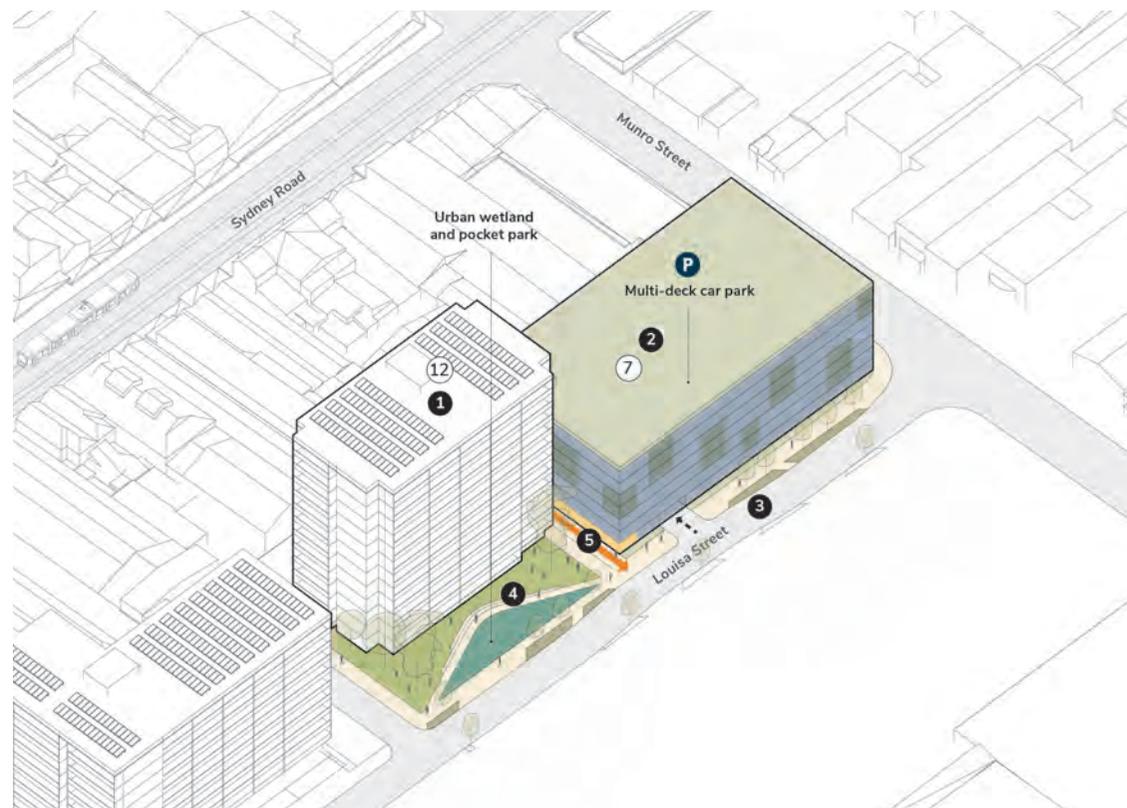
Key

Buildings and uses

-  New building
-  New public car park
-  Proposed community use
-  Height (storeys)
-  New pedestrian link

Public realm

-  Lawn/Green space
-  Landscape
-  Urban wetland
-  Rain garden
-  Pedestrian paving/footpath



Louisa East (indicative image only).

Russell East



Russell East (F) includes apartments and townhouses overlooking City Oval and with the Coburg Leisure Centre at their doorstep.

Two new parks are co-located with existing mature trees on the site, and provide views and links through to City Oval from Russell Street. An integrated urban wetland in the neighbourhood park manages water naturally and provides habitats for birds and insects.

Buildings range in height from 3-8 storeys. The new parks keep the area feeling open and accessible, providing usable space for the community and residents between new buildings.

The public parking on the existing site is relocated into a multi-deck car park opposite the Coburg Leisure Centre. It is convenient walking distance to key destinations including Coburg Primary School, City Oval and Sydney Road.

Key outcomes

- 1 Seven storey multi-deck car park with green roof and facades and opportunities for ground-level community uses.
- 2 Eight storey apartment building overlooking City Oval and new neighbourhood park.
- 3 New 1,850m² neighbourhood park overlooking City Oval with biodiverse landscaping, retained existing trees and an urban wetland.
- 4 Eight storey apartment building with upper-levels overlooking new neighbourhood park and City Oval.
- 5 Three storey townhouses overlooking City Oval.
- 6 Three storey townhouses overlooking tree-lined shared path.
- 7 Eight storey apartment building with upper-levels overlooking City Oval.
- 8 New 600m² linear park connecting Sydney Road to City Oval via Page Street.

Russell East.

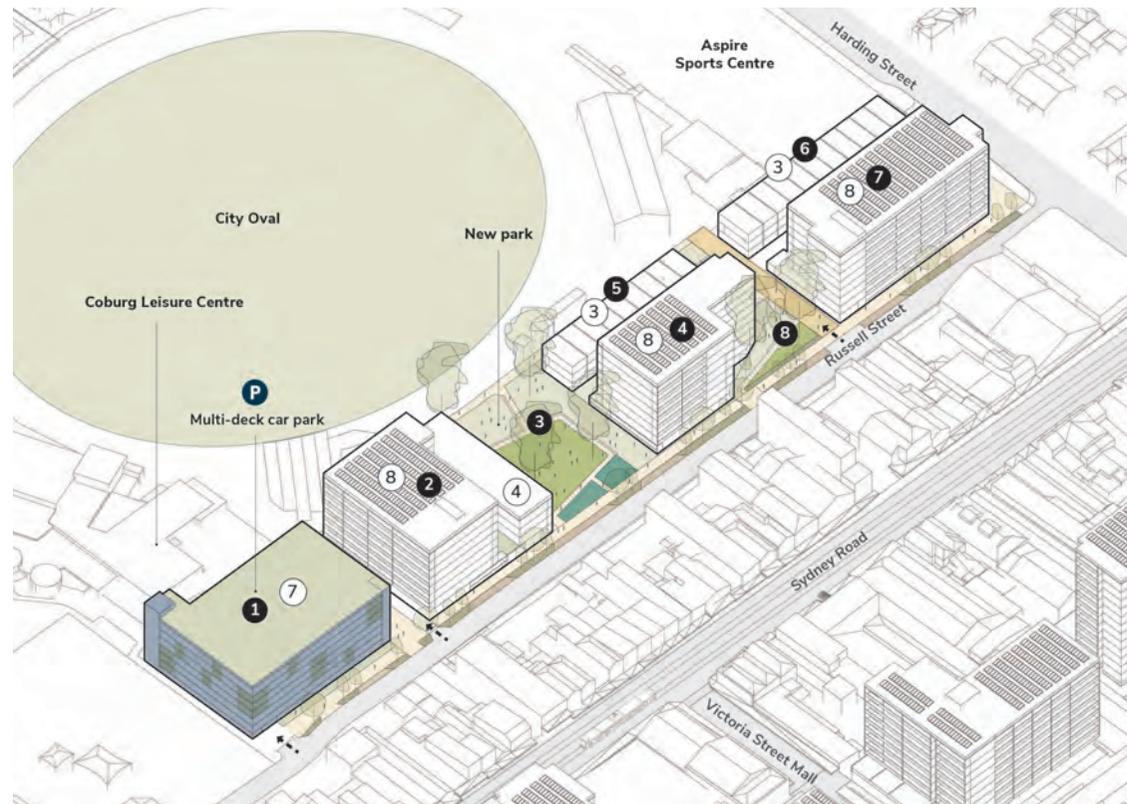
Key

Buildings and uses

-  New building
-  New public car park
-  Height (storeys)

Public realm

-  Lawn/Green space
-  Landscape
-  Urban wetland
-  Rain garden
-  Porous paving
-  Pedestrian paving/footpath
-  Shared zone



Russell East (indicative image only).

Coburg is evolving

A long-term plan for the future

This is a long-term plan, with projects to be delivered in five stages. This improves the financial feasibility of the project, and allows interim impacts such as disruption from construction to be carefully managed.

Public realm upgrades are also staged, to make sure they align with the development of nearby sites. This means upgraded streets won't be damaged when sites are developed.

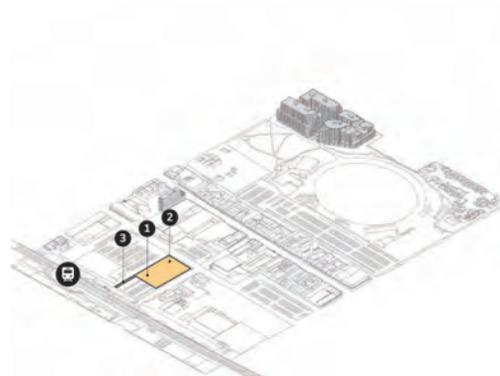


Potential staging plan (indicative image only).

Staging

The plan is to deliver in five stages and the first stage, the library and piazza, is already underway.

The stages are indicative and are subject to change over time. For example, future Council decisions and other external factors such as partnerships may have an impact. Earlier stages of the project are more certain, with the possibility of change increasing for future stages.

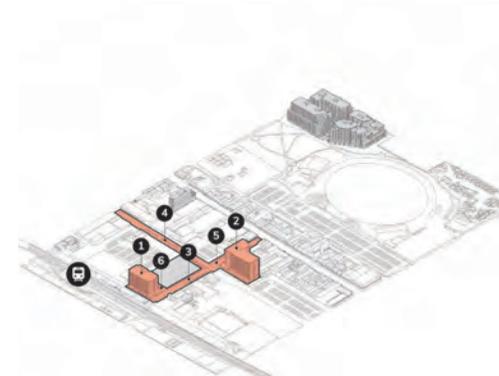


Stage 1

- 1 A new library in the heart of Coburg
- 2 A new piazza alongside the library
- 3 A temporary street connecting Coburg Station to Waterfield Street and Victoria Street Mall

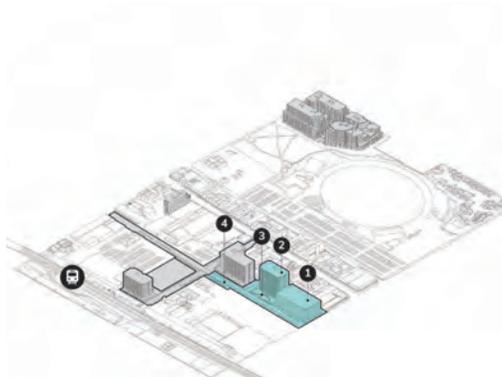
Consultation on the design of the new library and piazza will occur in 2026. The surrounding Waterfield West public car park will be redesigned to be more efficient, to minimise the reduction in public parking.

Potential staging.



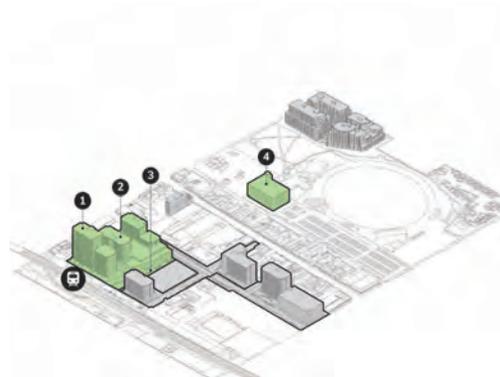
Potential stage 2

- 1 Commercial and residential building to the west of the new library and piazza
- 2 Commercial and residential building on the former library site
- 3 Victoria Street upgrade
- 4 Waterfield Street upgrade
- 5 Victoria Street Mall upgrade
- 6 New laneway



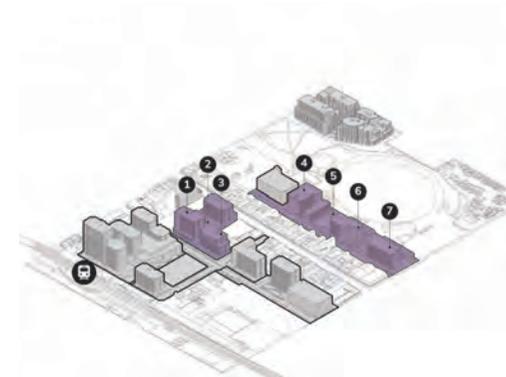
Potential stage 3

- ① Multi-deck car park with integrated community uses
- ② Residential building fronting a pocket park to the north
- ③ Laneway connecting to Coburg Market
- ④ Louisa Street upgrade



Potential stage 4

- ① A mixed use building, with residential uses, commercial uses and a basement car park next to Coburg Station
- ② A mixed use building with a supermarket, small-scale shops, office space, housing and relocated public parking
- ③ A new laneway connecting Coburg Station and Waterfield Street
- ④ Multi-deck car park with integrated community uses



Potential stage 5

- ① Commercial and residential building
- ② A new urban courtyard
- ③ Commercial and residential building
- ④ Residential building designed to protect the neighbourhood park to the south from overshadowing
- ⑤ A new neighbourhood park with integrated urban wetland
- ⑥ Housing, both apartments and townhouses

Potential staging.

Coburg is for everyone

This plan for central Coburg is informed by past community engagement. It's important that the plan reflects community needs and wants, is clear and easy to understand, and has the support of the community before it moves forward. As such, it is now entering a new phase of community engagement.

This next round of community consultation will include an array of online, in-print and in-person engagement activities and have a particular focus on reaching impacted and interested individuals and organisations, as well as Council's identified priority groups.

The engagement will include reflections on the findings of The Coburg Conversation to ensure that they are still accurate, and build upon this by seeking feedback on the current draft framework plan for Coburg.

To find out more about the project, learn about opportunities to get involved, ask questions, and offer feedback, visit the Coburg is Here landing page on the Conversations Merri-bek website.

Also remember to stay tuned for the designs on the new Coburg Library and Piazza! These are expected for consultation in early 2026.

What happens next?

There is more to be done after consulting with the community on this draft plan. While the feasibility of the plan has been tested, there are still decisions to be made about how to deliver the plan with lots of different options to consider.

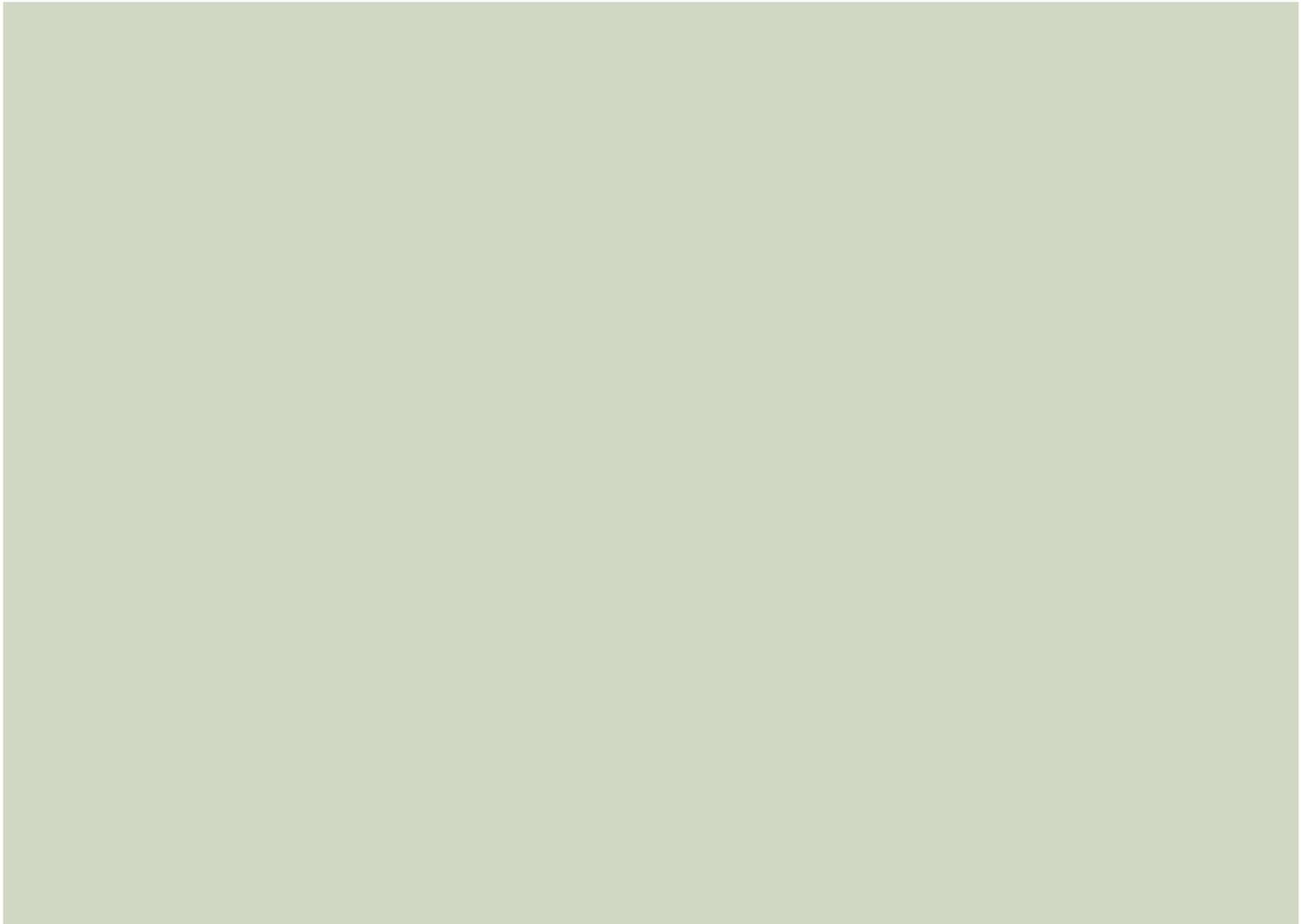
For example, partnerships will be necessary to deliver social and affordable housing projects and no decisions have been made about who these partners might be.

Importantly, market and planning conditions are subject to change which may require the plan to be adjusted in the future. That is why we have created a flexible plan that is able to respond to these changing conditions.

Council acknowledges the work of our primary advisors: Bridge42, SGS Economics and Planning, MGS Architects, GLAS Landscape Architects, Sibling Architecture, Traffix Group, Design Flow, Rain Consulting and Zinc Cost Management. First Nations Cultural Narratives prepared by Greenshoot Consulting. Renders prepared by Narrative.



Artist's impression of an upgraded Victoria Street Mall.



7.2 568 SYDNEY ROAD - PARK CLOSE TO HOME – PRELIMINARY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the community engagement report on options for the new park at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick.
2. Endorses the schematic design for 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick (Image 3 in this report).
3. Endorses the approach to report back to the community, including the schematic design being publicly available on Conversations Merri-bek.
4. Receives a future report on the results of a second round of community engagement, with a recommended concept design for endorsement.

REPORT

Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to present the outcomes of recent community engagement to Council and to seek endorsement of a schematic design identifying the proposed site layout for the Park Close to Home at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick.

In January 2025, Council purchased a site at 568 Sydney Road through Open Space Reserve funds with the intention of delivering a new 'Park Close to Home' project.

The program aims to address open space gaps in high-density precincts, ensuring all residents live within 300 metres of a park. A new Park Close to Home in this location will reduce high priority gap areas in the open space network, as identified in the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy 2024.

In November 2025, Council began conversations with the community to better understand their aspirations for the new park. Over the 6-week engagement period, 2,073 survey responses and hundreds of in-person and email feedback points were received, providing clear insight into our community's priorities. The feedback highlighted that both public open spaces and access to public carparking are very important to our community. Community members also shared their preferred features for the future park, with the highest priorities including shade, places to sit, native planting and safe lighting.

Based on this consultation feedback, Council's designers have developed a schematic design option that balances the priorities of the community including the importance of carparking provision and maximising green space. The schematic design will result in both more public car parking and a larger park. By reorganising parking along the street, more public and accessible parking delivered for the local area, as well as a 1,550 square metre new park.

The parking provision will ensure that current numbers of timed public access parking will be retained and increased. Some on-street parking will be signed to prevent longer stay parking by vehicles with residential permits. The numbers of parking spaces available to residents and traders will be unchanged. An additional accessible space will also be created. Council's endorsement is sought on a schematic design, enabling work to move forward on a full concept design for the project.

Council has been successful in securing a State Government Pick My Park grant of \$250,000 to help fund the delivery of the park. Initial budget estimates for the park are in the order of \$1.1 million – with a simple green open space model intended. Park works will be funded through the Open Space Reserve. Minor works proposed on Staley Street including line marking and transport safety improvements are estimated at approximately \$30,000 and will be funded through Council's Capital Works Program. Costings will be refined during the design process.

Subject to Council's endorsement of the schematic design, work will progress to develop a concept design for the new park. Community engagement on the draft concept design is planned for later in 2026, with construction anticipated to begin in 2027.

Previous Council decisions

568 Sydney Road Park Close to Home - Preliminary Community Engagement - 8 October 2025

That Council:

1. *Endorses community engagement on options for the new park at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick.*
2. *Receives a future report on the results of community engagement, with a recommended site extent and draft concept plan for the new park.*

Proposed Acquisition 568-574 Sydney Road, Brunswick – 16 September 2024

A Council decision regarding the project was made at a meeting as a Confidential Property Matter.

1. Policy context

This work aligns strongly with the 2025-29 Council Plan, including strategies such as:

- Cool urban environments and beautify public spaces with nature, including seeking opportunities to reduce hard surfaces to increase permeability.
- Maintain our streets, laneways and public places so they are adaptive to community needs; places we are proud of and feel safe in.
- Improve parks and facilities to make them welcoming places to share and to enjoy activities.
- Make it easy and safe for people to move around Merri-bek, especially using public and active transport and zero-emission vehicles.
- Places for People plans that support the development and greening of Merri-bek's activity centres as vibrant attractive hubs.

A Park Close to Home framework

The framework adopted by Council on 6 December 2017, is a strategy to fill gaps in the open space network in Merri-bek. The strategy is intended to create and improve access to open space in the areas that need it most, by identifying gap areas in the community where residents are not within walking distance to their closest park. The new park at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick will help to address one of the high priority gaps outlined in the framework.

A Park Close to Home delivers on the Merri-bek Open Space Strategy which seeks to provide quality open space within 500 metres of all residential properties, and 300 metres of all activity centre residences.

Other strategies

The new open space will also help deliver on the Urban Forest Strategy and the Cooling the Upfield Corridor Action Plan.

Aligned with the Moving Around Merri-bek strategy, this project enhances active transport connectivity by establishing a safe link between Hope and Stewart Streets. This supports a vital East-West corridor between Moonee Ponds and Merri Creeks, directly serving key community assets including retail precincts, schools, and CERES.

The project is being delivered in parallel with the Hope Street Streetscape Improvements, which includes a proposed future crossing at the Sydney Road intersection. This crossing is a critical interdependency; it will mitigate existing access barriers and ensure safe, high-quality pedestrian and cyclist permeability to the new parkland at 568 Sydney Road.

The new park at 568 Sydney Road is listed in the draft Places for People Plan currently out for community engagement.

2. Background

Council's primary vision for the park is to provide a space for informal, passive recreation – socialising, resting, and connecting with nature. The aim for the park is to:

- Create a valuable green space in the Brunswick Major Activity Centre.
- Give people a peaceful place to rest, play, and meet away from Sydney Road.
- Provide a safe walking and cycling link between Hope Street and Stewart Street, connecting Merri Creek to Moonee Ponds Creek.
- Help cool the area and save water.
- Build a new local landmark that the community can be proud of.
- Support nearby shops and cafés by attracting more visitors.

3. Issues

The newly acquired site is approximately 1,000 square metres with one street frontage on Sydney Road. Council also owns the site immediately to the east, a 1,040 square metre carpark with frontage to Staley Street. In total the carpark contains 36 carpark spaces with a mix of time restricted parking, paid parking and business permit parking. In the adjacent area of Staley Street there are 21 existing car parking spaces, as shown in the image below.



Image 1: Existing conditions of the purchased site and surrounding street

Four significant priorities were identified through the community engagement feedback (see details in the Community Engagement section of this report) including:

- Access to public car parking
- The size of the park
- Improving the walking and cycling connection to Sydney Road
- Road access for deliveries, local access, and community facility operations

In considering ways to plan for the new Park Close to Home, Council designers have taken feedback from the community and designed a new schematic design (Attachment 1) that balances these 4 community priorities.

The new schematic design:

- Recognises that car parking access is important to the community and increases the overall number of carparks in the area by redesigning the carparking layout in Staley Street to improve efficiency. This results in an overall increase of 2 car parking bays (subject to final design approvals).
- Provides a large 1,550m² park space for community use
- Improves walking and cycling connections, providing the opportunity for a safe active transport link between Hope Street and Stewart Street, supporting a strategic east-west link between the Moonee Ponds and Merri Creeks.
- Ensures access to rear laneways is maintained and
- Retains the provision of public carparking as per the table below, ensuring that the carparking conditions will result in two additional parking bays for community use. Any timed parking relocated from the off-street carpark to on-street parking will be restricted to public use and excluded from the Residential Permit Parking Override. Please refer to the images and table below for details:



Image 2: Existing parking provision



Image 3: schematic design of proposed approach (Attachment 1)

Key	Parking type	Existing	Proposed	Change
	2P parking (on-street with no residential override allowed)	13	17	+4
	2P parking (on-street with residential permit override allowed)	20	20	-
	Paid parking	18	15	-3
	Accessible parking	1	2	+1
	Business parking permit	5	5	-
	Total parking bays	57	59	+2

Table 1: Summary of impact on parking of proposed schematic design

Community impact

The project will have a positive impact on the surrounding residents, businesses and community, by providing a new park in an area lacking in existing open space. The park will allow for more frequent and convenient time for outdoor physical activity, social interaction, and connection to nature.

An improved active travel connection through the park will provide our community with better travel choices and experiences, making it safer and more attractive to walk and ride locally.

Reconfiguration of carparking in the area will have beneficial impact on the local community, through the provision of a net of two additional public car spaces.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

The project presents numerous opportunities to improve the environmental sustainability of the area through its design, which will include:

- Urban heat mitigation through planting and integrated stormwater management
- Increased biodiversity through increased and varied vegetation
- Increased tree canopy and shade
- Supporting active transport choices through the provision of safe walking and cycling links

Economic sustainability implications

The project is expected to make the area more attractive to visit, and therefore to bring more economic activity to nearby businesses.

By providing an attractive, vibrant and welcoming space on Sydney Road, visitors and workers will have an additional place to meet, stop and rest, thereby increasing their dwell time in the activity centre.

The new park will also provide important green space for workers in the area, improving their wellbeing and satisfaction at work.

Legal and risk considerations

The project will be delivered in alignment with Council's policies including community engagement, procurement and project management.

Risks will be identified and mitigated through Council's project management processes.

Council has met with and will continue to work with key stakeholders, to ensure the needs of our local community are factored into the project.

Human Rights consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

4. Community consultation and engagement

The first round of community engagement was conducted for a 6-week period between 5 November – 12 December 2025. The aim of the engagement was to understand the community's views on the size of the proposed public park, gain feedback on any potential changes to car parking in the vicinity of the site and to gain community ideas for the types of things they want to see in the future park, helping inform a future concept design. A Community Engagement Summary Report (Attachment 2) accompanies this Council report.

Engagement activities during the engagement period:

- A community engagement survey with 2073 responses (made available through the Conversations Merri-bek portal and in paper form distributed and collected by Council staff)
- Individual key stakeholder feedback sessions
- Pop-up engagement events – 19 and 29 November 2025
- Letter-drop (directed residents and businesses to the Conversations Merri-bek portal, business walk-ins included direct conversations)
- Social media promotion
- Signage at 568 Sydney Road advertising the project and engagement

- Phone and in person conversations (16 written submissions, 17 resident conversations)

Key stakeholder engagement:

The key stakeholders whose rights and interests may be affected and were contacted directly alongside the broader community engagement included:

- Residents and property owners of Staley Street
- Saint Vasilios Greek Orthodox Church
- Businesses on Sydney Road between Stewart and Blythe Street
- The Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

Survey results and community priorities

The four most significant priorities that came through the community engagement feedback were:

- Access to public car parking is important to the community
- The size of the park is important to the community
- Improving the walking and cycling connection to Sydney Road
- Road access for deliveries, local access, and community facility operations

The survey also asked people to rank the potential features of the future park. The four highest ranked features (in order of priority) were:

1. Seating and shade, specifically for rest and socialising.
2. Native planting and trees with a desire for both aesthetic beauty and environmental cooling.
3. Safety infrastructure including lighting and clear paths to ensure the park remains safe at night and accessible for those with mobility aids.
4. Quiet areas, with a preference for "passive recreation" over active sports or loud events.

This feedback will help inform the development of a draft concept design. Four design principles are proposed for the park, including:

1. Prioritise a "nature-first" aesthetic: The design should contrast with the surrounding industrial/commercial character by using native vegetation and reclaimed materials, avoiding an overly "engineered" look.
2. Balance universal access with green footprint: While the demand for green space is high, the design should maintain high-priority accessibility for people with limited mobility through drop off zones or other parking options.
3. Design for safety and place-specific context: Ensure the park is a safe, well-lit pedestrian link. Lighting must be functional and aesthetic, acknowledging the community's concerns about safety in this specific precinct. The design should be place-specific ensuring the local community feel connected to the site, e.g. through a local mural or artwork.
4. Integrate multi-generational amenities: Provide functional "nature play" for families while ensuring quiet, shaded seating areas to sit, socialise or relax for a range of users.

Reporting back to our community:

Should Council endorse this report, consistent with Council's normal practice:

- A project update, the Community Engagement Summary Report (Attachment 2) and the endorsed Schematic Design (Attachment 1) will be released on Conversations Merri-bek website.
- Council officers will directly contact key stakeholders to inform them of the final design layout and next steps for the project.
- Community members who participated in the engagement (and have registered with contact details) will be contacted to inform them of the final design layout and next steps for the project.
- Conversations Merri-bek will continue to be updated with progress as the project proceeds.

5. Officer declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and resources implications

Council has been successful in securing a State Government *Pick My Park* program grant, securing \$250,000 to help fund the delivery of the new park at 568 Sydney Road, Brunswick. The program delivers funding for new and updated community open space infrastructure for areas facing increased housing growth.

The site at 568 Sydney Road was specifically purchased for use as a public park under the Park Close to Home program. This is funded by the Open Space Reserve which collects contributions from developers to create more green space to serve the growing residential population.

The cost of the park construction is proportional to the size of the park. A preliminary cost estimate to deliver the park is in the order of \$1.1 million. The costing will be further refined through the design process and be balanced within Council's Capital Works Budget process. Carparking line marking changes on Staley Street will be delivered through Council's capital works program and are estimated at approximately \$30,000.

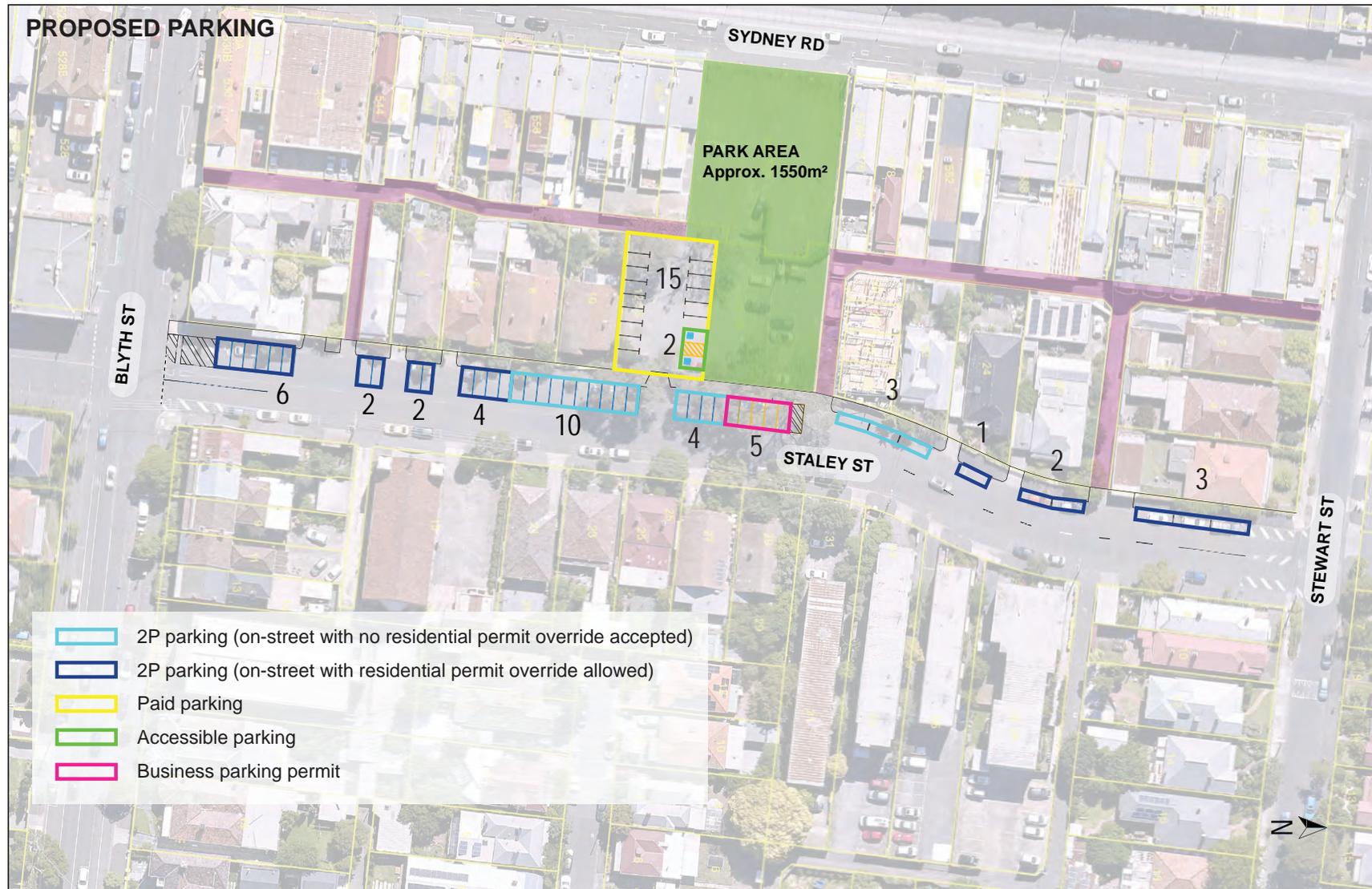
7. Implementation

The proposed next steps for the project are as follows:

- Council's design team will develop a concept design for the park based on this report – March to July 2026
- A second round of Community Engagement will be undertaken on the draft concept design commencing around August 2026.
- The community's feedback will feed into a preliminary detailed design towards the end of 2026
- A Council decision is expected to endorse final design and procurement in early 2027.
- Following finalisation of detailed design and tendering, construction is expected to begin in the second half of 2027 with the new park and revised parking arrangements finished in 2028.

Attachment/s

- 1 [↓](#) 568 Sydney Road - Schematic Design D26/74713
- 2 [↓](#) 568 Sydney Road - Stage 1 Community Engagement Summary Report D26/74726



568 Sydney Road Brunswick

A Park Close to Home

Stage 1 Community Engagement Summary Report

February 2026



Introduction

Project background and engagement overview

The development of the site at 568 Sydney Road is the latest project within Merri-bek City Council’s ‘A Park Close to Home’ plan. This strategic initiative aims to address open space gaps in high-density precincts, ensuring all residents live within 300 metres of a park. Following the Council’s acquisition of the site, this report synthesises community feedback regarding the park’s potential size, layout, and functionality.

Council’s primary vision for the park is to provide a space for informal, passive recreation—socialising, resting, and connecting with nature—while establishing a critical east–west link for pedestrians and cyclists between Sydney Road and Stewart Street, integrating the site into the broader *Creek to Creek* bicycle network.

Engagement reach

The consultation achieved a good reach, engaging 2,306 participants across multiple platforms to ensure a broad spectrum of voices was captured.

Engagement Channel	Total Participants
Survey (online and paper-based)	2,073
Pop-up Events (Two sessions – 19 & 29 November 2025)	200
Resident Stakeholders and Written Submissions	33
Total Reach	2,306



Layout options presented to the community



Option 1

This option creates a small park that adds new green space without changing the existing car park.

Option 2

This option provides more green space while keeping some car parking.

Option 3

This option creates the largest park, extending over Staley Street and closing it to traffic.

Key Findings by theme

The community has communicated there is an immediate practical need for vehicle access and a long-term need for public open space and urban greening.

1. The priority of accessibility and parking A major segment of the community emphasises that car parking is important to the local area.

- **Support for parking:** Many respondents used the scale to indicate a strong preference for maximising car parking.
- **Vulnerable populations:** A primary concern is that removing parking would disproportionately impact the **elderly, people with disabilities, and families** who rely on cars to access local businesses and services.
- **Economic impact:** Local business owners generally prefer a **smaller park** with concerns that a loss of parking may deter customers from visiting the Sydney Road shopping strip.

2. The demand for expanded green space Additionally, a substantial portion of the community views the project as a necessary intervention against urban density.

- **Support for greenery:** Respondents indicated they want to maximise green space.
- **Urban heat and wellbeing:** Proponents of the larger park options (Options 2 and 3) highlight the **Urban Heat Island effect** in Brunswick and the need for cooling. They also argue that for residents living in high-density apartments, public parks are essential for **mental health and social connection**.
- **Reduced car dependency:** Many argue that the council should prioritise pedestrians and cyclists over car infrastructure to encourage sustainable transport.

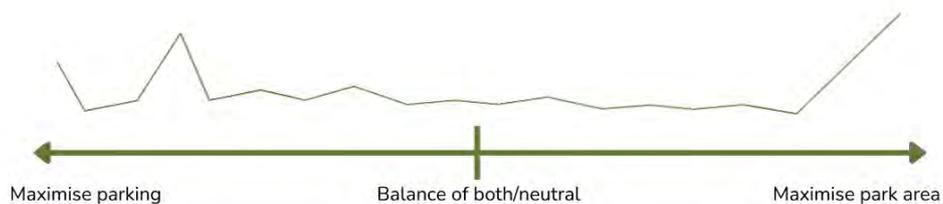


Image: Survey results on ideal balance of car parking and green space on a slider

3. Staley Street closure: The proposal to close Staley Street (Option 3) was one of the most polarising aspects of the options.

- **Safety gains:** Some respondents believe closing the street will eliminate a dangerous "rat-run" traffic and create a safer environment for children and pedestrians.
- **Traffic concerns:** Other respondents fear the closure will increase **congestion on Sydney Road** and divert traffic into other narrow residential streets, such as Edmonds Street.

Demographic trends

Preferences vary significantly based on age and residency:

- **Age split:** Respondents **under 45** are most likely to prefer the largest park (Option 3), while **those aged 45 and older** prefer the smaller park (Option 1) to preserve parking.
- **Resident vs. visitor:** Local residents are split, with **some favouring a larger park** (Options 2 or 3). However, **non-local visitors** prefer Option 1.
- **Local businesses:** Business owners showed the strongest preference for Option 1. Their primary motivation was the **retention of existing parking**. However, other local businesses did support a larger park (Options 2 or 3).

Desired park features

Regardless of the chosen size, the community has identified clear priorities for what the park should contain:

1. **Seating and shade:** The most requested feature, specifically for rest and socialising.
2. **Native planting and trees:** Desired for both aesthetic beauty and environmental cooling.
3. **Safety infrastructure:** This includes **lighting and clear paths** to ensure the park remains safe at night and accessible for those with mobility aids.
4. **Quiet Areas:** A preference for "passive recreation" over "active sports or loud events".



Conclusion: community-informed design recommendations

To progress the 568 Sydney Road development, the next phase should adhere to the following design principles:

- **Prioritise a "nature-first" aesthetic:** The design should contrast with the surrounding industrial/commercial character by using native vegetation and reclaimed materials, avoiding an overly "engineered" look.
- **Balance universal access with green footprint:** While the demand for green space is high, the design should maintain high-priority accessibility for people with limited mobility through drop off zones or other parking options.
- **Design for safety and place context:** Ensure the park is a safe, well-lit pedestrian link. Lighting must be functional and aesthetic, acknowledging the community's concerns about safety in this specific precinct. The design should be place-specific ensuring the local community feel connected to the site e.g. through a local mural or artwork.
- **Integrate multi-generational amenities:** Provide functional "nature play" for families while ensuring quiet, shaded seating areas to sit, socialise or relax for a range of users.

7.3 BREESE STREET MASTERPLAN

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

Officer recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the Community Engagement Report (Attachment 1) detailing the methodology and findings of the second round of community engagement on the Breese Street Masterplan.
2. Endorses Option Two – Central Shared Zone for detailed design for the Breese Street Masterplan, with minor changes based off community engagement.
3. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to make minor changes to the proposed design subject to detailed design and coordination with the Level Crossing Removal Project.
4. Endorses the Parking Plan (Attachment 2) to introduce new parking conditions in Breese Street prior to construction of capital works improvements along Breese Street.
5. Notes that delivery of the capital works be aligned with the construction of the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project.

REPORT

Executive summary

The Breese Street Masterplan arose following a community campaign for improvements to the street following a period of rapid urbanisation and poor-quality road asset condition. Budget was allocated in the 2024/25 and 2025/26 financial years to undertake concept designs and community engagement to make improvements to the street.

In November 2024, Council asked the community for their lived experiences of Breese Street. The findings from this round of community engagement were used to produce two concept designs. These concept designs were consulted during September-October 2025. Option 1, which featured a one way south bound treatment and Option 2 featuring a central shared zone around Bulleke-bek Park were presented. A total of 226 people completed the survey, providing feedback on the two concept designs. Both concept designs were well received by the community.

Option 2 has been identified as the preferred option for detailed design due to its deliverability, its support from the community, and proven treatment as evidenced by the recently delivered Albert and Victoria Shared Zones.

Subject to endorsement of the concept design, detailed design would be undertaken during 2026-27. Immediate changes such as parking treatments could be delivered quickly, but construction delivery would be subject to the construction plans and timelines of the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project which is due to be completed in 2030.

Previous Council decisions

Council Budget 2025-29 – 23 June 2025

- *Allocate \$135,000 to Hope Street and Breese Street (Design Only)*

Council Budget 2024-28 – 26 June 2024

- *Allocate \$110,000 to the Breese Street Masterplan*

1. Policy Context

Council Plan 2025-2029

The Council Plan 2025–2029 sets out Council’s strategic direction for delivering on the Community Vision: “*Merri-bek leads, and leaves no one behind*”. Transport is addressed under the Beautiful and Liveable City theme, which aims to ensure streets and public spaces are safe, pleasant, and easy to use so everyone can enjoy and be proud of where they live.

Key actions that align with this report include:

- Keeping public places and streets well-maintained, safe, and inviting for community use.
- Fixing and improving streets and footpaths to make them more friendly for walking and riding.
- Encouraging walking, cycling, and scooting – especially for getting to school.
- Making it easier and safer to use public transport to move around.

The Moving Around Merri-bek Action Plan is a key mechanism to deliver on these outcomes and ensure that transport investments reflect the priorities of the Merri-bek community.

Moving Around Merri-bek Transport Strategy (2024)

Moving Around Merri-bek is a long-term strategic document that guides the way Council manages and makes changes to Merri-bek’s transport system. The strategy sets out 6 key values that guide transport systems in Merri-bek. They are:

- Safe
- Accessible
- Healthy
- Liveable
- Sustainable
- Inclusive

Moving Around Merri-bek established a new framework for how we make changes to our streets. The framework is called Streets for People, and ensures a holistic approach to understanding the function of our streets and wider transport network, and is used to inform changes to streets to ensure benefits to all road users.

Community Engagement Policy (2020)

Council has a Community Engagement Policy (2020) that aligns with the *Local Government Act 2020*. It sets directions for how Council will engage with the community on decisions that impact them, including future bicycle and pedestrian projects.

2. Background

Project background and context

Breese Street is a high-density residential area in Brunswick between the Upfield Rail Corridor and Sydney Road. Over the last ten years there has been significant residential development and investment in the area. While there is mixed land use, many of the existing commercial blocks have planning permits to develop them into multi-story apartment buildings.

Council identified this area for streetscape improvements during the 2024-25 budget cycle. The project area can be seen at Figure 1. Hope Street between the Upfield Rail Corridor and Sydney Road was originally included in the project scope but was scoped out and identified to be delivered as part of the Hope Street Streetscape Masterplan.



Figure 1 – Breese Street precinct area

Existing conditions

The Breese Street Precinct is a densely populated residential area of Brunswick. It has undergone significant change with many developments completed in the last ten years. The population has grown quickly, with further development and growth anticipated.

The project area contains a variety of land uses, included multi-story residential development, single story houses and a mix of retail and commercial businesses. Several of the new multi-story developments contain ground floor activated businesses which contribute to street level activation.

In 2021 Bulleke-bek Park was delivered as part of the Park Close to Home program. This park functions as the community centre of the Breese Street Precinct.

While cars remain an important transport option, walking and cycling are popular choices for residents and visitors to the precinct. The project area borders the Upfield Shared User Path (SUP) which is one of the most popular off-road cycling routes in Melbourne.

The project area is well serviced by public transport, with the project area bordered by all public transport modes. Directly adjacent to the project area, during the morning peak, trains run every 17 minutes from Anstey Station, and trams on route 19 every 5 minutes.

The 503 bus between Essendon and East Brunswick runs on Albion Street at 20-minute intervals during peak times. Within walking distance, the 509 and 508 buses are also accessible via Victoria Street.

Traffic and parking

Traffic counts were undertaken on Breese Street in August 2024 which showed an average of 2,014 vehicles traveling along the street per day. Of the total volume, approximately seven per cent were heavy vehicles. Vehicle speeds along the street are relatively low.

Surveys of the he carpark at 1-9 Breese Street indicate that it is frequently fully occupied. This is consistent with some of the issues identified by community members who advised that visitors found it difficult to find parking in the precinct. The off-street car park is mostly unrestricted, apart from some car share bays and an accessible parking bay. Many residents and businesses requested greater loading zone and short-term parking to assist with deliveries and ride share drop-off / pick-ups.

Design process

Following an officer assessment and the feedback received a part of the preliminary community engagement, two designs were produced. Both design options addressed the design criteria and responded to the community's requests identified as part of the preliminary community engagement

Option 1 – south bound one way

During the preliminary community engagement and conversations with key stakeholders, a one-way treatment to increase road space and calm traffic was frequently mentioned. A one-way treatment allows the road carriageway to be reduced to 3.5 metres which maximises on road planting space, while maintaining a row of parking along Breese Street. A southbound option was indicated as the only viable option due to existing congestion and traffic volumes along Albion Street.

This design would allow for bicycles to travel in both directions (contraflow) with low traffic speeds. This is done extensively through the inner city suburb of Fitzroy.

However, analysis indicates that for a southbound one-way treatment to function, additional changes to the road network could be required. This could include changes to how Sydney Road operates – a complex change that is also dependent on State approvals (Sydney Road is a State road and a major tram route).

A key feature of this design is the improvement of road safety in the precinct. This is done by alternating the side parking is located on, forcing vehicles to slow down as well as reducing the posted speed to 30 km per hour across the precinct.

Option 2 – central shared zone

During community engagement Council heard that Bulleke-bek is the centre of precinct. The Option 2 design creates a central shared area around the park that prioritises people and greenery. In a shared zone drivers must yield to people walking allowing pedestrians to cross in any direction.

There were several references to the shared zone at Albert and Victoria Streets during the community engagement. During the design process several versions of shared zones were investigated, and the proposed design is a balance of pedestrian needs with the requirements for parking in the precinct.

To ensure safe traffic speeds Council is proposing negotiation points in the precinct that require that vehicles yield. The proposed design is similar to what has been installed in the Albert Street Shared Zone.

Council also heard that having parking on both sides of the street was not working because of increased congestion, particularly on weekends. Parking is therefore proposed on one side of the street, to improve traffic flow while accommodating two-way flow of vehicles and increased planting opportunities.

This design proposes a stepless kerbing similar to what has been installed in Duckett Street. In sections, the bluestone could be sawcut to level it and allow for a smooth transition for people with prams or in wheelchairs.

The proposed speed in this area is 10km/h for all road users, including people riding bicycles. To make the street feel less like a road, Council is proposing to limit parking in the shared zone area. This needs to be done as parked cars can make it more difficult to cross by blocking line of sight and can re-enforce the street as a place primarily for vehicles.

Design improvements across both design options.

The two options present different ways of addressing the fundamental issues identified during the community engagement to make Breese Street a safer, greener and more attractive place to visit. Officer also noted the following improvements which apply to both design options:

- Additional tree planting and greening along Breese Street.
- A shared zone treatment along West Street to access the future station entrance.
- Improved vehicle circulation to the car park behind 36 Breese Street.
- Improved footpaths and pedestrian safety.
- A pocket park at the end of Florence Street.
- Improved traffic flow along Breese Street.

3. Issues

Traffic Impacts on the network

Community feedback indicated concerns about the deliverability of Option 1 – South bound one way. Following the community engagement Council engaged a consultant to undertake traffic modelling of the area.

The modelling outputs showed that full signalisation would be required at the Hope Street and Sydney Road intersection to safely facilitate the additional movements out of the precinct under a one-way southbound option. This would require additional funding and require State government and Yarra Trams approvals, adding significant cost and complexity to this option.

Preferred option

Based on community feedback and further modelling, Option 2 with a central shared zone is recommended. Option 2 delivers an improved Breese Street and can be delivered within the estimated budget. The shared zone model is working successfully in the recently-installed area of Albert and Victoria Street in Brunswick East.

During the engagement several detailed items were raised that are proposed to be factored into the detailed design. These include additional seating, material choices, as well as other smaller design improvements.

Brunswick Level Crossing Removal

The State government is working to remove a number of level crossings in Brunswick, including at Hope Street. This is planned for completion in 2030. The State's proposed layout features a reduction in stations in Brunswick from three to two, with Jewell, Brunswick and Anstey being consolidated into two new stations.

The new northern station is proposed to have an entrance to the north of Hope Street as well as West Street, adjacent to Bulleke-bek Park. Currently, no further information is available, and Council is operating on the information provided to the community about the station entrances.

Council's proposed design assume the State's proposed level crossing alignment. It seeks to improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to the new station entrances, particularly along West Street. Improving pedestrian connectivity along West Street to the station entrance is an important action for the Breese St project.

Parking

The recommended option proposes changes to parking in the precinct to make parking fairer for residents, businesses, and visitors to the precinct. During consultation, many community members indicated that they saw unrestricted parking leading to cars never moving, making it difficult to find a park for visitors. The lack of short-term bays hinders deliveries for both residential (eg food deliveries) and business users.

Parking is proposed to be reduced on West Street to facilitate the new shared zone and access to the new railway station. During site inspections and observations vehicles would become stuck here trying to find parking leading to congestion.

It is proposed that on-street and off-street parking become a uniform 2P from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week. The off-street carparks at 1-9 Breese Street, and behind 34 Breese Street would be given the same restrictions to simplify parking in the precinct.

This proposed parking restrictions promote turnover to support visitors and customers to the precinct during trading hours, and the consistent restriction makes it easier to understand what sort of parking is allowed. It is however proposed that the 2P continue to allow vehicles with residential permits to be exempt from the time restrictions (residents in buildings developed prior to 2011 are eligible for these permits).

Alongside the uniform 2P, several 15-minute (1/4P) parking bays are proposed to support deliveries, pickups and other high turnover items. These bays would be spread evenly across the precinct.

Under the Parking Management Policy, Council has a Service Permit, which allows for removalists and other trades to park for extended periods in timed restriction parking spaces. This permit will continue to be available in the precinct, and helps for example people moving in and out of apartment buildings with inadequate loading zones.

It is also recommended that temporary parking on the west side of Breese Street is removed. Residents gave feedback that on weekends this parking control leads to congestion and frustration.

These proposed changes to parking directly address issues raised during community engagement. A full list of parking changes can be found in Table 1 (below)

Proposed changes to 1-9 Breese Street

New restrictions are proposed in the carpark at 1-9 Breese Street, where parking turnover has been very low, with vehicles often not moving for weeks at a time – with cars effectively being stored in this car park. The purpose of the public car park is to enable visitors ready access to businesses, residences and community facilities. Retaining unrestricted parking in this location is not an equitable or fair use of land in the precinct.

Changing the parking restrictions in this off-street carpark will reduce the number of vehicles being stored in this location and provide more opportunities for visitors to park in the precinct.

Table 1 – Summary changes to parking as part of recommended design

Existing parking control	Proposed new parking control
2P (various)	2P 8am-8pm
Unrestricted	2P 8am-8pm
Unrestricted off street (1-9 Breese Street)	2P 8am-8pm
1p (various)	2P 8am-8pm
2p (8-6 M-F, 8-1 Sat)	2P 8am-8pm
disabled bay	disabled bay
Carshare	Carshare
Loading Zone`	Loading zone
No standing 9-6 M-F 9-1 Sat (West side of Breese Street)	Removed to allow for traffic flow.
	NEW 1/4P 8am-8pm for deliveries
Parking in the Shared Zone Area	Reduced to allow safe pedestrian crossing and increased planting

Parking changes that can be made prior to full project delivery

While the timing to deliver the full Breese St program may be some years away, many of the parking changes can be delivered in the short term, prior to capital works. This includes:

- Changing the parking controls at the 1-9 Breese Street carpark to 8am-8pm 2P parking.
- Introducing 15-minute (1/4P) parking zones to assist with deliveries, in two locations.
- Introducing additional trader parking in the precinct.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

Council is committed to reducing emissions in the community and addressing the climate emergency. Transport is a major source of emissions, so reducing the community’s reliance on private vehicle transport, particularly for local trips, is crucial.

The Moving Around Merri-bek Transport Strategy aims to reduce transport emissions in a variety of ways, including by providing infrastructure to facilitate the use of zero-emissions transport modes such as walking and riding a bike for as many people as possible.

This project will deliver safe and accessible infrastructure that will enable more people to walk and ride safely, reducing car trips. Breese Street has been identified as having poor tree canopy cover. This project will include significant increase in tree planting in the area, aiding climate resilience and reduce the urban heat island effect.

Legal and risk considerations

The project has been developed to align with the transport system objectives of the Transport Integration Act 2010, as well as the decision-making principles as they apply to the Merri-bek context. Similarly, the project takes into consideration the provisions of the Road Management Act 2004 and will continue to be guided by the legislation through the detailed design and constructions phases.

Human Rights consideration

Under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 Council is required to consider potential impacts of actions taken on fundamental human rights protected by the Charter and under the Gender Equality Act 2020 Council is required to ensure that policies, programs and services address inequality and meet the needs of people of different genders and intersectionality.

The Breese Street Masterplan is not considered to impede on any person's human rights, the provision of safer active transport will aid the right to movement for more people. Council has also commissioned an access audit of the precinct which will be used as part of the detailed design process to further improve movement in the area for people with disabilities or who have reduced movement capabilities.

4. Community consultation and engagement

Previous community engagement - overview

In November 2024 Council undertook a round of preliminary community engagement to understand how the community experienced Breese Street and what sort of improvement they wanted to see on the Street. A total of 226 people completed the survey, providing feedback on the two concept designs. Both concept designs were well received by the community. The community engagement report can be found at Attachment 1.

Traffic was the most common issue respondents raised in the preliminary engagement. This included issues such as cars idling, getting stuck on weekends due to increased traffic and cars parked on the western side of the street, and the presence of trucks and frequent construction traffic. Respondents also raised a range of parking issues.

Pedestrian and active transport challenges were also a key theme. The new crossing had made it easier to cross Breese Street, but respondents said they still struggled to cross in other locations. Other issues included narrow and footpaths, footpath quality, and lack of shade and green space. The new crossing was a positive, but respondents had become a bottleneck on weekends when vehicles struggled to pass each other with increased traffic and parking on the eastern side of Breese Street.

The most popular response by a significant margin was to increase greenery and tree planting in the precinct. Requests for greenery came in many different forms, from additional tree planting in the road to provide shade for pedestrians, to revisiting the proposed park at 1-9 Breese Street.

Requests to changes for parking was also a common theme. Suggestions included removing parking on the western side of Breese Street, which was higher than expected, introducing permitted parking, issues with loading zones and food delivery riders.

Similarly, some form of traffic calming was also suggested frequently by respondents. Items that came up regularly, issues with congestion due to parked vehicles and the slow point at the pedestrian crossing, less traffic and cars, items to slow traffic including speed bumps.

Approximately a quarter of respondents mentioned making Breese Street a one-way street. This is consistent with the advocacy work done by the Better Breese Block (A local Breese precinct advocacy group), and this percentage was higher than expected.

Lastly improving footpaths and other pedestrian improvements were frequently mentioned. Outside of improving footpaths the following items were common themes identified in the survey.

5. Officer declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and resources Implications

The design recommendations in this report are expected to be delivered with the allocated budget for the current (2025-26 financial year). Detailed design is subject to inclusion of proposed funding in the 2026-27 budget.

Construction of the Breese Street upgrades is subject to coordination and timing of the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project. The southern half of Breese Street is also due for routine resurfacing in the 2028-29 financial year. These capital works projects will be combined (and may occur after the level crossing removal).

7. Implementation

Subject to endorsement, officers will commission detailed design work for the Breese Street Masterplan. The detailed design process is estimated to take at least twelve months including required state and referral authority approvals.

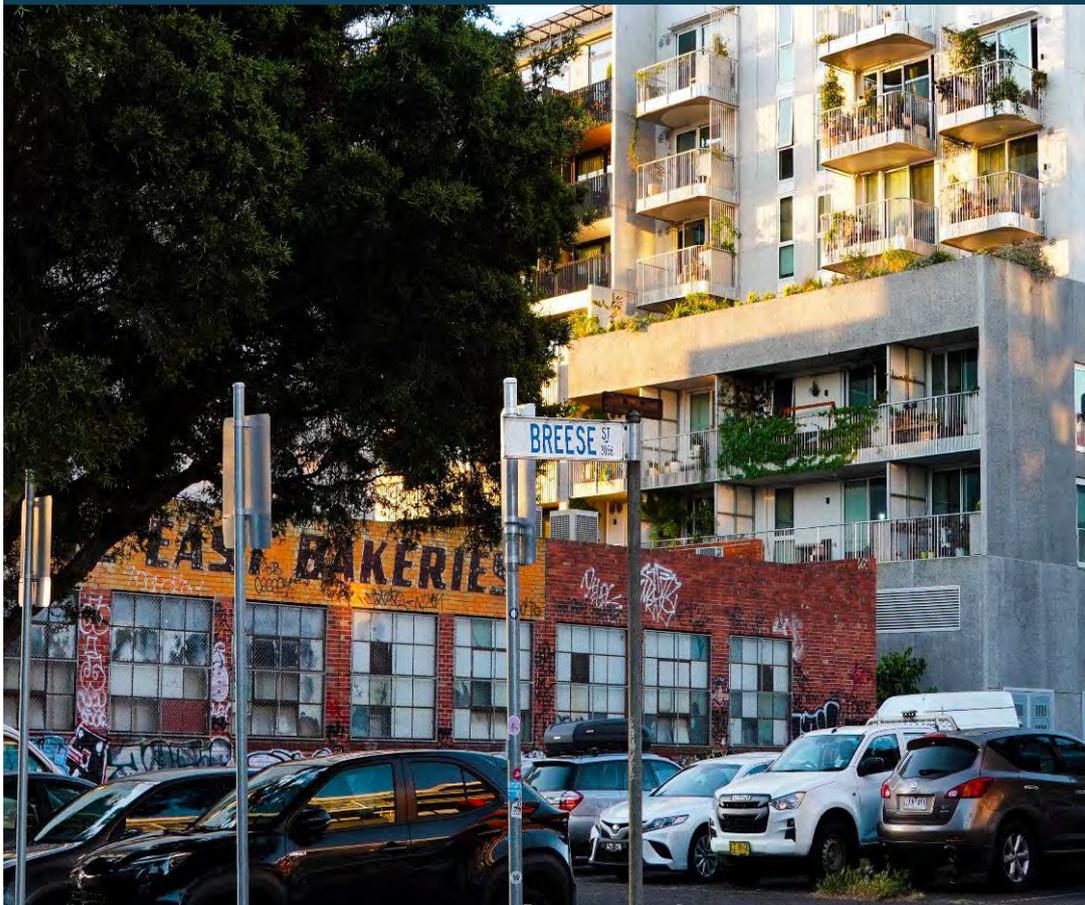
Construction may depend on staging of the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project.

Attachment/s

- | | | |
|-------------------|--|-----------|
| 1 | Breese Street Second Engagement Report | D26/77555 |
| 2 | Breese Street Preliminary Parking Plan | D26/74697 |



Breese Street Masterplan. Second Engagement Report



Executive summary

Consultation Process

Merri-bek City Council consulted with the community from 26 September to 26 October 2025 on two potential concept designs for the Breese Street Precinct. These designs were created in response to the preliminary community engagement which ran in November 2024.

We asked the community to provide feedback on the two options and indicate which option they preferred.

Platforms Used

- Online survey
- Direct mailing
- Physical advertising
- 2 pop-up sessions

Overview of Engagement



226 Responses Received



2 pop-up sessions
112 conversations



1,836 letters posted

What the community told us

- The community believed that both design options would improve the Breese Street Precinct
 - 80 per cent of respondents believed that Option 1 (One Way Southbound) would improve the precinct
 - 76 per cent of respondents believed that Option 2 (Central Shared Zone) would improve the precinct
- 75 per cent of respondents thought that Option 1 was either Very Good (49%) or Good (26%)
- 68 per cent of respondents thought that Option 2 was either Very Good (37%) or Good (31%)
- The community prefers Option 1 (One way southbound) with 54 per cent of responses indicating that this was their preferred treatment (37% of respondents preferred Option 2 (Central Shared Zone).

Introduction

Breese Street is a high-density residential area in Brunswick between the Upfield Rail Corridor and Sydney Road. Over the last ten years there has been significant residential development and investment in the area. While there is mixed land use, many of the existing commercial blocks have planning permits to develop them into multi-story apartment buildings. Due to the changing land use in this area, the existing street environment is no longer fit for purpose

Merri-bek City Council first identified this area for streetscape improvements during the 2024/25 budget cycle following a community campaign, and existing asset conditions. This project uses Council's Streets for People design methodology. Streets for People takes a holistic approach to understand how our streets function and how we can make changes to them. This ensures that the benefits are felt by all users and that it aligns with the values identified Councils Transport Strategy Moving Around Merri-bek

Council has identified five goals for this project.

Project goals



This second round of community engagement for this project ran from 26 September to 26 October with all information hosted on the Conversations Merri-bek website at conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/breese-street-streetscape-improvements. During this period two pop-up sessions were held where we spoke to 112 members of the community across the two pop-up sessions. One pop-up scheduled for 22 October was moved to 23 October due to forecasted dangerous winds.

Across these pop-up sessions, community members were directed to provide their feedback via the survey on Conversations Merri-bek, and physical copies of the survey were also provided.

Design methodology



Background and previous engagement

In November 2024 Council undertook a preliminary round of engagement where we asked the community to share their experiences using Breese Street and what sort of improvements they would like to see on the street. The community were informed that feedback gathered during this round of community consultation would be used to develop concept designs for the area, in line with our Streets for People process in the Streets for People Plan

Six questions were asked in a survey to learn more about peoples' experiences with the Breese Street Precinct.

Summary of responses

- 70 per cent of survey respondents suggested some form of greening to improve the Breese Street Precinct
- 39 per cent of respondents suggested some form of parking changes to the area
- The top issue that respondents had with the precinct was some form of traffic related challenge (75% of respondents)
 - 42 per cent of respondents mentioned too many vehicles
 - 31 per cent of respondents mentioned parking issues
 - 11 per cent of respondents mentioned rat-running
- The top infrastructure treatment suggestions were
 - 32 per cent of respondents mentioned some form of traffic calming
 - 25 per cent of respondents mentioned making Breese Street one way
 - 24 per cent of respondents mentioned improving the footpaths
 - 20 per cent of respondents mentioned changes that prioritise pedestrians
 - 20 per cent of respondents mentioned removing car parking on one side of Breese Street

Key issues identified as part of Preliminary Engagement.

Traffic issues were the most common issue respondents raised during this first community consultation. Frequently raised issues included as cars idling, getting stuck in traffic on weekends due to increased traffic and cars parked on the western side of the street, and the presence of trucks due to frequent construction.

Pedestrian and active transport challenges were also a key theme. Respondents noted that while the new crossing had made it easier to cross at that specific section of Breese Street, they still struggle to cross in other locations, and experience issues walking along the street due to the narrow footpaths, poor surface quality, and lack of shade cover while walking along the length of the street. Residents mentioned that the new crossing, though beneficial, had created a bottleneck on weekends when vehicles struggled to pass each other with increased traffic and parking on the eastern side of Breese Street.

Key Suggestions

The top suggestions for improving Breese Street were as follows:

1. More greenery and trees (70%)
2. Changes to parking (39%)
3. Traffic calming (32%)
4. Making Breese Street one way (25%)
5. Improving footpaths (24%)

The most popular response by a significant margin was to increase greenery and tree planting in the precinct. Similarly, we heard that Bulleke-Bek park is the feature of the precinct most enjoyed by respondents. Requests for greenery came in many different forms, from additional tree planting in the road to provide shade for pedestrians, to revisiting the proposed park at 1-9 Breese Street (8%).

Requests to changes for parking was also a common theme. In addition to the bottlenecking issues caused by car parking on weekends, issues were raised with regards to loading zones and food delivery riders and drivers. Suggestions for improving parking included removing parking on the western side of Breese Street (20% - a higher-than-expected percentage) and introducing permitted parking.

Similarly, some form of traffic calming was also suggested frequently by respondents.

Approximately a quarter of respondents mentioned making Breese Street a one-way street. This is consistent with the advocacy work done by the Better Breese Block - a local Breese precinct advocacy group.

Lastly, respondents asked for footpath improvements and other pedestrian upgrades. Outside of improving footpath related ideas, the following improvements were commonly raised in the survey

- More pedestrian crossings or other pedestrian improvements (20%)
- Pedestrianisation or making Breese Street a shared zone (20%). The Council project at Albert Street Brunswick was frequently mentioned as an example.
- Improving the intersection of Breese Street and Hope Street (12%), including making it safer for people to cross all of Breese, Hope and Oven Streets.
- More seating or benches (6%)

Proposed designs

Council produced 2 different concept designs to make these improvements to the Breese Street Precinct. Each design has its own unique approach to addressing community feedback and achieving project goals, though there are some proposed changes that are the same across both designs

Option 1 – South Bound One way

During the first round of engagement and conversations with key stakeholders, a one-way treatment to increase road space and calm traffic was mentioned frequently. A one-way treatment allows the road carriageway to be reduced to 3.5m which maximises on road planting space, while maintaining parking along Breese Street. A northbound option was investigated, however, due to the existing volume of traffic along Albion Street, a southbound option is preferred.

This design would allow for bicycles to travel in both directions (contraflow) due to the low traffic speeds. This type of treatment is already present extensively and successfully through Fitzroy.

The community were informed that for a southbound one-way treatment to function it is possible that additional changes to Hope Street could be required. Some of these changes include changes to how Sydney Road operates, which is under control of the Department of Transport and Planning. It is also a major tram route, and subsequently any changes will require external approvals. If this is the preferred option from the community Council will investigate and advocate to the State Government for changes.

Option 2 – Central Shared Zone

During the first round of engagement Council heard that Bulleke-bek is considered the centre of the precinct. This design options focuses on creating an area around the park that prioritises people and greenery, while having road conditions that create calmer, safer traffic movement. In a shared zone drivers must yield to people walking allowing pedestrians to cross in any direction.

The shared zone at Albert and Victoria Streets was frequently referenced as inspiration during the community engagement. During the design process several versions of shared zones were investigated, and the proposed design is a balance of pedestrian needs with the requirements for parking in the precinct.

Council also heard that having parking on both sides of the street was not working due to increased congestion, particularly on weekends. As part of this design option, Council is proposing a change to parking on one side of the street only to improve traffic flow while accommodating two-way flow of vehicles and increased planting opportunities.

Improvements to the streetscape across both design options

Both the design options feature the following improvements

- Additional greenery along Breese Street
- A Shared Zone on West Street
- Footpaths widened where possible to improve the walking environment
- One-way circuit to access the car park behind 36 Breese Street
- Removal of redundant vehicle crossings to improve the pedestrian environment
- A proposed pocket park at the end of Florence Street (to be delivered by developers)
- Additional east west crossings opportunities

Results

The following section summarises the result of the 2025 community engagement

During the community engagement council received 226 responses to the survey via our conversations Merri-bek platform. Across both community engagements we spoke to 112 community members who relayed their thoughts about the two designs that have been proposed.

Results

Both design were well received by the community, with nearly 80 per cent of respondents agreeing Option 1 “would improve the Breese Street precinct?” and 76 per cent of respondents saying the same for Option 2.

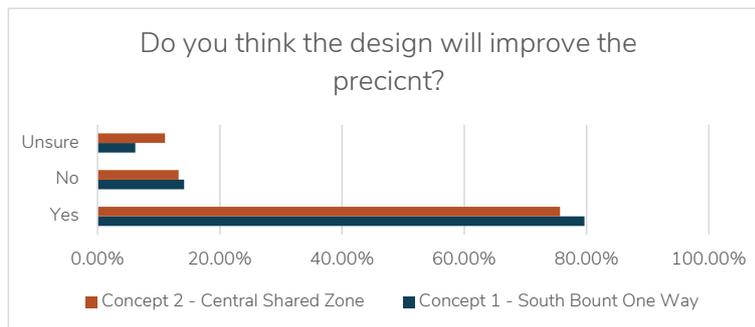


Figure 1 - Do you think this design would improve the precinct?

Respondents felt positively about both designs, with a slight preference for Option 1. Figure 2 outlines the community sentiment. 75 per cent of respondents thought that Option 1 was either Very Good (49%) or Good (26%) and 68 per cent of respondents thought that Option 2 was either Very Good (37%) or Good (31%)

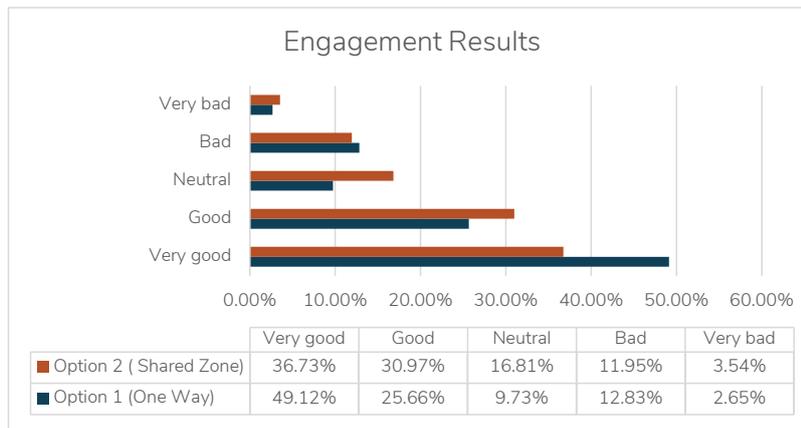


Figure 2 - How do you feel about the designs?

Lastly, when asked which was their preferred design, the community noted a preference for Option 1 – Southbound one-way. 54 per cent of respondents indicated that the preferred Option 1, and 37 per cent indicated they preferred Option 2. 5 per cent of respondents had no preference and 4 per cent were unsure of their preference.

Overall Sentiments

Both designs were positively received by the community with a majority indicating that they thought both designs would improve the precinct. Residents did raise concerns about the impact of construction and the level crossing removal project.

Option 1 was often seen as the most transformative option. Respondents appreciated its potential to reduce congestion, increase pedestrian safety, and allow the planting of more street trees and greenery. It was frequently identified as the preferred option if Council could deliver it quickly. However, concerns were raised about the potential for higher vehicle speeds, reduced access to Sydney Road and Hope Street, and complex, external approval processes that could delay the project. Some respondents indicated they would accept Option 2 instead, preferring timely delivery over waiting for external approvals.

Option 2 received more pragmatic support. Many liked that it could slow traffic, retain full vehicle access, and be delivered more easily. It was often viewed as a more achievable solution. Nonetheless, respondents worried it wouldn't be as effective as Option 1 in reducing congestion, offered less space for pedestrians and greenery, and expressed doubts on the efficacy of shared zones in Australian contexts, with cars often failing to yield to pedestrians.

Parking feedback was mixed. Some residents supported the removal of parking to make way for improvements to the street, while others believed Council should maintain existing levels of parking or supply better parking options. It was often noted that nearby apartment developments lack dedicated parking, leading to a greater reliance on street spaces.

Specific Feedback on Option 1 – One-way Southbound

Positive feedback

Respondents thought positively about this design, noting its potential for:

- Reducing congestion
- Maximising planting space for trees due to narrowed carriageway
- Increasing pedestrian safety

Comments often mentioned that the one-way option was their preferred option if it was something that Council could deliver in a timely manner.

Negative feedback

Respondents mentioned some concerns about this design, including:

- The one-way treatment potentially increasing vehicle speeds
- Decreased vehicle access to and from the precinct and Sydney Road
- Impact to traffic on Hope Street
- Project delivery timelines due to external approvals

Respondents mentioned concerns on the function of Hope Street and Sydney Road should this design go ahead. Many commented that they felt it would make it more difficult to access their properties on Breese Street via vehicles.

Although there were many comments supporting Option 1, respondents also mentioned they felt it was less likely to go ahead to delivery due to the external approvals required. Some commented that although their preference was Options 1, they would be happy to see Option 2 delivered rather than wait longer for approvals for Option 1.

Specific Feedback on Option 2 – Central Shared Zone

Positive Feedback

Respondents saw the benefits of this design, noting:

- A shared zone may work better to slow vehicles than a one-way treatment
- Maintenance of vehicle access to and from the precinct to Sydney Road and Hope Street
- It is easier to implement and deliver than Option 1

Many commentators believed that Option 2 was more likely to proceed to design and delivery in a reasonable timeframe in comparison to Option 1.

Respondents often mentioned that Option 2 provided better access for vehicles getting into and out of the precinct.

Negative Feedback

Respondents mentioned some concerns about this design which included:

- Congestion may persist without more radical changes
- Less space for pedestrians
- Less room for greening
- Shared zone isn't big enough and should be made bigger

Many of the comments indicated that they thought shared zones do not work in Australia for various reasons. Respondents noted concerns with vehicles not giving way to pedestrians, as well as issues with visibility when crossing the road.

Respondents also noted that they felt that cars didn't slow down in shared zones in Brunswick/Melbourne, and they felt that surface treatments do not provide an adequate level of protection or indication of priority for pedestrians.

It is noted that many respondents felt that Option 2 did little to address the issue of congestion and non-local traffic rat-running through the precinct.

Parking

Analysis was also undertaken to highlight when respondents mentioned parking. Like the other analysis the feedback was mixed.

Several respondents indicated that they supported removing on-street parking if it led to better tree canopy and improved traffic outcomes. Similarly, respondents stated they would support a reduction in parking to enable more walking, riding and other active transport improvements.

Respondents mentioned the need for on-street parking as some of the new apartments in this area do not provide car parking. There was a noted perception that some residents in the zero car developments were using the on-street parking.

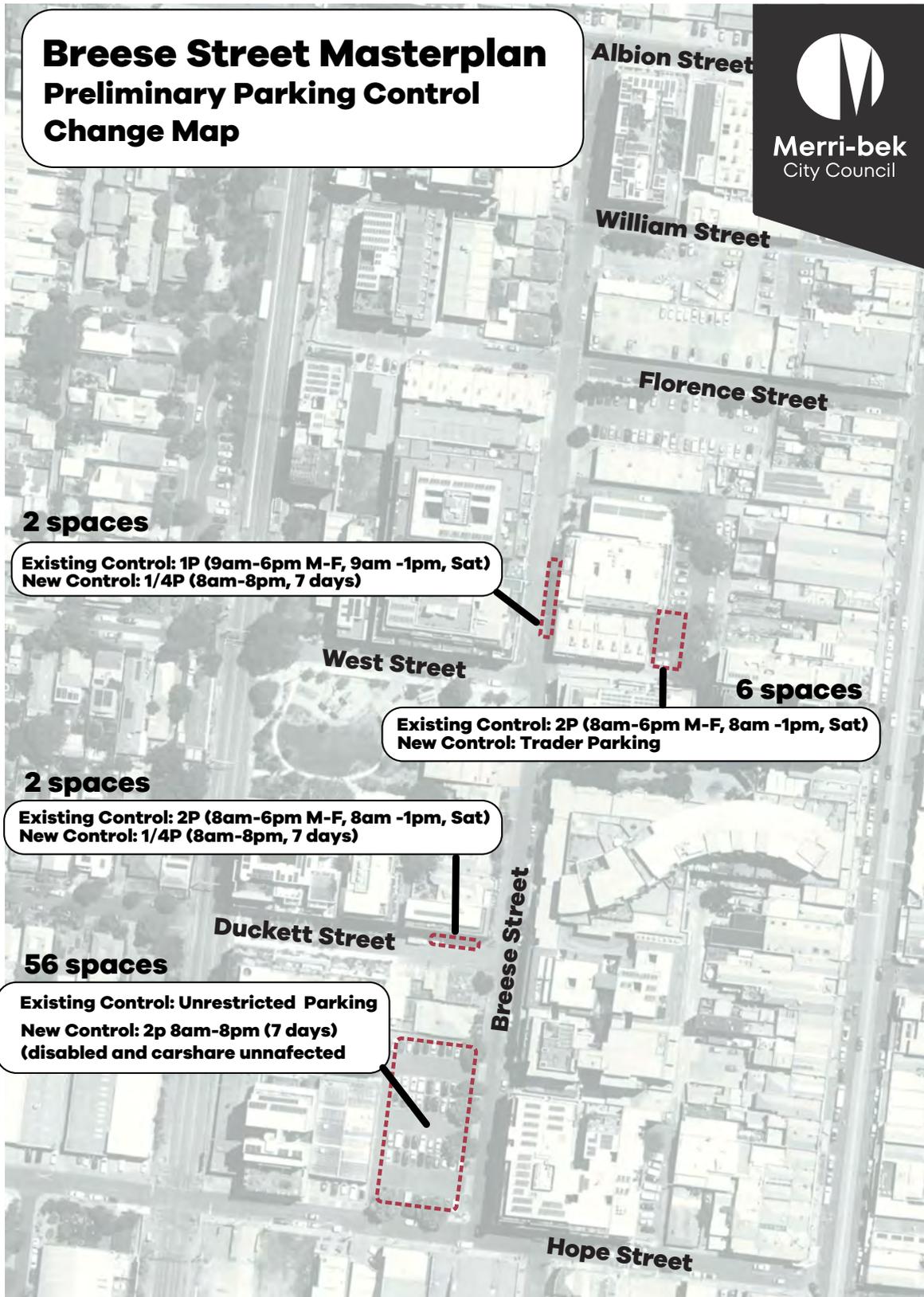
Appendix

Option 1 - South Bound One Way - Design



Option 2 – Central Shared Zone - Design





7.4 DRAFT LIBRARY STRATEGY 2026-2031

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

Cultural Development

Officer Recommendation

That Council endorses the draft Library Services Strategy 2026-2031 for public exhibition in March and April 2026.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The previous Library Services Strategy was developed in 2019 and required updating to reflect the existing needs and community aspirations for Merri-bek Libraries.

Following extensive community consultation, staff engagement, benchmarking and research in 2025, a draft Library Services Strategy 2026-2031 has been developed to guide positive outcomes at Merri-bek Libraries across the coming five years.

The draft Library Services Strategy 2026 – 2031 has four overarching aims that align with community expectations and will form the basis of annual operational plans for the library service from July 2026:

- Welcoming places: Merri-bek Libraries are welcoming, flexible and inclusive places for everyone in the community.
- Inspiring collections: Our collections inform, inspire and entertain, evolving to meet the changing needs and interests of the community
- Community connections: Programs and services provide more opportunities to create, celebrate, learn and connect at the library.
- Contemporary library service: Library staff reflect our diverse community, and are trained to provide an excellent, tailored service to the Merri-bek community.

The draft Library Services Strategy will be put on public exhibition on Conversations Merri-bek and in the libraries across March to April 2026.

Previous Council Decisions

Library Services Strategy 2019 – 13 March 2019

That Council adopts the Library Services Strategy 2019, at Attachment 1 to this report.

1. Policy Context

Merri-bek Community Vision 2024–2028

Merri-bek leads and leaves no one behind.

Merri-bek Council Plan 2024–2028

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

2. Background

The Library Services Strategy 2019 identified and delivered on the following priorities:

1. Connect – Engaging with the community to raise awareness of the breadth of library services and to create opportunities for connection, input and partnerships.
2. Curate – Tailoring resources, technology and programs to the needs and aspirations of our community.
3. Discover – Providing opportunities for creative exploration
4. Learn – Supporting lifelong learning for community and staff
5. Place – Planning and advocating for quality flexible spaces for our community to learn, discover and connect.

There was an identified need to update the library strategy to ensure that the priorities of the library remained strategic and aligned with community need.

Extensive community and staff consultation, research and benchmarking took place in 2025.

3. Issues

Community Impact

Merri-bek Libraries provides services to a proudly diverse community, with 44,908 library members in the community. Speakers of languages other than English exceed the metropolitan average, especially in the north of the city. SEIFA index shows high levels of disadvantage in the city, particularly in the north. AECD data shows improvement in school readiness, but there is still work to do here. Merri-bek has a higher than average number of lone person households and renters.

An average of 49 people visit a Merri-bek Library each hour that they are open.

Merri-bek Libraries are in the top ten libraries in the state for:

- Staffed opening hours per branch
- Active borrowers
- Total number of collection items

Library Services Strategy 2019

The Library Services Strategy 2019 set out five key priorities, and the following actions were implemented:

Priority	Outcomes
Connect	Dedicated programming delivered for and with LGBTIQ+ community members, people living with a disability, First Nations people and young people. Ongoing late night library hours and programming at Glenroy Library. Community led events such as chess club, community jigsaws and craft clubs established. Justices of the Peace at libraries. Library Social Worker Program introduced to connect in need community members to services. A workforce more reflective of our diverse community.

Priority	Outcomes
Curate	<p>Programming Framework implemented.</p> <p>New Library Management system, self-serve kiosks and Library app introduced.</p> <p>More digital and streaming items available for loan.</p> <p>Library of Things introduced.</p> <p>Ganbo marra, First Nations collection established.</p> <p>Bookshop style arrangement of Non-Fiction implemented.</p>
Discover	<p>MakerSpaces introduced at Brunswick, Coburg and Glenroy Libraries.</p> <p>Collaboration with other areas of Council to deliver large-scale events at libraries.</p>
Learn	<p>Responsive program of digital support offered at the libraries.</p> <p>More multi-cultural storytimes introduced.</p>
Place	<p>Increased opening hours in response to community need.</p> <p>New Glenroy Library opened in the Glenroy Community Hub.</p> <p>Coburg Library and Piazza planned.</p> <p>Planning for Brunswick, Campbell-Turnbull and Fawkner Libraries to be renovated.</p> <p>Facility upgrades to improve safety and amenity.</p>

Library Services Strategy 2026–2031

In addition to industry benchmarking, the Library Services Strategy 2026–2031 responds directly to community and staff engagement undertaken across the past year. It outlines a number of strategic goals. See draft Library Services Strategy attached.

What we heard...	What we will deliver
<p>Libraries need flexible physical spaces to support a range of different uses.</p>	<p>New Coburg Library and Piazza.</p> <p>Program of library refurbishment to increase amenity, access to study space and support programming at Brunswick, Campbell-Turnbull and Fawkner Libraries.</p>
<p>Physical collections are still very important.</p> <p>Strong support for borrowing non-book items (Library of Things).</p> <p>Demand for digital collections continues to grow.</p>	<p>An exciting Library of Things.</p> <p>News about all the great library collections and how to best use them.</p> <p>Inspiring digital and physical collections.</p> <p>Increased digital help opportunities at the library.</p>
<p>Library programs are popular and necessary.</p>	<p>An annual large-scale celebration to bring the community together.</p> <p>Programs that support social cohesion, social connection and build a sense of community belonging.</p> <p>Range of programs designed specifically for and with our priority cohorts;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders - Migrant, refugee, and faith communities - People with disability - Women, girls, and gender diverse

What we heard...	What we will deliver
	- LGBTIQ+ communities
<p>Strong support for libraries to be open more on evenings and weekends.</p> <p>Library staff are valued.</p> <p>Library Social Worker Program is valued.</p>	<p>Opening hours reflect community expectations.</p> <p>The best possible service and support provided by skilled library staff.</p> <p>An enhanced Library Social Work Program to support vulnerable community members.</p>

The Library Services Strategy will be supported by detailed annual operational plans that advance the strategic goals as outlined above.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

Library collections include relevant print material and have been enhanced through partnership with the sustainability team to introduce environment positive collection items such as portable induction cooktops for loan. Library redevelopments will include best practice and innovative environmentally sustainable design initiatives to ensure these spaces are more resilient to the impacts of climate change and more comfortable for occupants.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Recent library community engagement that has informed this strategy includes consultation with Merri-bek's Human Rights priority groups to ensure that diverse voices are heard in the development library strategies and policies. These groups include:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Migrant, Refugee and Faith Communities
- People with Disability
- Women, Girls and Gender Diverse Communities
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Gender Diverse, Intersex, Queer and Asexual and Aromantic (LGBTIQ+) communities

4. Community consultation and engagement

- A Gender Equity Impact Assessment was completed in April 2025.
- Library staff engagement took place between 12 May – 15 June 2025 and included digital engagement through Conversations Merri-bek, in-person workshops, and a presentation at the staff training day.
- Community engagement took place between 1 July – 12 August 2025, including digital engagement through Conversations Merri-bek, pop-ups at community locations, focus group sessions with cohorts not usually reached, and activities at the libraries.
- There were over 520 responses to the survey online and at in-person events, including;
 - 84 people from the LGBTIQ+ Community
 - 75 people living with or caring for someone with a disability
 - Wide range of language groups were engaged (Arabic, Greek, Nepali, Turkish, Persian, Dari, Farsi, Chinese, Urdu, Vietnamese and Bengali communities)

- Written submissions received in community languages (Turkish, Farsi)
- 80 Children contributed their thoughts about the library at the Children’s Forum
- 100+ post it notes drawn by children in the libraries
- A broad range of age groups were consulted, including 65+ (31%), 26-34 (23%) and 35-44 (18%)
- First Nations communities through the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation.

Affected persons rights and interests

Before making a decision that affects a person’s rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views.

Affected persons include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, migrant, refugee, and faith communities, people with a disability, women, girls, and gender diverse people, and LGBTIQ+ communities, and general community members including young people and the aged, who were consulted extensively on the creation of this strategy.

Communications

Pending endorsement, the draft Library Services Strategy 2026–2031 will be on public exhibition in March – April 2026, inviting community feedback. A communications plan to promote this is in place.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

In developing this Strategy serious consideration has been given to leveraging opportunities for collaboration and efficiencies and will largely be funded by shifting existing resources to areas of identified need.

Library redevelopments will be funded through the Capital Works budget. Planning for major new developments will include planning for any potential new service delivery models.

7. Implementation

Pending endorsement, the draft Library Services Strategy 2026–2031 will be on public exhibition in March – April 2026, inviting community feedback.

Following public exhibition, the final Library Services Strategy will return to Council to request endorsement in May 2026.

Attachment/s

- 1 [↕](#) Library Services - Draft Library Strategy 2026-2031 D26/95710



Mayor's Foreward

Introduction

This strategy will;

- describe the environment in which Merri-bek Libraries is operating, locally and at a broader level
- outline the community we serve
- celebrate achievements of the Library Strategy 2019
- define how we have engaged with the community
- reflect what we have heard from the community
- commit to acting on what we have heard from the community
- set a direction that ensures the Merri-bek community has a contemporary library service offering sustainable services and programs in welcoming spaces

Victorian Public Libraries

Victorian Public Libraries are constantly evolving. Providing access to information, shared resources and shared spaces, public libraries are one of very few locations where you can access free loans, services and space. Whether you're seeking answers to a specific question, a place to learn, or simply somewhere to spend time without financial pressure, your local library is here for you.

Across Victoria, public libraries are navigating reduced state government funding at the same time community demand for services, collections, and programs continues to grow. During a cost-of-living crisis, free services, such as the local library can help make ends meet.

As a library user, you are in good company - almost 1/3 of all Victorians are library members and many non-members visit libraries and use their services and programs.

A rise in loneliness has emphasised the role of the library as a facilitator of community connection. There is more social programming in libraries such as Conversation and Craft Clubs, late night opening hours and partnerships such as Chatty Café, increasing opportunities for connection in the library.

Increased anti-social behaviour has impacted public libraries, creating a challenge to ensure that these loved spaces remain safe for community and staff. Libraries are implementing interventions including security guards, abolishing fines and increasing opportunities for building connections with others to address this social change.

As lives get busier, there is increased demand for longer library opening hours, libraries across the state are meeting this demand through increased operating hours, digital collections available 24/7, new libraries, lockers for item collection outside of operating hours and unstaffed access to make accessing the library more convenient.

With government services moving towards a digital-first delivery model and the rise of AI, libraries are experiencing increased demand for digital help, which they are addressing with digital literacy programming, delivered by library staff and in partnership with specialist organisations and referral to community support organisations.

Early Literacy continues to be a focus for public libraries, even after the introduction of free 3 year old kinder, programs such as Rhyme Time and Storytime continue to be in high demand, providing early literacy education for our youngest community members and support for parents and carers as their child's first teacher.

The Merri-bek Community

Merri-bek Libraries provides services to a proudly diverse community;

Total population 186, 534, with 44,908 library members

Speakers of languages other than English exceed the metropolitan average, especially in the north of the city.

SEIFA index shows high levels of disadvantage in the city, particularly in the north.

AECD data shows improvement in school readiness, but there is still work to do here.

An average of 49 people visit a Merri-bek Library each hour that they are open

Merri-bek has a higher than average number of lone person households and renters

Infographics

 Alignment

Sustainable Development Goals

These goals, developed as part of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), advocates for libraries to be recognised as essential partners for inclusive, sustainable development, through their work to provide meaningful access to information for all.

Merri-bek Libraries will aim to align with these goals and identify this work in our action planning.


Merri-bek Council Plan

Merri-bek Libraries will deliver against the Council Plan in the following areas;

- *Care for nature and climate resilience*
 - Supporting and encouraging the local community efforts to fight climate change
- *Healthy and inclusive communities*
 - Providing accessible spaces, facilities and programs that support community health and safety
 - Providing affordable activities and spaces for youth, seniors and families to participate and feel independent
 - Supporting local food initiatives to increase access to healthy, affordable food
- *Beautiful and liveable city*
 - Keeping public places, spaces and areas well-maintained, safe and inviting for community use
- *Thriving economy and culture*
 - Promoting and supporting local art, festivals, and events celebrating our community's diversity

Merri-bek Libraries

The Library Services Strategy 2019 set out 5 Key Priorities, and the following actions were implemented.

1. Connect

- Dedicated programming delivered for and with LGBTIQ+ community members, people living with a disability, First Nations people and young people
- Ongoing late night library hours and programming at Glenroy Library
- Community led events such as chess club, community jigsaws and craft clubs established
- Justices of the Peace at libraries
- Library Social Worker Program introduced to connect in need community members to services
- A workforce more reflective of our diverse community

2. Curate

- Programming Framework implemented
- New Library Management system, self-serve kiosks and Library app introduced
- More digital and streaming items available for loan
- Library of Things introduced
- Ganbo marra, First Nations collection established
- Bookshop style arrangement of Non-Fiction implemented

3. Discover

- MakerSpaces introduced at Brunswick, Coburg and Glenroy Libraries
- Collaboration with other areas of Council to deliver large-scale events at libraries

4. Learn

- Responsive program of digital support offered at the libraries
- More multi-cultural storytimes introduced

5. Place

- Increased opening hours in response to community need
- New Glenroy Library opened in the Glenroy Community Hub
- Coburg Library and Piazza planned
- Planning for Brunswick, Campbell-Turnbull and Fawkner Libraries to be renovated
- Facility upgrades to improve safety and amenity

Merri-bek Libraries over the years.

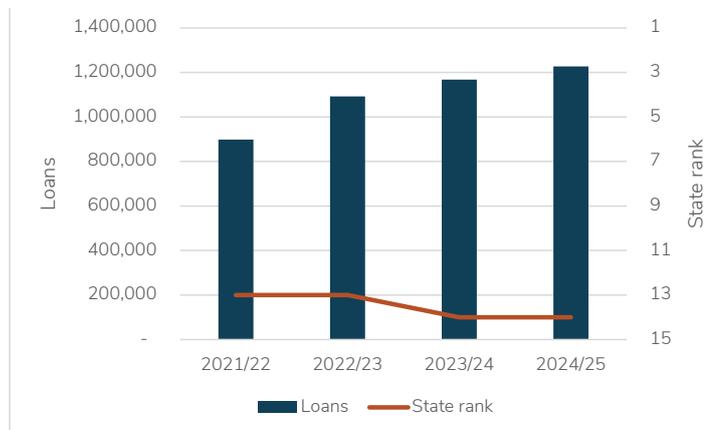
Visits

In a turnaround since the last library strategy, visits to Merri-bek Libraries are growing. Ensuring that we have buildings which can support this demand is a priority.



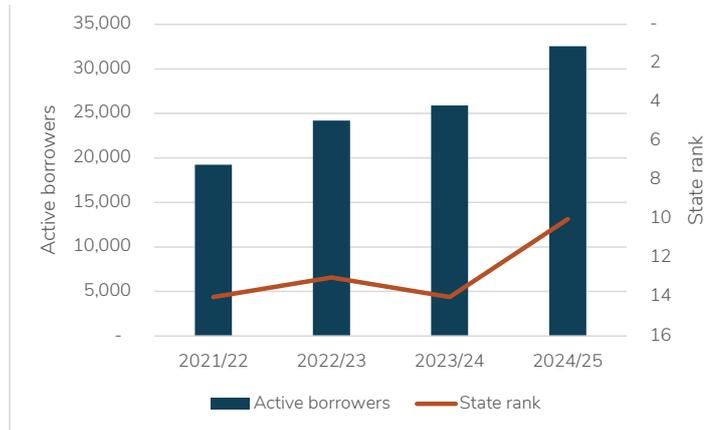
Loans

You told us that collections are important to you, and the numbers support this. We will be curating relevant and innovative collections to meet this demand.



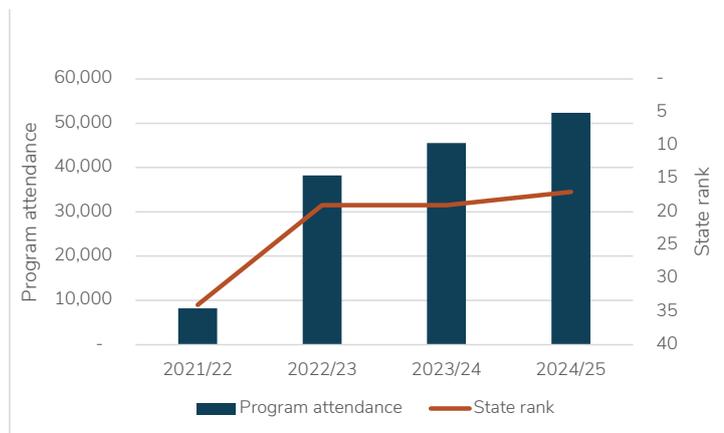
Active Borrowers

Merri-bek library members use of collections makes them one of the most active borrowing cohorts in the state. We will maintain collections which attract and support high usage.



Program Attendance

Attendance at library programs in Merri-bek has exceeded pre-pandemic numbers. We will target these programs so that they deliver the best value for the community and attendance numbers are maintained.



Community Engagement

Significant Community Engagement was undertaken to inform this new Library Strategy.

There were over 520 responses to the survey online and at in-person events, including;

- 84 people from the LGBTIQ+ Community
- 75 people living with or caring for someone with a disability
- Representation from a range of language groups
- Consultation with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Aboriginal Corporation

Over 100 people joined the online conversation

80 Children contributed their thoughts about the library at the Children's Forum

More than 100 Post-it notes were contributed by children in the libraries

Infographic

We are guided by the **Merri-bek Community Vision**

Merri-bek leads, and leaves no one behind.

- *We are a welcoming, safe and thriving community*
- *We are sustainable, and our environment is respected*
- *Our community is engaged and informed*
- *Our streets are full of life*

One community, proudly diverse.

Merri-bek Libraries

A contemporary library offering sustainable services and programs in welcoming spaces

What we heard	What we will deliver
Welcoming places : Merri-bek Libraries are welcoming, flexible and inclusive places for everyone in the community.	
Libraries need flexible physical spaces to support a range of different uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Coburg Library and Piazza • Program of library refurbishment to increase amenity, access to study space and support programming at Brunswick, Campbell-Turnbull and Fawkner Libraries
Inspiring collections : Our collections inform, inspire and entertain, evolving to meet the changing needs and interests of the community	
Physical collections are still very important. Strong support for borrowing non-book items (Library of Things). Demand for digital collections continues to grow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An exciting Library of Things • News about all the great library collections and how to best use them • Inspiring digital and physical collections • Increased digital help opportunities at the library
Community connections : Programs and services provide more opportunities to create, celebrate, learn and connect at the library.	
Library programs are popular and necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An annual large-scale celebration to bring the community together • Programs that support social cohesion, social connection and build a sense of community belonging • Range of programs designed specifically for and with our priority cohorts; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders - Migrant, refugee, and faith communities - People with disability - Women, girls, and gender diverse - LGBTIQ+ communities
Contemporary library service : Library staff reflect our diverse community, and are trained to provide an excellent, tailored service to the Merri-bek community	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong support for libraries to be open more on evenings and weekends • Library staff are valued • Library Social Worker Program is valued 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening hours reflect community expectations • The best possible service and support provided by skilled library staff • An enhanced Library Social Work Program to support vulnerable community members

7.5 ART AND HISTORY AT THE BRUNSWICK TOWN HALL

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

Cultural Development

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes that expansion of the Brunswick Library will be considered in 2027, including possible relocation of town hall customer service functions to within the library.
2. Notes that any potential expansion of the Counihan Gallery will occur following the library redevelopment.
3. Notes that a future report will be presented to Council in 2027 that considers how through the Library renewal, future Counihan Gallery expansion or a public art outcome, Council could formally recognise and acknowledge local activists and artists who have made a significant contribution to Brunswick over time
4. Endorses the following activations of the Brunswick Town Hall that can be achieved within current resources and will commence in 2026:
 - a) A public art commission to create a welcoming appearance for the Town Hall.
 - b) Increased marketing of the Brunswick Town Hall as a venue for hire.
 - c) Improvements to the amenity of the foyer.
 - d) Provision of time-limited artist residencies in offices.
5. Endorses further activation of Brunswick Town Hall through:
 - a) Creation of new pop-up exhibition spaces and programming in the Brunswick Town Hall foyer.
 - b) Performing artists residency in the town hall.
6. Refers the financial implications of this report of up to \$73,000, year 1 and up to \$32,000 ongoing, to the 2026-2030 budget process for consideration.

REPORT

Executive Summary

Brunswick Town Hall has the potential for increased usage, especially considering its central location and vital services which include Brunswick Library, Counihan Gallery and Council Customer Service.

This report proposes low-key activation opportunities to increase awareness and usage of the building, including creating a welcoming entrance, providing much-needed artists' spaces, and improving the look and amenity of the main foyer. Much of the work can be delivered within operational budgets.

Planning to increase community spaces at Brunswick Library and co-locate the Council Customer Service will begin in 2027 as part of planning for capital works in subsequent years; an expansion of the Counihan Gallery will be explored once the critical library project is established. Increased opportunities to celebrate heritage will be investigated as part of the planning for the Brunswick Library works.

Previous Council Decisions

Notice of Motion - Art and history at the Brunswick Town Hall – 10 July 2024

That Council:

1. *Calls for a report into the best use of the Brunswick Town Hall and as part of the report considers the following:*
 - *Expanding the Counihan Gallery to include a permanent exhibition of the Merribek Art Collection which focus on the work of Noel Counihan and themes associated with Brunswick.*
 - *Interpreting the history of Brunswick in collaboration with the Brunswick Historical Society the permanent exhibition spaces can display art and objects which interpret the history of the suburb, including the historical council chambers and multimedia displays.*
 - *That consideration be given to expanding the Library and community usages, which include study spaces, meeting rooms, information and customer service desk and other community spaces.*
 - *That consideration also be given to small scale commercial operations and, or social enterprises, which can contribute to the vision and function of the Brunswick Town Hall.*
2. *Gives recognition to the role of prominent local activists Vic Little and Vida Little from the Brunswick Progress Association for their role in preventing the demolition of and saving of the Brunswick Mechanics Institute in 1971 and the Brunswick Town Hall in 1973.*
3. *Calls for a report that considers how Council could formally recognise and acknowledge the Littles and the many other local activists and artists who have made a significant contribution to Brunswick over time.*

1. Policy Context

- Council Plan 2025-2029, Theme 3: Beautiful and liveable city; and Theme 4: Thriving economy and culture
- 2023-2030 Arts and Culture Strategy
- Library Services Strategy 2019

2. Background

Current use of the Brunswick Town Hall

Brunswick Town Hall is currently occupied by the Counihan Gallery, Customer Service and five small community organisations.

There are currently 15 empty office spaces in the building, both in the heritage wing and in the 'MCEC' area.

Visitation to the Counihan Gallery and Customer Service is fairly low with around 45-60 people attending the Town Hall daily.

Brunswick Library is well utilised in contrast with the rest of the facility. Located in the old dance hall adjacent to the Brunswick Town Hall, the library is open 7 days a week and averages 580 visitors per day.

The entrance to Brunswick Library is via Dawson Street or Saxon Lane, resulting in no visibility of the library from Sydney Road.

The façade of the colonial building is unwelcoming and can be intimidating, with unclear entry points due to cluttered signage and aging infrastructure. Once inside, the vast foyer lacks clear way finding.

For further historical information about the history of use of the Brunswick Town Hall, please see **Attachment 1**.

3. Issues

Activation of town hall spaces

There is significant unmet and ongoing need for affordable spaces for artists to work within the Merri-bek community, some of which could be met through a program of activations at the Brunswick Town Hall.

Activation and visitation will be boosted by undertaking a number of projects (achievable within current resources) including:

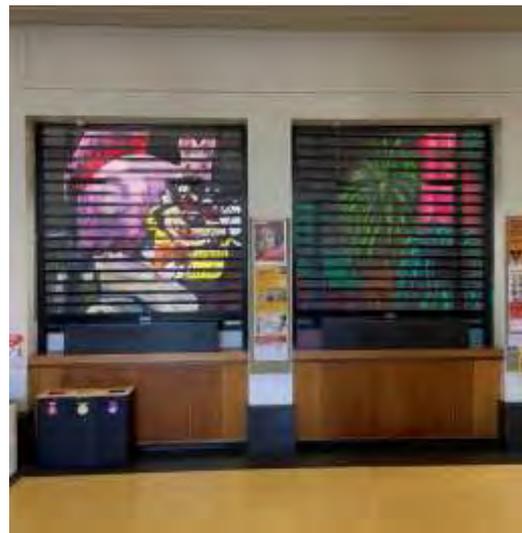
- Creating a contemporary and welcoming entrance for the Town Hall to increase casual visitation and curiosity through the installation of public art on the façade and improving wayfinding.
- Improving the amenity of the foyer by improving layout, wayfinding and minor upgrades.
- Providing time-limited artists' residencies in office spaces, related to Counihan Gallery or Library programming.
- Increasing marketing of the Brunswick Town Hall as a venue for hire for the creative industries.

With additional resources, activations could include:

- Create a welcoming foyer by installing new exhibition spaces and programming to increase visitation and engagement. This could be achieved by installing a new hanging space in the form of moveable walls, a new screen for video works, and increased exhibitions in the gallery's existing window spaces.
- Performing artists residency in the town hall.
- Upgrade town hall with sound, lighting and blackout infrastructure to increase opportunities for use by artists (out of scope for this report).
- Increase facilities for Merri-bek staff to use the Town Hall offices as a hot desking location (out of scope for this report).
- The total additional budget required to realise these activations and upgrades would be up to \$73,000 (see Financial and Resource Implications).

The proposed activations reference other highly successful local government approaches including Inner West Council's Creative Town Halls program, Paramatta Council's Artists Studios Program and Council's past successful artistic residency programs during Covid, Making Spaces. The activations would also further enhance Council's current trial for artists to access community spaces at not for profit rates.

Examples of outdoor and foyer activation



Expansion of the Counihan Gallery

Some minor works are proposed to the Brunswick Town Hall foyer (current Customer Service area) to increase display space in order to create a more inviting and welcoming entry.

A further expansion of the Counihan Gallery could be considered and costed following the library redevelopment which is exploring the integration of customer service into the library.

Presentation of History of Brunswick

Rather than the delivery of a museum, the Brunswick Community History Group are divesting of objects to focus on archiving photographs and telling social histories. Council will continue to explore opportunities to collaborate on heritage and history outcomes for the Brunswick Town Hall.

There is an existing local history room within the Brunswick Library that will be in scope for the redevelopment project.

Opportunities to develop flexible, innovative local history and heritage displays within the Brunswick Library and Town Hall will be scoped as part of the Brunswick Library redevelopment.

Library Redevelopment

Brunswick Library has \$1.75 million allocated from the capital works budget in the 2027/2028 & 2028/2029 financial years for works at the Brunswick Library. Note the budget is modest, requiring a prioritisation of works as part of the planning process.

Recognition of Vic and Vida Little and/or other local activists and artists

Currently, Counihan Gallery does show exhibitions related to this topic, including promoting the work of Noel Counihan and other artists and activists.

Further consideration for this item will be given during the Brunswick Library and/or future Counihan Gallery expansion as a public art outcome.

Community impact

Brunswick Town Hall is a significant building in Merri-bek and making it more inviting and better utilised would have positive impact on the community, particularly the creative and artistic community.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

There are no climate emergency implications associated with this report.

Economic sustainability implications

Increasing community access to the Brunswick Town Hall will enable Merri-bek's significant creative community to create and present work within the municipality, leading to increased employment and economic impact on the surrounding area.

Legal and risk considerations

Any hirers or users of the Brunswick Town Hall would be required to have their own Public Liability Insurance.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. Key sections in the Charter that are relevant to this report are the right to freedom of expression.

4. Community consultation and engagement

As the proposal is a temporary activation of the Brunswick Town Hall, with some minor upgrade works, community engagement is not required.

Past Community Engagement

Extensive community engagement was completed through the Arts and Culture Strategy process in 2023 to inform the need for increased art making and presenting spaces in the municipality. A strong interest in time-limited residencies and other professional development opportunities was also clear.

Future Community Engagement

Full community engagement would be undertaken as part of the library expansion project.

Staff engagement

Property, Facilities, Arts and Culture, Libraries, Place Activation, Customer Service Units have been engaged on the proposed activations.

Affected persons rights and interests

Before making a decision that affects a person's rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views.

Affected persons include general community members, Council service users and artists.

Communications

The small scale activations will be communicated through Council's communications channels. The Brunswick Library community consultation will include a communications plan.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30
Option: Moveable gallery walls for foyer				
Programming and operations	8000	8000	8000	8000
Capital Expenditure	15000	0	0	0
	23000	8000	8000	8000
Option: Projector screen for foyer				
Programming and operations	12000	12000	12000	12000
Capital Expenditure	26000	0	0	0
	38000	12000	12000	12000
Option: Performing arts residency				
Staffing costs	12000	12000	12000	12000

Additional budget of up to \$73,000 would be needed to realise the proposed upgrades and activations of the Brunswick Town Hall. Upon endorsement by Council, this would be referred to the 2026/2027 budget process.

7. Implementation

March 2026 – public art commission and wayfinding project commences.

May 2026 – first round of time-limited artists residencies commences.

July 2026 – capital works and activation commence dependent on budget allocation.

Attachment/s

- 1 [↓](#) Arts and Culture - History of the Brunswick Town Hall Summary 2026 D26/71956

History of the Brunswick Town Hall

Year	Uses
1876	Brunswick Town Hall built.
1900s	BTH expanded gradually throughout the early-mid 1900s, including addition of theatre.
1974	A Council initiative to demolish and rebuild the Brunswick Town Hall in more modern style defeated through community activism.
1986	National Trust heritage lists 19th Century parts of the building.
1992	Library is opened on existing site. The rest of the Town Hall building is also refurbished and the two buildings immediately to the south along Sydney Road are incorporated into the existing building layout.
1994	Amalgamation of Councils into Moreland; BTH becomes secondary Council offices for municipality.
2000	Moreland Community Enterprise Centre (MCEC) established to assist the development of local businesses and employment. Business plans and a tenancy stakeholder committee was active until 2010.
2013	Limited library upgrade to introduce new spaces and technology, cosmetic makeover (\$2M)
2013	<p>ILM and Master planning undertaken to see the revitalisation of the Brunswick Town Hall and Library in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the identity of the precinct • Providing additional usable community space to meet previously unmet demand • Better utilising the asset of the Town Hall <p>The Brunswick Civic & Cultural Hub feasibility project considers the future of the precinct surrounding the Brunswick Town Hall and Library complex, in particular a selection of key sites in close proximity to the Town Hall. The report proposed and costed a number of initiatives, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend Library to include Atrium, extend through staff rooms to open up Sydney Road street frontage for library, and introduce new function and meeting rooms to meet growing size and needs of community (<i>unrealised</i>). • Introduce café fronting Sydney Road. • Extend Counihan Gallery to have a street frontage. • Streetscape works and other cosmetic improvements. • Undertake planning to reactivate MCEC which had very low tenancy (<i>unrealised</i>).
2018	Saxon Lane parklet established.
2019	Brunswick Town Hall & Mechanics Institute Forecourts upgrade. Counihan Gallery extended to include street frontage.

7.6 RAMADAN NIGHTS AT BONWICK STREET FAWKNER

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

Community Wellbeing

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the feasibility assessment and benchmarking of comparable Ramadan events undertaken as part of investigating the establishment of a 'Ramadan Nights' event in Bonwick Street Fawkner (Attachment 1).
2. Supports the delivery of a pilot Ramadan community festival program in 2026/27 as a community-led event, with the service delivery selection to be determined through an expression of interest process in July 2026.
3. Requests officers to assess the feasibility of waiving applicable Council permit fees and charges associated with the event.
4. Refers \$50,000 to support delivery of a community-led Ramadan festival in 2027 to the 2026/27 Council budget process for consideration.

REPORT

Executive Summary

This report responds to Council's 12 November 2025 resolution (Item 8.2) to investigate the feasibility of establishing a Ramadan Nights event in Fawkner, including site suitability, delivery requirements, engagement opportunities and funding options.

Benchmarking of comparable events across Melbourne and Sydney demonstrates that large-scale, multi-night street closures require significant financial investment, extensive traffic management and substantial operational resourcing. Given Bonwick Street's narrow road reserve, high parking demand and residential interface, this model is not viable.

Community-led activations delivered within defined sites or venues present a more proportionate and financially sustainable approach. This model reduces traffic and amenity impacts, manages risk more effectively, and allows Council to adopt an enabling, rather than lead, role.

Officers recommend a pilot community-led Ramadan activation in February-March 2027, selected by an Expression of Interest process in July 2026, and supported by \$50,000 seed funding (subject to consideration through the 2026/27 budget process). Council would provide permit coordination and officer support and waive Council permit fees.

The pilot would be evaluated with findings informing future consideration for an ongoing annual activation.

This approach enables cultural celebration and social cohesion outcomes while maintaining financial sustainability and managing operational risk.

Previous Council Decisions

Notice of Motion - Ramadan nights @ Bonwick Street, Fawkner 2026 – 12 November 2025

That Council:

1. *Receives a future report investigating the establishment of a 'Ramadan Nights' event, that outlines operational, financial and logistical requirements for delivery including:*
 - a) *Considerations for holding this event on an annual basis from 2027 as a multicultural community celebration.*
 - b) *Assesses the suitability of hosting the event in Bonwick Street, Fawkner during the month of Ramadan.*
 - c) *Outlines engagement considerations and opportunities to include Muslim Women's Council Victoria, local business owners, restaurants, and community groups to collaboratively plan and deliver the event in a way that celebrates cultural diversity and strengthens social cohesion.*
 - d) *Identify external funding opportunities, including relevant State and Federal Government multicultural and community event grants, to support event delivery.*

1. Policy Context

- Merri-bek Community Vision – supports a welcoming and proudly diverse city.
- Council Plan 2025– 2029 – commits to strengthening inclusion, supporting culturally diverse communities, and delivering events that build social connection and community pride.
- Human Rights Policy 2016 - 2026 – guides Council's role in ensuring equitable participation, cultural safety, and respect for community diversity.
- Social Cohesion Plan 2021 - 2025 – focuses on belonging, reducing discrimination, and activating shared community spaces to encourage positive cross-cultural connection.

2. Background

Since 2024, businesses on West Street have been running a Ramadan Nights activation Hadfield. The activation is popular with community and well attended, indicating an appetite for such events within the community. Through permitting and supporting the event, Council has noted the importance of local engagement, traffic planning and compliance when arranging long, large-scale community events in our shopping strips.

Ramadan in 2027 occurs from the evening of Sunday 7 February through Monday 8 March, subject to moonsighting; planning now for next year enables a realistic lead-time for budgeting, engagement, permits and sponsorships.

3. Issues

Benchmarking findings

Based on the findings of the benchmarking activities (see overview of the events considered in Attachment 1), officers recommend that Council allocate \$50,000 in 2026/27 to support a pilot community-led event (see Financial and Resources Implications below).

Council's role would be to enable delivery through permits, coordination, marketing and risk management, with a community organisation leading planning and delivery. The pilot would be evaluated, and the findings would inform decision-making about future community-led cultural events including further Ramadan celebrations.

A multi-night, street-based event on Bonwick Street is a challenging model for event delivery. The street is narrow, parking demand is high, and the interface includes both shops and nearby homes, factors that make repeated road closures difficult and increase risks for access, safety and amenity. A contained venue model is more suitable and aligns with Merri-bek's place activation approach, as well as comparable low-infrastructure models such as Moonee Valley's Eid al-Adha event at Djerring Flemington Hub.

A community-led model will enable local cultural groups, traders and organisations to create an event in line with community expectations and desires. It supports local ownership and participation and is a cost-effective approach for a pilot event.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

The proposed event has significant climate and environmental implications, including energy and emissions impacts, waste generation, water use, transport emissions, single-use plastics, and heightened vulnerability to extreme weather disruptions.

Economic sustainability implications

An event attracting people to a particular location such as Bonwick Street, or to Merri-bek, will benefit local businesses that are able to cater to those visitors. A Ramadan festival represents an opportunity for local cultural groups and organisations to collaborate with traders on an event that will showcase and draw visitation to the local area.

Legal and risk considerations

- **Traffic and parking pressure**

Mitigation: keep the event footprint compact; use traffic controllers; use staged and time-limited closures only where needed; notify residents in advance; promote satellite parking and public transport; ensure appropriate traffic management plans and permits are in place.

- **Noise and amenity (including late-night impacts)**

Mitigation: appropriate venue or location selected; limit amplified sound and avoid high-volume PA; use acoustic or low-impact programming; schedule activities to allow breaks around prayer times; ensure noise management and permits are in place.

- **Public safety and compliance**

Mitigation: require stallholder briefings and written conditions; complete onsite compliance checks; document emergency access routes; apply strict food safety, gas and electrical requirements; include first aid and a lost child procedure; ensure permits are in place.

- **Crowd management**

Mitigation: space stalls to avoid pinch points; use clear wayfinding and entry/exit points; plan for overflow capacity using a nearby relief space.

- **Reputation and cultural integrity**

Mitigation: co-design with relevant community partners, organisations and traders; ensure programming reflects Ramadan values; and avoid commercialised approaches.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

4. Community consultation and engagement

In developing the expression of interest Council will undertake a targeted consultation with the diverse Muslim population groups and organisations in Merri-bek.

Bonwick Street traders do not have formal trader association at present.

Affected persons rights and interests

Before making a decision that affects a person's rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views.

Communications

Council will work with communications to ensure key stakeholders are consulted and invited to consider the expression of interest.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

This paper requests that \$50,000 be allocated to support delivery of a community-led Ramadan festival in 2027 to the 2026/27 budget process funding requests.

Following an expression of interest process, seed funding of \$50,000 would be allocated to a lead delivery organisation to present a community-led Ramadan festival in 2027.

The fees associated with Council's permit process would be waived to support an efficient and affordable event delivery.

To be completed within the FY 2026/27 budget year.

7. Implementation

- April – May 2026: Consult and draft the expression of interest process.
- July – December 2026: Select suitable organisation, finalise permits and event planning.
- February – March 2027: Event delivery.
- April – May 2027: Post event evaluation and reporting.

Attachment/s

- 1 [↓](#) Overview of Ramadan events for Ramadan Nights at Bonwick Street Fawkner Council report - March 2026 D26/88129

Attachment: Overview of Comparable Ramadan events for Ramadan Nights at Bonwick Street Fawkner Council report

Event	Approx visitors	Date and time	Organiser	Location	Estimated cost
Lakemba Nights during Ramadan Run by City of Canterbury Bankstown	1.57 million in 2024	Thursday-Sunday from 19 February-15 Mar 2026, 6pm-2am	City of Canterbury Bankstown	Haldon Street, Lakemba, NSW	\$3 million (2024)
Dandenong Ramadan Night Market Funded by City of Greater Dandenong and the Australian Government	350,000 in 2025	19th February - 15th of March 2026; 7pm till late	Bright Community Organisation	Thomas Street and Harmony Square, Dandenong	\$172,200 (<i>True cost likely higher</i>)
SalamFest's Eid @ Queen Victoria Supported by the City of Melbourne Event Partnership Program	70,000 in 2024	Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 April 2024; 9am to 4pm.	SalamFest	Queen Victoria Market	\$150,000 plus sponsorship
Ramadan Night Market at Queen Victoria Market Supported by City of Melbourne's Event Partnership Program	Estimate not available	Feb 20 - Feb 21, 2026 5pm-10pm	Queen Victoria Market	Queen Victoria Market	\$150,000 plus sponsorship
SalamFest – Eid @ Maribyrnong Supported through Maribyrnong City Council's Festivals Grants Program	Estimate not available	Sunday 6 April 2025; 3:00 pm to 8:00 pm	SalamFest	Kindred Studios, Yarraville	\$25,000 to \$60,000

<p>Moonee Valley's Eid al-Adha Supported by Moonee Valley City Council</p>	<p>Estimate not available</p>	<p>Saturday 7 June 2025 (12pm – 4 pm)</p>	<p>Moonee Valley City Council</p>	<p>Djerring Flemington Hub (<i>Flemington Community Centre</i>)</p>	<p>\$10,000–\$30,000,</p>
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7.7 ADDENDUM TO THE COBURG NORTH MASTERPLAN ZONE 2

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

Community Wellbeing

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Endorses the revised project scope for the Coburg North Athletics Precinct, (Zone 2) with attached signed deed of variation from the federal government.
2. Notes strong sport stakeholder support from Coburg Little Athletics Centre and the Coburg Athletics Grounds Management.
3. Notes that the Gym and Conditioning Centre component will be incorporated into the long-term vision and funding model outlined in the Coburg North Masterplan, consistent with strategic planning and future precinct development sequencing.
4. Notes that the variation was required due to updated mandatory flood planning requirements issued by Melbourne Water, which rendered the gym design unfeasible without substantial redesign, cost escalation and significant project delays.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The Commonwealth Government has now approved Merri-bek City Council's variation request to adjust the scope of the Coburg North Athletics Gym and Conditioning Centre project within the short-term development plan of the Coburg North Masterplan. This approval follows significant and mandatory changes issued by Melbourne Water, whose updated flood planning advice requires a minimum finished floor level of 43.9m AHD approximately 1 metre higher than the current gym design. Melbourne Water has confirmed that no exemptions to the required freeboard will be granted.

Complying with this new requirement would have necessitated substantial architectural redesign, new planning approvals, major cost increases, long-term accessibility issues, and a high likelihood of delays and budget overruns. As a result, Council sought a variation to deliver the Athletics Track remediation in the short-term and moving the Gym to the long-term vision.

With the Commonwealth now having endorsed this revised approach, Council is requested to formally adopt the adjusted project scope within the masterplan timeline. Track remediation is a priority short-term action in the endorsed Coburg North Masterplan and offers a more feasible, cost-effective and wider community-beneficial outcome.

Previous Council Decisions

Coburg North Sports Hub Masterplan – 9 July 2025

That Council:

1. *Notes the findings of the Coburg North Sports Hub Community Engagement Report and thanks the community for their contributions.*
2. *Endorses the Coburg North Sports Hub Masterplan (Attached), including:*
 - a) *The short-term development plans and long-term Vision plans for Zone 1 and Zone.*
 - b) *The updated short-term development plan for Zone 2, including:*
 - *Completion of the new Sports Hub indoor gym*

- *Refurbishment of the Basketball Stadium entry*
 - *Completion of a feasibility study and concept design for a new, relocated basketball stadium to allow for expansion*
 - *Improvements to Basketball Stadium changerooms*
 - *Implementation and investigation of appropriate netting solutions to enable the return of senior cricket to Jackson Reserve Oval*
 - *Incorporation of access gates into the athletics track fencing*
 - *Ongoing maintenance of the athletics track and feasibility assessment of upgrade options, including LED lighting installation*
- c) *The updated long-term Vision plan for Zone 2, including:*
- *Enhancement of the creek corridor and vegetation buffer*
 - *Replacement and expansion of the play space*
 - *Refurbishment of the cricket pavilion*
 - *Replacement of the athletics track with a new, competition standard synthetic track to support existing activities.*
 - *Future removal of the existing basketball stadium (once a new off-site stadium is operational and if no longer required), enabling reconfiguration of car parking with increased landscaping and canopy cover*
- d) *That the short-term development plan for Zone 3 includes the development of concept design options for a redeveloped Coburg Olympic Pool and associated facilities that are informed by the community needs identified in the Master Plan and the directions of an updated Merri-bek Aquatic and Leisure Strategy.*
3. *Notes the estimated costs for the implementation of the short-term development priorities and that these will be considered in future Council budget processes.*
 4. *Notes the strong community advocacy to achieve safer access for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users and drivers to the Coburg North Sports Hub facilities on the local road and footpath network.*
 5. *Thanks the Australian Government for its funding contribution towards the development of the Coburg North Sports Hub Masterplan.*

1. Policy Context

- Council Plan
- Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Recreation Strategy 2018–2028
- Fair Access Policy Roadmap
- Climate Emergency Action Plan
- Endorsed Coburg North Masterplan (2025)

The proposed scope adjustment remains aligned with Council’s strategic objectives relating to accessible, inclusive, equitable and sustainable sports infrastructure; improving participation; supporting active communities; and ensuring responsible asset management and risk mitigation.

2. Background

The Commonwealth Government previously approved funding for the Athletics Gym and Conditioning Centre within the Coburg North Masterplan. The project progressed through early design stages; however, the original Melbourne Water flood compliance certificates subsequently expired.

Updated mandatory flood compliance advice now requires a finished floor level of 43.9m AHD, approximately 1–1.5 metres higher than the gym’s existing design. Melbourne Water has confirmed that no exemptions to the freeboard requirement will be granted.

Meeting this requirement would necessitate extensive architectural redesign, new planning approvals, substantially increased construction costs, and structural modifications to address accessibility and interface challenges with the existing pavilion.

Following technical assessment, Council officers determined the gym component is no longer viable within the funding envelope or timeframe.

The endorsed masterplan identifies renewal of the athletics track as a short-term development priority. This alternative outcome aligns with Commonwealth objectives, community needs, and project deliverability.

3. Issues

Key issues informing the proposed variation include:

Mandatory Design Compliance:

Melbourne Water’s updated advice requires floor level changes that fundamentally alter the project’s feasibility.

Cost Escalation:

Elevating the gym by 1–1.5 metres would incur major redesign and construction cost increases, exceeding available funding.

Planning and Timeline Risk:

Significant delays to planning approvals and construction would jeopardise the funding program’s timelines.

Accessibility Challenges:

A raised building would create long-term universal access and operational issues due to the height difference from the existing pavilion.

Strategic Alignment:

Track remediation is a prioritised short-term action in the adopted masterplan and offers broader community benefit.

Stakeholder Support:

Strong letters of support from Coburg Harriers, Coburg Little Athletics, and endorsements from Hon. Ged Kearney MP and Hon. Peter Khalil MP accompany the variation request.

Community impact

The revised scope delivers the following community benefits:

- Improved track safety, performance and accessibility for both club members and wider community use.
- Alignment with Fair Access principles through enhanced facilities supporting women and girls’ participation.
- Minimised disruption by avoiding extended delays associated with gym redesign.

- Increased opportunities for school, club, and broader community access and programming via upgraded track surface, new turnstile gate for community access and future LED lighting integration.
- Retention of investment in a precinct with high community sport participation and demand.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

The variation to deliver track remediation rather than a major new building reduces embodied carbon and construction waste associated with significant structural elevation works. The track renewal also supports future operational sustainability through compatibility with LED lighting upgrades and improved stormwater performance.

The project has positive climate implications by avoiding substantial construction emissions associated with raising and redesigning the proposed gym.

Economic sustainability implications

Track renewal offers greater value for money and reduces long-term asset maintenance costs.

It provides more immediate community benefit and higher utilisation for the cost.

Avoids escalation and future operational burdens associated with an elevated, non-integrated gym structure.

Legal and risk considerations

Proceeding with the gym would place Council at risk of non-compliance with Melbourne Water's mandatory flood requirements.

Redesign delays pose risks to meeting Commonwealth funding milestones.

The proposed variation mitigates design, construction, financial and reputational risk by delivering a compliant, achievable project.

Human Rights Consideration

This report complies with the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006. The revised scope continues to support equitable access to community sport and recreation facilities.

4. Community consultation and engagement

Extensive community engagement was undertaken as part of the development of the Coburg North Masterplan, which was endorsed by Council in July 2025. Engagement included online surveys, drop-in sessions, workshops with tenant clubs, meetings with local schools, and outreach to passive and informal users of the precinct. Feedback from this process identified strong community support for improving athletics facilities, increasing access for schools, and prioritising asset renewal that enhances participation and safety.

Specific engagement relating to the athletics precinct has been ongoing. Tenant clubs, including Coburg Harriers and Coburg Little Athletics, have provided strong written support for the revised project focus on track remediation. Both clubs emphasised the immediate community benefit, higher utilisation, and alignment with priorities identified through the masterplan process.

Council has also liaised with key stakeholders, including local schools and the offices of Hon. Ged Kearney MP and Hon. Peter Khalil MP, who have endorsed the variation. Engagement will continue during procurement, construction planning, and delivery to ensure users and residents remain informed of project impacts and timelines.

Affected persons rights and interests

No adverse impacts on individual rights are anticipated. The variation enhances access to community facilities. Stakeholders have been informed through direct engagement and provided opportunities to express their feedback.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

It is anticipated that the track renewal can be delivered largely within the approved Commonwealth funding. If the project has a minor funding shortfall, this will be referred to the quarterly forecast process for additional funding to complete the resurfacing works.

If the revised project scope did not proceed, Council would incur significant unbudgeted costs that would otherwise arise from gym redesign, elevation and additional approvals.

There are no long-term financial risks associated with the revised scope.

7. Implementation

- Council endorsement alongside the federal government department approval of the variation request of project scope.
- Letters of support (**Attachment 1**).
- Procurement processes for track renewal alongside Commonwealth approvals.
- Continued stakeholder communication and project oversight through the Community Wellbeing and City Infrastructure teams.

Attachment/s

- | | | |
|---|--|------------|
| 1 | Support letters Athletics clubs for scope change | D25/630847 |
| 2 | Executed Deed of Variation
<i>Pursuant to section 3(1)(g)(ii) of the Local Government Act 2020 this attachment has been designated as confidential because it relates to private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.</i> | D26/75041 |

Coburg Little Athletics Centre

coburglac@gmail.com

22nd October 2025

Christina Grayland
Unit Manager Recreation Services
Merri-Bek Council



Dear Chrissy,

I am writing on behalf of Coburg Little Athletics Centre to express our support for funding for the proposed gym to be reallocated to the upgrade of the athletics track itself.

The track and field areas are the core of our community activities. As an affiliated centre of Little Athletics Victoria we offer track events ranging from 70m sprints to 1500m distance events, including hurdles and race walking. On a Saturday competition our track is in use from start to finish, and we have athletes training on the track surface at least 3 nights a week, with around 100 athletes training there this Monday.

The track surface is significantly degraded, with cracks showing and grass and moss growing on or through it. Around turn two, previous repairs have opened up, leaving a gap in the track large enough that a spike can get stuck and cause an athlete to suffer an injury. The line markings are so faded that in many areas they are not visible, meaning our younger and more inexperienced athletes struggle to run their races and our volunteer helpers find it a challenge to set the races up and judge them effectively. We are scheduled to host the regional Track and Field competition in February 2026, and there are concerns that we will not be able to do this with the track in its current state.

Our field areas also need some attention. In particular, the infield discus cage is non compliant. Rather than a net version that absorbs energy, ours is a vintage cyclone fence with lower sides and metal support bars. This means that we have witnessed a discus hit an upright bar and fly back towards the athlete. Large metal discs weighing a number of kilos coming back at speed can be lethal. The fencing also has a large opening on the top left hand side which allows a discus to travel through, putting volunteers and track runners at risk. With national-level throws athletes competing at our centre, this is a serious safety concern.



We mitigate these safety concerns, along with the challenges of ongoing maintenance and repair, through processes we have put in place. We support the council's aim to open the track for public training when not used by the athletics clubs, and believe that track upgrades are critical to achieving this aim so that our mitigation measures are no longer needed.

Athletics is a sport which allows children to compete alongside others and make friends without feeling that they may let a team down. With multiple different events, there is no single pathway to success in athletics, and people of all skill levels and body shapes find a place they can thrive. This means that we count in our athletes a large number of neurodiverse children, as well as those who may otherwise not feel comfortable in a sporting environment. Some of these athletes require special accommodations to allow them to compete, and track repairs and improvements are crucial to allowing us to continue to offer a safe space for them.

Within our recent cohort we have had athletes represent Team Vic at competitions nationally and internationally, competing across almost all track and field events. That they have achieved this level of excellence whilst competing on a track which requires repair and upgrade is testament to their commitment and dedication.

We at Coburg Little Athletics Centre strongly support the reallocation of funds to allow us to continue to grow the next generation of elite athletes, support our children's health and wellbeing, and provide a space where children of all abilities feel safe and confident to be themselves.

Regards,

Kirsty Johns

President, Coburg Little Athletics Centre



**COBURG ATHLETIC GROUND MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE INC. A0009182E**

To Christina Grayland
Merri-bek Council

Letter of support for revised capital development works

Dear Christina,

This letter is to express the support of Coburg Athletics Ground Management Committee to the revised plans for redevelopment of the Harold Stevens Athletics Track as part of the Coburg North capital works project diverting funds originally intended for the now flood affected gym towards track re-surfacing.

Thank you and best wishes

David Woods

David Woods (President of Ground Management Committee)

Coburg Harriers Club Inc. A14798C

Harold Stevens Athletic Track, Outlook Road, Coburg North Victoria 3058
e cagmc.secretary@gmail.com ph 0432685999 w coburgharriers.org.au

7.8 ADDING SEATS AND SHELTERS TO MORE BUS STOPS IN THE CITY OF MERRI-BEK

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes that bus stops and bus seating are a State government responsibility, but that Council:
 - a) Has entered into a contract with JC Decaux for the provision, installation and maintenance of additional bus shelters and seats with advertising, and a lease amount payable to Council for the provision of the land.
 - b) Delivers public seating upgrades, including choosing to deliver seating at bus stops to meet community need that is not met by the State government, via existing budget allocations within the transport program.
2. Notes that Council is installing fifteen new seats this financial year near bus stops identified in Attachments 1 and 2, as part of the regular transport program.
3. Receives a report in early 2027 that considers:
 - a) A Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport audit for Merri-bek provided waiting areas;
 - b) Ongoing advocacy to the State government to invest in bus seating in Merri-bek; and
 - c) Procurement options following the end of Council's bus shelter contract with JCDecaux in December 2027.

REPORT

Executive summary

At the October 2025 Council Meeting, Council resolved to receive a report on the status of bus shelters within the City of Merri-bek and identify actions Council can take to increase the number of seats and shelters at bus stops.

There are an estimated 653 bus stops in Merri-bek. Of these, an estimated 283 (43%) have a seat or shelter. While bus seating and shelters are a State responsibility, Merri-bek Council has in fact funded or facilitated the majority of shelters and seats in Merri-bek. The distribution of waiting areas across providers is summarised below:

- Merri-bek Council provided waiting areas: 154 (65 shelters and 89 seats) – funded and maintained by Council.
- Merri-bek Council auspiced waiting areas (delivered and maintained by JCDecaux under a contract that includes advertising rights and a fee payable to Council for the use of land by the contractor: 99 shelters
- DTP provided waiting areas (delivered and maintained for DTP by a third-party oOh!media): 26 shelters

A map of bus stops in Merri-bek and the type of waiting area facilities provided are shown in **Attachment 1**. These figures are estimates based on available Council asset management records and provider asset data, which contain some gaps and inconsistencies.

The installation of bus shelters and seats are primarily the responsibility of Department of Transport and Planning. However, Council has installed bus shelters and seats to cover the significant gaps in the network of State provided bus shelters and seats around Merri-bek.

Bus shelters and seats can be complex and quite costly. To manage high costs, installation is typically integrated into road reconstruction programs – particularly where extensive civil works are required. There are opportunities to accelerate delivery by prioritising installing seats at bus stops on wide footpaths that do not require preparatory concreting works. However, as bus seating and shelter delivery is a service which primarily sits with the state government, any Council investment has an opportunity cost.

Officers have commenced works to install 15 new seats near bus stops in Merri-bek. These installations will be completed in this financial year using existing transport program budget. **Attachment 2** also identifies 35 additional locations where seats could be installed and will be prioritised for future years subject to availability of appropriate funding.

The report also outlines longer-term considerations, including the expiry of the JC Decaux – Merri-bek Council Bus Shelter Agreement in December 2027, and flags contract renegotiation as a potential opportunity to work with external providers to increase the number of shelters provided across the network.

Previous Council decisions

Notice of Motion - Bus shelter program in Merri-bek – 8 October 2025

That Council:

1. *Recognises the vital importance of increasing the number of bus shelters in Merri-bek, particularly in key locations.*
2. *Receives a report by February 2026 which includes:*
 - *information on the estimated proportion of bus stops which have bus shelters or bus seats*
 - *the progress towards increasing the number of bus shelters and/or bus seats*
 - *recommendations on how to speed up the number bus shelters installed each year*
 - *Consideration of referral to next year's budget process \$100,000 to install more seats at bus stops and shelters on walking routes*
 - *Considers giving priority to bus stops that are further away from other public transport options.*

Bus shelter program 2013-2017 - 12 April 2017

Council resolves to:

1. *Note the status of the bus shelter program.*
2. *Continue funding for the provision of bus shelters for the next 5 years*
3. *Refer an increase in the annual allocation of capital for the provision of bus shelters from \$50,000 to \$60,000, from the 2017-2018 budget year.*
4. *Enter into negotiations with JC Decaux for the provision of additional bus shelters, with and without advertising.*
5. *Review the Sydney Road bus shelters from Anderson Road to Gaffney Street to assess whether advertising obscures the vision of oncoming traffic from vehicles entering from side streets onto Sydney Road.*
6. *Review the design of Council's bus shelters to consider if any improvements can be made.*

Consideration of Tenders Received for Public Transport Shelters Contract Co 1066 – 9 August 2004

Council resolve:

1. To enter a contract with JC Decaux Australia Pty Ltd (ABN 73 619 936 326) for contract CO 1066 for the provision, installation and maintenance of shelters and other street furniture with advertising.
2. To authorise the Chief Executive Officer to sign the final contract.
3. That the contract period be for no more than 20 years.
4. To hold further negotiations with the successful tenderer for the management of existing AdShel shelters if ownership of them is transferred to Moreland.
5. That the accompanying confidential Attachment 1 of the report, dated 9 August 2004, should remain confidential unless released by a later resolution of Council.

1. Policy context

The public bus network is a State Government responsibility and the State is responsible for providing bus shelters and seats to support this network. However, historically Merri-bek has chosen to invest to enhance the network as the State provision has been inadequate and the provision gap has been raised by the community. This includes through a commercial arrangement with JCDecaux which installs shelters in return for the advertising space.

Over a number of years, Merri-bek's investment has led to Council installing and maintaining the majority of the existing bus shelters and seats. There is no specific policy context for this investment, but it has been based on successive Council decisions and investments to bridge the gap in State provision.

There are a range of federal and state government guidelines that Council must comply with in installing seats and shelters. These statutory requirements, guidelines and design standards have an implication for the way that seating is installed – and impact the cost and complexity of the program. Key guidelines and standards include:

2. Background

There are an estimated 653 bus stops within the City of Merri-bek. Of these, an estimated 283 bus stops (43%) have a waiting area (a seat or shelter). The public bus network and associated infrastructure is a State government responsibility. However, Merri-bek Council has made a number of decisions to invest Council resources to enhance this offering as the State's provision is inadequate. Across Merri-bek, bus stop waiting areas are provided and maintained by:

- Merri-bek City Council provides and maintains an estimated 154 waiting areas comprising shelters at 65 bus stops and a seating at an additional 89 bus stops.
- The outdoor advertising company JC Decaux provides shelters at an estimated 99 bus stops. This is contracted to Merri-bek and follows a Council procurement process (JCDecaux funds the installation and maintenance and pays a form of rent, in return for advertising opportunities).
- The Victorian Government Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) provides an estimated 29 bus stops. (it does so in partnership with outdoor advertising company ooHMedia and maintenance company Meipol).

The estimated 24 roadside tram shelters on Melville Road and Dawson Street are excluded from this discussion, as the report is exclusive for shelters and seats at bus stops. The existing tram stops and related infrastructure are owned, operated and maintained under an agreement between the DTP and Yarra Trams.

A map of bus stops with waiting areas is included as **Attachment 1**

Progress delivering seats and shelters at new bus stops since 2017

The responsibility to install bus shelter remains primarily with the State Department of Transport and Planning. However, since a decision in 2017, Council has chosen to invest in a range of improvements to the city's bus stops and waiting areas. Council currently allocates \$60K per year to install new bus shelters and seats. (The replacement of shelters and seats at existing locations is also funded as part of road reconstruction projects).

Between April 2017 and June 2024, Council delivered upgrades at 17 bus stops, comprising:

- 12 new waiting areas, including eight new seats, and four new shelters
- Four upgrades, where an existing seat was replaced with a shelter
- One full bus stop reconstruction, delivering improved access and DSAPT 2002 compliance.

During the same period:

- DTP/oOH!Media upgraded three shelters at Glenroy Station as part of the Level Crossing Removal Program.

In FY 2024-5 and 2025-6 Merri-bek Council has commenced (and expects to complete this Financial Year) works to:

- Install 15 new seats at bus stops without waiting areas, and
- Renew six existing bus shelters as part of the South Street road reconstruction project.

What can Council do to speed up the number of bus stop seats and bus shelter delivered each year without increasing costs?

The installation of bus shelters and seats is the responsibility of the State government. Continued advocacy to the State government to increase its provision levels is important. Council's discretionary investment in the bus seating program is made to address inadequate provision by the State.

Given the State's primary responsibility for bus infrastructure, officers do not recommend expanding Council's budget allocation to bus seating – but to achieve the maximum impact from current investment levels. The time and cost required to install a seat or shelter varies significantly depending on site conditions. The main factor affecting both delivery speed and cost is whether civil works are required before a seat or shelter can be installed.

Low-cost installations (fast to deliver):

- At bus stops located on wide footpaths, a seat or shelter can be installed with minimal preparatory work.
 - A seat can typically be installed for approximately \$3,500.
 - A shelter can typically be installed for approximately \$16,000.
- These sites allow Council to deliver the highest number of new waiting areas per dollar invested and therefore represent a key opportunity to increase annual delivery rates.

High-cost installations (slower to deliver):

- At bus stops located on nature strips extensive concreting is required to provide level boarding areas and a suitable foundation for a seat or shelter. This can take a lot longer to plan and deliver than simple installations. They are also much more costly:

- A standard seat or shelter installation in a nature strip typically costs around \$40,000 once civil works are factored in.
- Relocating a bus stop that includes a shelter with an illuminated advertising panel can cost more than \$70,000.

Given this time and financial cost differential, the most effective way to speed up the delivery of new bus stop waiting areas within the existing Council budget is to prioritise sites that do not require civil works. **Attachment 2** identifies 51 bus stops on wide footpaths where a seat or shelter can be installed quickly and cost-effectively.

To accelerate delivery of new bus stop seats and shelters, officers recommend that Council:

- Prioritise funding to low-cost “easy install” sites on wide footpaths (mapped in **Attachment 2**), to maximise the number of new waiting areas delivered annually.
- Use seats as the default treatment at these sites unless shelter demand, patronage data or equity considerations justify the higher-cost upgrade.
- Reserve nature-strip reconstructions for locations with the highest access, safety or equity needs, given their significantly higher cost and longer delivery timeframes.
- Integrate bus stop upgrades into road reconstruction and footpath renewal programs wherever possible to capture cost efficiencies associated with civil works already underway.
- Advocate to the State government to deliver more bus stops and shelters in Merri-bek.

Prioritising bus stop locations

The Victorian Bus Plan notes ‘*Younger people, particularly students are more likely to use bus as a mode of travel (compared to other modes within that age cohort)*’ ... and ... ‘*Bus passengers are less likely to have a drivers’ license, including a large cohort of student and elderly users. Often users are among the most vulnerable members of society*’.

The Victorian Government Department of Transport ‘Public Transport Guidelines for Land Use and Development’ recommends ‘*Passenger shelters should be provided at all stops that are expected to be frequently used (e.g. at activity centres, interchanges, community facilities, etc)*’.

A good site for a bus stop waiting area is either:

- a starting point for a journey made by older people and students; or
- a transfer point (such as bus stops near train and tram stops) where they wait for a connecting service during a multi leg trip.

Providing waiting areas at bus stops near places that are regularly visited by students and older people – such as shops, community facilities and schools and within suburbs experiencing socio-economic disadvantage should be prioritised over providing waiting areas at bus stops on primarily residential streets in economically advantaged areas.

Another guide to inform bus stop seat placement is the ‘Principal Pedestrian Network’ (PPN), a Council map depicting important walking areas, and the ‘Streets for People Network’, which identifies corridors for place-led, people-focused street improvements. Placing seating at bus stops on the Principal Pedestrian Network and within or near Streets for People network corridors provides both waiting areas for bus passengers and creates pause points that support walkability, comfort, and street amenity.

In responding to the Notice of Motion, officers examined whether bus stops located further from other public transport options should be automatically prioritised for new seats or shelters. Analysis of boarding data, land-use context and equity indicators shows that distance from train or tram services alone is not a consistently reliable predictor of need. Usage patterns, SEIFA disadvantage, proximity to schools, shops and community facilities, and the role of the stop within the Principal Pedestrian Network provide a more robust basis for prioritisation.

While distance from the nearest train or tram stop can be one consideration, it is not on its own a consistently reliable indicator of whether a new bus shelter will be well used or highly valued by the community. Higher-quality indicators – such as boarding activity, SEIFA disadvantage, and proximity to schools, shops and community facilities – provide a clearer picture of where new seats or shelters will deliver the greatest benefit.

The **Attachment 2** list proposes to implement these priorities by:

- prioritising bus stops that have both received significant community interest and are located on wide concrete footpaths;
- prioritising bus stops on the Principal Pedestrian network and Streets for People network over bus stops on footpaths with a secondary role in the walking network;
- prioritising bus stops located in suburbs in areas of social or economic disadvantage, (as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas SEIFA index) ahead of bus stops in socially advantaged areas; and
- within a SEIFA band, prioritising busier bus stops (as identified by DTP bus boarding data) over quieter ones.

3. Issues

Disability standards for accessible public transport

When Merri-bek City Council installs a seat or a shelter at a bus stop, it becomes ‘a provider of waiting area infrastructure’ at that bus stop as defined by the Australian Government Regulation [‘Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002’](#) (DSAPT 2002). This regulation defines what features an accessible bus stop ought to include and specifies a timeline for providers to upgrade the facilities they provide at bus stops so that everyone (including people with a disability) can use them.

Each provider is required to make sure that the facilities they provide at a bus stop are built to DSAPT 2002 standard before 31 December 2022. At many bus stops Merri-bek City Council has not met this requirement.

Data quality

Bus stop asset information (stored in the Council asset management system ‘Assetic’) does not include detailed valuation information. Similarly, the accessibility status of bus stops with Merri-bek Council supplied waiting areas is incomplete. An audit of the 154 bus stops Merri-bek Council provides will establish an accurate baseline that will allow Council to plan for asset replacement works, to replace bus shelters that are no longer ‘fit for purpose’, and to upgrade seats and shelters to meet relevant access design standards.

Many bus stops with Merri-bek supplied waiting areas require upgrade works to improve access, safety and to comply with legislation.

In 2019 Merri-bek conducted an accessibility audit of approximately 20% of the bus stops with Merri-bek provided waiting areas. This audit found multiple bus stops with “*many access issues identified and issues that will significantly restrict access for people with disabilities*”.

Additional access survey work is required to fully understand Council's responsibilities under DSAPT and to plan works to bring Merri-bek Council into compliance with Commonwealth regulations.

Other agencies provide bus stop shelters in the City of Merri-bek in accordance with a Council 'Bus Shelter Agreement'

The responsibility to install bus shelter and seats reside primarily with the DTP. Attempts to encourage other bus shelter providers (JC Decaux and DTP / oOHMedia) to install additional bus shelters within the City of Merri-bek have not been successful. Under the current licence agreement between JC Decaux and Merri-bek Council, the City of Merri-bek is a JC Decaux 'territory' where they can operate an agreed number of bus shelters with advertising. This agreement prevents others (DTP / oOHMedia) from installing new bus shelters with advertisements.

Following a 2017 resolution, Council officers contacted JC Decaux to encourage them to install additional shelters. JC Decaux noted the option to display additional advertisements was not an effective incentive for them to provide and maintain additional shelters.

The JC Decaux – Merri-bek bus shelter agreement will expire on 1 December 2027.

Economic sustainability implications

Bus services provide access to home, to school and to shops – the services for daily living. Good access to services makes a place more valuable. Differences in the quality of access can be a source of transport inequality. By focusing improvements to the bus network in areas with identified socio-economic disadvantage, Council can help improve access to jobs and services and respond to the economic inequality experienced by our most vulnerable communities. However, investing in bus shelter may have financial sustainability implications on already constrained resources of Council.

Human Rights consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. The right to freedom of movement is relevant.

Some of bus stop waiting areas provided by Merri-bek City Council present a physical barrier to movement for people with a disability. Undertaking an access audit will identify these barriers and inform a capital works plan to eliminate them.

Legal and risk considerations

DTP and Merri-bek Council share a responsibility to ensure that the object provided at a bus stop does not encroach on the paths of travel used by people with a disability. Encroaching objects can limit access

- to use the footpath (get around the bus stop and waiting area),
- get on and off the bus (travel from bus door to the footpath) and
- to make use of the waiting area (travel from the seat or shelter to either the bus doors or the footpath).

It is currently unknown whether clear and unobstructed paths of travel are provided at every bus stop.

At bus stops where these paths of travel are obstructed objects provided by Merri-bek City Council, Council has not met its responsibilities under *Disability Standards for Accessible Public Transport 2002* and may be subject to an adverse ruling by the Australian Human Rights Commission following a complaint investigation.

An investigation may present budget risks as the Australian Human Rights Commissioner has powers to compel a provider to make all changes necessary to provide access. An access audit and endorsement of an action plan to resolve access issues identified the audit will help demonstrate to the Human Rights Commissioner that Council is working provide access for all bus and footpath users.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

Buses provide a “from anywhere, to anywhere” public transport option that is particularly well suited to serve lower density residential areas. Buses typically perform a ‘feeder’ service that collects passengers from lower density parts of the city and delivers them to a public transport interchange in a local activity centre. Passengers can either use services in the activity centre or use the interchange to transfer onto a high frequency, high capacity ‘trunk’ public transport service (such as a train or ‘bus rapid transit’) to access to destinations across the state.

A well-run bus service provides connectivity and low transport related greenhouse gas emissions without requiring radical changes to existing urban form.

Whilst there is significant room for improvement, even our current bus service delivers lower greenhouse gas emissions than private car travel. With modest improvements such as transitioning the bus fleet to electric vehicles (to reduce the emissions of each bus) and making bus stop upgrades (to make bus travel a more appealing encouraging more people to travel on each bus) buses can be a very environmentally efficient travel option for the city we currently live in.

Bus services are also more socially sustainable than private car travel because they provide personal mobility without requiring a driver’s licence. Improving the bus service helps the most vulnerable adapt to the challenges of a changing climate

Upgrading bus stops to remove physical access barriers and providing bus stop waiting areas represent a just response to the mobility challenges of the climate emergency.

4. Community consultation and engagement

Merri-bek Transport team contacted the following people and organisations to advise them that report will be tabled at the February 2026 Council meeting.

- People who have an active request for an upgrade to a bus stop.
- Advocacy groups seeking to improved access at Public Transport stops.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and resources implications

Officers recommend that the current allocation of \$601 per year towards the installation of new bus seats and shelters should not be expanded. The responsibility for public transport, bus stops and related infrastructure rests with the DTP and any available Council funding should be allocated to other transport priorities for which Council has primary responsibility. A bus stop access and condition audit is required to identify bus stops requiring changes to achieve DSAPT 2002 compliance.

7. Implementation

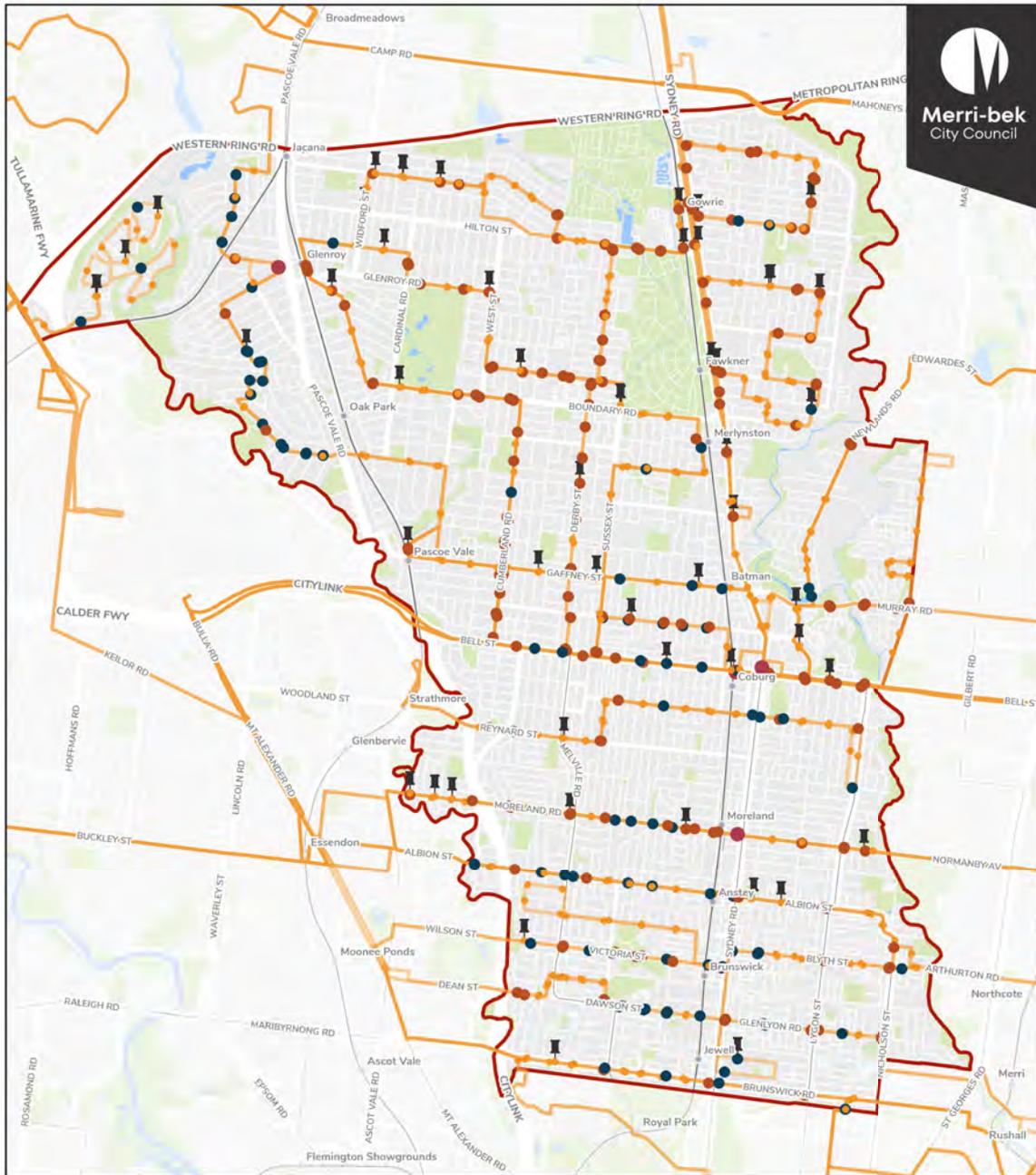
Merri-bek Council could increase the number of accessible bus stop waiting areas in the City of Merri-bek by:

- Completing seat installation works using existing funding FY 2025-26 funding allocations, and ‘Walking Facilities’ allocations proposed for future years.

- Conducting a bus stop waiting area asset condition and accessibility audit and to install additional seats (subject to funding).
- Commencing negotiations with JC Decaux and DTP / ooHmedia to inform a replacement agreement to 'JC Decaux Merri-bek Council Bus Shelter Agreement 1066' scheduled to expire on 1 December 2027.

Attachment/s

- [1](#) [↓](#) Bus Stops in City of Merri-bek - By Waiting Facilities Provided. D25/632828
- [2](#) [↓](#) Map of Bus Stops without Seats - by complexity of seat install D25/672784



Bus Stops in Merri-bek

Waiting facilities provided

Legend

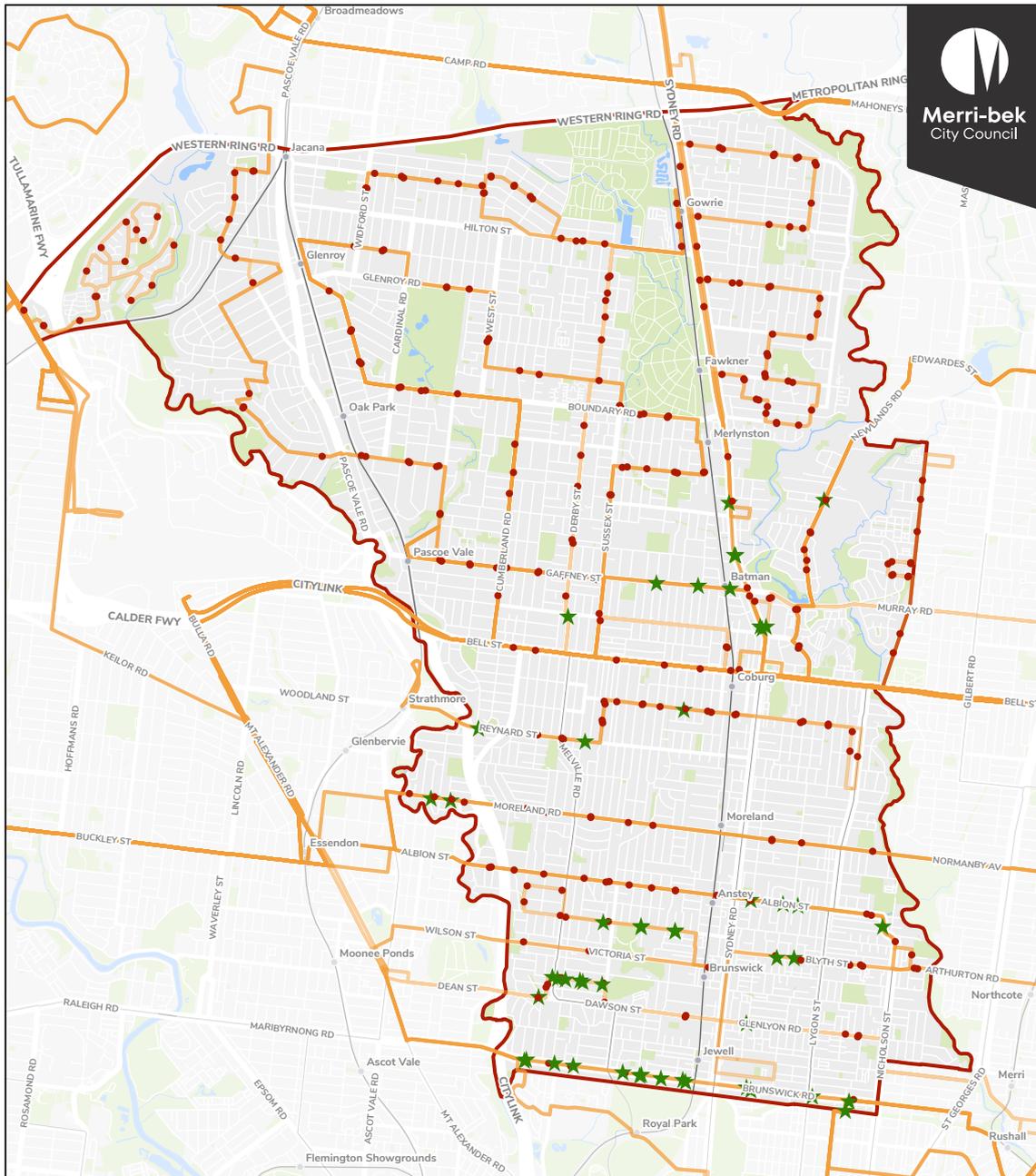
WaitAreaFacilities

- None
- Seat
- Shelter
- Shelter, Seat

Requests for Bus Stop Upgrades RQNA05



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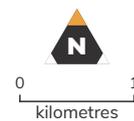
Bus Stops in Merri-bek

Bus Stops without waiting facilities - by install complexity

Legend

LowComplexitySeatInstall

- ★ Y
- N



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7.9 2026 ANNUAL AND WINTER SPORTS GROUND TENANCY ALLOCATIONS

Director Community, Eamonn Fennessy

Community Wellbeing

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Allocates sports grounds and pavilions for the 2026 annual and winter season to the clubs shown in Attachment 1 to this report.
2. Authorises the Director Community to make any necessary changes to the allocation of facilities for the 2026 annual and winter season if required and to inform Council of any changes.
3. Notes any club owing ground and pavilion fees from previous seasons, or owing any other debt to Council, will be informed that no ground allocation will be granted until payment is made, or a payment plan has been agreed to.
4. Notes current junior and female participation levels at sports clubs contained within this 2026 Annual and Winter Sports Ground Tenancy Allocations Report.

REPORT

Executive Summary

Council is committed to providing a diverse range of active sport and recreation opportunities and associated facilities to support participation and a healthy and active community.

In the past year, the Merri-bek sporting community has experienced significant growth in participation, with greater numbers than previous years. This has been particularly evident within Football (Soccer). This winter season, Merri-bek will hold a significant number of local sporting teams across the grounds and pavilions. In total, 468 junior teams will compete, including 178 girls' teams, demonstrating the continued growth in female participation.

At the senior level, 148 senior teams will take the field, including 66 women's teams, reflecting the ongoing strength and expansion of women's sport across the municipality.

Council's revised Allocation and Use of Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilions Policy 2025/26 guides the annual and seasonal allocation of sporting grounds and pavilions to clubs through a tenancy agreement. In line with the Policy, facilities are allocated to clubs with sound governance structures, open membership for men, women and juniors, and a demonstrated commitment to social responsibility, including participation in club development programs.

This year, officers began working with winter clubs on championing gender equity and fair access pathways by assisting clubs obtaining 50 per cent or above representation of women, girls, or gender diverse people on Committee/Board and/or Leadership roles (*implemented from September 2024*).

There were 31 annual and seasonal tenancy applications received from clubs.

Previous Council Decisions

Winter Allocations 2025 – Wednesday 12 March 2025

That Council:

1. *Allocates sports grounds and pavilions for the 2025 annual and winter season to the clubs shown in Attachment 1 to this report.*
2. *Authorises the Director Community to make any necessary changes to the allocation of facilities for the 2025 annual and winter season if required and to inform Council of any changes.*
3. *Notes any club owing ground and pavilion fees from previous seasons, or owing any other debt to Council, will be informed that no ground allocation will be granted until payment is made, or a payment plan has been agreed to.*
4. *Notes current junior and female participation levels at sports clubs contained within this 2025 Annual and Winter Sports Ground Tenancy Allocations Report, and continues to work with clubs struggling.*

1. Policy Context

The Merri-bek City Council Allocation and Use of Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilions Policy (the Policy), together with the Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilions User Guide (the User Guide) provide a framework for the allocation for Council's sports facilities and outline the terms and conditions of use.

Theme: Healthy and Caring Merri-bek

Strategy 3.3 *“Ensure Merri-bek residents are more active more often at all stages of life by providing a diverse range of accessible and affordable recreation opportunities that reflect our diverse community and develop and maintain partnerships to enhance participation options.”*

2. Background

Council adopted a revised Allocation and Use of Sporting Facilities, Grounds, and Pavilions Policy in December 2023. The revision of the Policy, together with the User Guide, outlines the terms and conditions of use for Council's sports facilities.

For facilities to be allocated to clubs requires them to:

- Have sound governance structures
- Provide open membership for men, women and juniors
- Demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility
- Participate in club development programs
- The Policy also contains conditions for leasing and allocation of Council facilities to clubs whose membership provide the following in their respective sporting codes
- Have at least one junior team/side
- Have at least one female team/side
- Be registered with sport association development programs
- Female representation on club committee and/or board
- Priority leasing and allocation of facilities will be given to clubs that:
- Are inclusive of people with disabilities, and actively support juniors, females and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) to participate in recreation

- Demonstrated participation by Merri-bek residents
- Comply with all previous occupancy requirements
- Completed approved capital work projects to the satisfaction of Council

The revised Policy now also provides concessions to clubs who ensure equitable scheduling of training for all participants and obtaining 50 per cent or above representation of women, girls, or gender diverse people on Committee/Board and/or Leadership roles including coaching. Clubs providing sport, recreation and physical activity opportunities must develop and demonstrate policies, strategies and active programs that increase the participation, general health and wellbeing of juniors, girls and women.

3. Issues

Capacity of sporting grounds

Tenancy and allocation applications are considered firstly in relation to the capacity of Merri-bek's sporting grounds, and secondly with respect to the club's compliance to the Policy.

This season, Council's facilities (grounds and pavilions) are being fully occupied. Any vacancies throughout the season are being utilised to spread training loads and fixtures away from grounds where the condition of the surface may be deteriorating. With capacity maximised and no new facilities available, allocations are managed where possible to ensure they do not exceed ground capacity.

Excessive allocations result in overused and damaged playing surfaces. On average, most grounds in Merri-bek can sustain 11-15 hours of use per week, (not including grounds that have received recent upgrades, these grounds can sustain 20-25 hours minimum). Hours above this may create unsafe playing conditions, especially throughout the winter months which lead to temporary ground closures for all users. This can impact the community in the short term, club utilisation in the medium term and create additional maintenance requirements to ensure appropriate standards for training and competition.

With the continued increase in participation namely in the sports of Football (Soccer) and AFL, Council grounds are at full capacity and this increased access usage required by clubs for training is affecting the overall ability for our ovals turf to maintain to appropriate standards through winter.

Football (Soccer) Season lengths and allowable pitches turf rejuvenation periods

Football participation and programming delivered by Football Victoria continues to expand, with longer seasons, additional cup competitions, trials and tournaments extending the use of the grounds. As a result, the pitches are increasingly being required year-round to meet these competition and training demands.

However, Council cannot sustainably support this increase in time and usage. Turf surfaces require scheduled rest and recovery periods to allow for proper maintenance and rejuvenation. Without these breaks, the quality and safety of the playing surfaces will decline, impacting our ability to provide the standard of pitches required for Football Victoria competitions. Council officers are actively working with Football Victoria and surrounding neighbouring Councils on solutions to this together.

Ability of Clubs to Field Senior Women's Teams

Recreation officers continue to work closely with clubs on a one-on-one basis to support the development and sustainability of senior women's teams. This remains particularly challenging within the AFL environment, given the high number of clubs across the municipality and the comparatively limited pool of players seeking to participate at senior women's level.

Across all council areas, participation data shows a consistent trend of female football numbers declining significantly from approximately the Under 14 age group through to older youth and senior women's competitions. Many participants transition to other sports or alternative social and recreational activities, which impacts the ability of clubs to sustain senior teams.

Notably as per Attachment 1 Coburg Football Club, Glenroy Football Club, Hadfield Football Club, and Northern Saints Football Club will not field senior women's AFL teams in 2026. However, each club continues to operate junior girls' programs and is focused on retaining these players, with the aim of strengthening participation numbers and establishing clear pathways into future senior women's football.

Grounds to watch

Balfe Reserve continues to present turf condition challenges and will require protection through reduced winter usage hours. Brunswick Zebras will again utilise Clifton Park's synthetic and grass pitches throughout the 2026 season to help alleviate pressure on Balfe.

Campbell Reserve South (Main Pitch) experienced significant turf deterioration in 2025, resulting in matches being deemed unplayable mid-winter. The pitch was closed and fenced from October to late January for turf rejuvenation. Moreland City is scheduled to resume senior training and matches on the main ground from March, subject to conditions.

CB Premier Pitch will require careful management this season following turf issues that developed in January–February 2026 across several areas of the surface. Usage will need to be controlled to support recovery and maintain playability.

Coburg City Oval – Coburg Junior Football Club has been approved to train and play at the venue for the 2026 season (previously based at Jackson Reserve). The ground condition will be monitored throughout the year to assess whether this arrangement can continue into 2027.

Dunstan Reserve South is expected to receive a high volume of use and is predicted to wear early in the season. The surface condition will be regularly monitored and usage adjusted where required.

Fleming Park will experience increased winter usage, with a women's football club training on Monday and Wednesday evenings due to construction delays at Allard Reserve. This additional demand will require close monitoring.

Hosken Reserve North Pitch experienced difficulty sustaining winter usage levels in 2025. Access and hours of use in 2026 will need to be carefully managed in coordination with both Pascoe Vale Soccer Club and the local school.

JP Fawkner East and West

Both grounds experience turf drainage issues and high wear and tear due to high participation. The Open space team have completed required spring maintenance and will be monitoring this winter. These grounds currently have investigations occurring into long term solutions for irrigation, drainage and consistency in turf coverage.

Raeburn Reserve

Raeburn Reserve continues to hold high use from AFL. This ground has received a strong spring maintenance and will be monitored throughout Winter.

Richards Reserve will open for sports use from 1 April with newly established turf. Usage hours will be introduced gradually and increased progressively across the season to support establishment and longevity.

Wallace Reserve (West, North and South Ovals) experienced turf issues last winter. Ground hours and booking allocations will need to be carefully managed this season to prevent similar deterioration.

Reserves Projects update and impacts on clubs

Allard Reserve – Construction of the new ground has been delayed and it is unlikely the venue will be available for football this winter. As a result, North Brunswick FC has been temporarily relocated, with junior teams training and playing at Jackson Reserve and senior teams at ATC Cook.

Cole Reserve North – Reconstruction of the new oval is scheduled for completion by mid-season. In the interim, Cole Reserve South Oval will experience increased usage by Coburg Districts FC while redevelopment works continue, noting there have been some minor delays. Once the North Oval turf is established and opened, usage hours will need to be carefully managed to protect the new surface and support its long-term condition.

Improved Outcomes

During the off-season, several pitches and ovals were closed to club use to allow for essential turf rejuvenation works over summer, with access typically resuming from February 2026. These sites included

- CB Smith Premier Pitch
- CB Smith Community Pitch
- De Chene Reserve
- Sumner Reserve
- Dunstan South and North Reserves
- Campbell Reserve

We anticipate that this will see soccer pitches able to better sustain themselves this winter. However strategically, with the increasingly year-round competition calendar delivered by Football Victoria, including extended seasons, cups, trials and tournaments Council is facing significant challenges in maintaining these critical recovery periods. The reduced downtime places pressure on turf quality and limits Council's ability to adequately prepare surfaces, while also creating difficulties in meeting clubs' growing demand for pre-season training access.

Several new sports lighting projects are underway or have been completed which will help grounds get a higher utilisation, while simultaneously spreading training load more evenly so grounds wear out slower.

New LED Sports Lighting:

- Allard Park
- Balfe Park
- Raeburn Reserve
- Cole Reserve South
- JP Fawkner East and West

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

Officers monitor the hours of ground use to manage the sustainability and fit for purpose of each sports field. Recommended hours of use for each playing surface vary depending on the following considerations:

- Grass type
- Soil profile
- Suitable sports field lighting
- Infrastructure for drainage and irrigation
- Level of sport being played

The management of each sports facility is also discussed regularly with clubs, to educate and facilitate the appropriate use of each sports field, pavilion, and other sports infrastructure (e.g. sports field lighting, training nets/facilities and turf wickets).

Clubs play an integral role in reactive management of these facilities, with routine checks for safe playing surfaces. Several pavilions also have solar panels installed through club initiative and grants programs to support renewable energy.

Storm water harvesting. Several reserves will have rainwater tanks in place to reduce the consumption of water for irrigation programs.

Economic sustainability implications

The clubs and associations applying for annual and winter allocations are not-for-profit organisations, predominantly operated by volunteers.

Legal and risk considerations

The governance audit ensures clubs maintain their incorporation, as State Sporting Association insurance policies would deny indemnity to clubs that have allowed their incorporation to lapse putting Council at risk to cover injury claims.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been considered in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. Access to sport and physical activity reflects Sections 12 and 18 of the Human Rights Charter which relate to freedom of movement and taking part in public life.

4. Community consultation and engagement

Annual and winter applications opened on 6 January 2026 and closed on 10 February 2026. During this time, officers liaised regularly with clubs and associations providing advice and guidance on the application process, availability of facilities and grounds and answer any questions club committee members had.

While all annual and winter clubs have submitted their applications, registrations for players and teams have not yet been finalised by the relevant leagues and associations. State Sporting Associations and local leagues are responsible for managing the competitions Merri-bek clubs enter. Officers work closely with their staff to monitor team numbers, player registrations, and competition conditions. For the annual and winter allocations 2026, the following associations will be consulted to confirm participation numbers for this report:

- Lacrosse Victoria
- AFL Victoria
- Netball Victoria
- Tennis Victoria
- Essendon District Football League
- Baseball Victoria
- Victorian Amateur Football Association
- Yarra Junior Football League
- Football Victoria.

To ensure Council can provide appropriate facilities, regular communication and consultation occurs between Council operational areas to ensure suitability of facilities and grounds to meet competition standards. Supporting this, clubs communicate frequently with officers about their needs, and this is monitored as the season approaches.

Communications

All clubs and associations will be notified of the Council resolution within 14 days.

Annual and Winter allocations will be approved for each club or association via IMS Reserves Manager as soon as the Policy and application compliance is confirmed.

A summary list of ground allocations will be available to view on the Active Merri-bek website. This list is subject to change based on the seasonal requirements for ground usage (e.g. preseason, in season fixtures, finals).

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

The estimated fees and charges income for the 2026 annual and winter sports ground and pavilion allocations is \$158,500.

Despite CPI increases from 2024/25 fees to 2025/26 fees, this total is a reduction of approximately \$10,000 from 2025 projected fees, due to the waving of fees as below which have been endorsed by management and communicated to clubs:

North Brunswick Football Club will not be charged this Winter 2026 seasonal fees for the relocation grounds allocated at Jackson Reserve, ATC Cook and Fleming Park, due to delays in the Allard Reserve ground reconstruction.

Brunswick Zebras will not be charged Winter 2026 fees for use of Balfe Park, as ongoing turf issues are expected to prevent games from being played at the venue during the 2026 season.

Officers actively monitor the payment of seasonal fees. Clubs with outstanding debts are formally advised in writing that unpaid fees may impact future ground allocations. Relevant State Sporting Associations are also notified. It is recommended that clubs with outstanding debts not receive an allocation until their fees have been finalised.

Attachment 2 (confidential) shows a breakdown of which clubs have outstanding debt as well as further commentary.

7. Implementation

Once adopted, clubs will receive written notification of their allocation within 14 days. Officers will work with clubs to ensure any outstanding documentation is received and outstanding fees are paid prior to allocation confirmation. Officers will continue to actively support clubs that do not currently comply with the requirements of the Policy to develop strategies and actions to establish female and junior teams.

Attachment/s

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| 1 | 2026 Annual and Winter Sports Facilities Ground Allocations | D26/77731 |
| 2 | Outstanding debt - 2026 annual and winter sports facility ground allocation | D26/84947 |

Pursuant to section 3(1)(g)(ii) of the Local Government Act 2020 this attachment has been designated as confidential because it relates to private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

Club	Venues to be allocated		Allocation of Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilion Policy compliance								Documentation required for allocation* *as at time of report		Affiliated Association
	Training ground/s	Match ground/s	Junior development program	Juniors		Junior teams		Seniors		Senior teams			
				Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
WINTER ALLOCATIONS													
Brunswick Football Club (Brunswick Community Sports Club)	Gillon Oval		Auskick					100	40	3	1	Food Registration	VAFA
Brunswick Junior Football Club (Brunswick Community Sports Club)	Gillon Oval Clifton Park (West) Fleming Park			300	100	16	5						
Brunswick Lacrosse Club	Fleming Park		U11-13	30	25	3	3	60	30	2	2		VLA
Coburg Districts Football Club	Cole Reserve North Cole Reserve South		Auskick	220	110	7	5	80	30	3	1		EDFL
Coburg Football Club	Coburg City Oval		Auskick	83	16	4	1	50	0	1	0		VFL, VAFA, FIDA, EDFL
Fawkner Soccer Club	CB Smith Community Pitch CB Smith Premier Pitch		Miniroos	210	90	19	6	80	80	3	3		FV
Glenroy Football Club	Sewell Reserve		Auskick	120	30	6	2	90	0	3	0		EDFL
Glenroy Lions	Wallace Reserve East North Wallace Reserve East South		Miniroos	180	10	11	1	35	0	2	0		FV
Hadfield Football Club (Hadfield Sporting Club)	Martin Reserve		U8-U10	195	20	10	1	70	0	3	0		EDFL
Itiki Sporting Club of Glenroy	Glenroy Tennis & Multipurpose Courts		U6-U11	75	165	10	14	96	45	6	15		NV, BV, VV
Moreland Eagles Soccer Club	Wallace Reserve West Pitch 1		Miniroos	34	15	4	1	58	18	2	1	Certificate of Incorporation	FV
North Brunswick Football Club & Brunswick Ultimate Frisbee (Moreland Sports Club)	Allard Park Fleming Park Jackson Reserve ATC Cook		Auskick	110	85	5	4	85	50	2	1	Certificate of Incorporation	VAFA, YJFL
Northern Saints Football Club	Charles Mutton Reserve East Charles Mutton Reserve West		Auskick	160	80	9	4	100	0	4	0	Certificate of Incorporation	EDFL
Oak Park Football Club (Oak Park Community Sports Association)	JP Fawkner East ATC Cook Reserve		Auskick	270	120	13	5	95	50	4	3		EDFL

Club	Venues to be allocated		Allocation of Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilion Policy compliance								Documentation required for allocation* <small>*as at time of report</small>		Affiliated Association
	Training ground/s	Match ground/s	Junior development program	Juniors		Junior teams		Seniors		Senior teams		Incorporation (copy) Public Liability Insurance (copy) Liquor License (copy) Food Registration (copy)	
				Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
WINTER ALLOCATIONS													
Pascoe Vale Football Club (Pascoe Vale Sports Club)	Raeburn Reserve Hallam Reserve		Auskick	471	114	12	5	112	16	5	1		EDFL
St Francis Junior Football Club	Oak Park North Reserve Oak Park South Reserve		Auskick	120	25	6	0					Certificate of Incorporation	EDFL
Therry Penola Football Club (Penola St Francis Moreland Community Sports Club)	JP Fawcner West Oak Park South Reserve							135	25	5	1		VAFA
West Coburg Football Club (West Coburg Sports Club)	Shore Reserve Brearley Reserve		Auskick	244	94	13	7	75	20	3	1		EDFL
ANNUAL ALLOCATIONS													
Brunswick City Soccer Club	Dunstan Reserve North Dunstan Reserve South Clifton Park (Central Pitch)		Miniroos	258	106	19	7	60	20	3	1		FV
Brunswick Dog Training Club	Wylie Reserve		NA									N/A	
Brunswick Hockey Club	Wylie Reserve (pavilion only)		Hook in2 Hockey	118	84	12	12	160	155	9	8		HV
Brunswick Juventus Football Club	DeChene Reserve McDonald Reserve Moomba Park CB Smith Premier Pitch		Miniroos	440	60	30	4	105	60	5	3	Liquor License Food Registration Incorporation Public Liability Insurance	FV
Brunswick Netball Club (Brunswick Community Sports Club)	Reaburn Reserve (Netball courts)		Net Set Go	14	233	0	19	0	37	0	5		NV
Brunswick Zebras Soccer Club	Clifton Park (Central Pitch) Summer Park Balfe Park Holbrook Reserve		Miniroos	360	108	25	8	150	75	6	3		FV
Fawcner Netball Club	Charles Mutton Reserve (Netball courts*8)		Net Set Go	14	233	2	15	3	44	0	6		NV
Hadfield Netball Club (Hadfield Sporting Club)	Martin Reserve (Netball courts*1)		Net Set Go	0	6	0	1	0	24	0	4		EDFL
Moreland City Soccer Club	Campbell Reserve North Pitch Campbell Reserve South Pitch		Miniroos	130	22	8	2	56	0	3	0		FV
North Coburg Rebels Baseball Club	Parker Reserve Baseball Diamonds		U13	60	7	5	0	60	15	6	1		Went. Winter & Summer Baseball League
Pascoe Vale Soccer Club	Hosken Reserve South Pitch Hosken Reserve North Pitch Richards Reserve "under reconstruction Reddish Reserve Rayner Reserve		Miniroos	490	123	40	12	50	25	2	1	Liquor License Food Registration Incorporation Public Liability Insurance	FV

Club	Venues to be allocated		Allocation of Sporting Facilities, Grounds and Pavilion Policy compliance								Documentation required for allocation* *as at time of report Incorporation (copy) Public Liability Insurance (copy) Liquor License (copy) Food Registration (copy)	Affiliated Association	
	Training ground/s	Match ground/s	Junior development program	Juniors		Junior teams		Seniors		Senior teams			
				Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male			Female
WINTER ALLOCATIONS													
West Coburg Netball Club (West Coburg Sports Club)	Morris Reserve (Netball courts*2)		Net Set Go	4	316	1	34	0	40	0	4		NV

7.10 VISIBLE SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS IN HERITAGE OVERLAY

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

City Design and Economy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes that Amendment C233mbek seeks to reduce planning permit requirements for some visible solar energy systems on contributory and non-contributory heritage buildings.
2. Receives a further report by late 2027 on further options to amend the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, including the potential removal of permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within the Heritage Overlay, informed by planning panel precedents, independent heritage advice and the outcomes of Amendment C233mbek.
3. Notes that consultation with Council's *Liveability Advisory Committee* will be undertaken as part of the preparation of the further report.

REPORT

Executive Summary

This report responds to Council's Notice of Motion seeking to commence a review of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to remove planning permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within the Heritage Overlay.

Council has consistently demonstrated leadership in climate action, including declaring a climate emergency and committing to Zero Carbon 2040. Supporting renewable energy uptake, including on heritage buildings, is an important part of this commitment. Visible solar energy systems can contribute to the long-term sustainability and ongoing use of heritage buildings while enabling residents to reduce emissions and energy costs.

Council has already taken proactive steps in this area. In September 2025, Council resolved to initiate Amendment C233mbek, which proposes to remove permit requirements for certain visible solar energy systems on contributory and non-contributory heritage buildings where defined siting and design criteria are met. The Amendment represents a meaningful step toward reducing regulatory barriers while continuing to appropriately manage heritage significance.

The Notice of Motion seeks to build on this work by exploring whether permit requirements could be further reduced or removed. Officers have reviewed the available planning scheme mechanisms and emerging Victorian precedents. Reform in this area is progressing, with councils adopting different models through either Heritage Overlay schedule exemptions or criteria-based incorporated documents. Planning panel outcomes in other municipalities will provide important guidance for future change.

Current permit data indicates that the existing framework is not constraining solar uptake. Applications for visible solar energy systems in the Heritage Overlay are low (approximately 6–8 per year), all applications have been approved through the VicSmart fast-track process, and enforcement matters are rare.

Officers recommend continuing the Amendment C233mbek process while establishing a pathway for further reform. A further report will be provided to Council by late 2027 outlining options to amend the Merri-bek Planning Scheme, informed by the outcomes of Amendment C233mbek, planning panel precedents and independent heritage advice.

This staged and evidence-informed approach builds on Council's climate leadership and positions Merri-bek to progress further change in this area, if required.

Previous Council decisions

Notice of Motion - Solar energy system permit requirements in a Heritage Overlay - 8 October 2025

That Council receives a report on commencing the process of reviewing the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to “switch off” permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within a heritage overlay, as permitted by VC226. This review can either be done as a standalone priority review, or as part of a broader review of the entire Planning Scheme. This review would include consultation with Council’s Liveability Advisory Committee to seek their feedback. The report should also consider any other mechanisms, including for example a moratorium on enforcement in certain circumstances, as interim approaches while a planning scheme review is undertaken.

C233mbek - Fix up amendment - Gateway 1 - Authorisation and exhibition - 10 September 2025

That Council:

1. *As the planning authority, apply to the Minister for Planning (Minister) under section 8A of the Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Vic) (Act), for authorisation to prepare Amendment C233mbek to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Amendment).*
2. *Prepares the Amendment if authority is received under section 8A of the Act, or if 10 business days have passed since the Minister received the application without notifying Council of a decision:*
 - a) *As the planning authority, prepares the Amendment in accordance with section 8A(2) or section 8A(7) of the Act as relevant.*
 - b) *Authorises the Director Place and Environment to make minor changes to the draft Amendment documentation at Attachments 1-6 as required prior to exhibition of the Amendment, to correct any administrative errors, and to meet any conditions the Minister imposes through authorisation.*
 - c) *Endorses, for the purpose of exhibition, the draft Amendment documentation at Attachments 1-6, subject to any changes required under (2)(b) above.*
 - d) *Exhibits the Amendment in accordance with sections 17, 18 and 19 of the Act.*

1. Policy context

Climate leadership On 12 September 2018, Merri-bek City Council declared a climate emergency and committed urgent action, as set out in the Merri-bek Zero Carbon 2040 Framework. Facilitating renewable energy uptake, including on heritage buildings, directly supports this commitment and contributes to the long-term sustainability and viability of the municipality’s building stock.

Council Plan The *Merri-bek City Council Plan 2025–2029* includes strategic objectives relating to care for nature and climate resilience, a beautiful and liveable city, and an engaging and responsible Council. Supporting the uptake of solar energy systems contributes to these objectives, while the Heritage Overlay framework ensures that heritage values and local character are appropriately managed.

Merri-bek Planning Scheme Planning policy in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme for visible solar energy systems in Merri-bek is informed by climate change mitigation and energy efficiency objectives, alongside heritage conservation objectives. These objectives are intended to be applied through balanced decision-making.

Environment

State planning policy supports climate change mitigation and adaptation through land use planning. Clause 13.01-1S of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Natural hazards and climate change) seeks to minimise the impacts of climate change by ensuring planning controls allow for risk mitigation and adaptation strategies to be implemented.

Clause 15.01-2S (Building design) further supports improved building energy performance through siting and design measures that encourage on-site renewable energy generation and storage technologies.

Heritage

State planning policy at Clause 15.03-1S of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme (Heritage conservation) seeks to conserve and enhance places of heritage significance, encourage development that respects identified heritage values, and ensure the setting and context of heritage places is maintained or enhanced.

Local policy guidance at Clause 15.03-1L (Heritage in Merri-bek) provides more specific direction, including to:

- Respect the scale, form, massing and siting of contributory and significant heritage places.
- Protect important views to heritage buildings and features.
- Ensure alterations and additions are visually recessive and do not dominate the heritage place, having regard to heritage grading.

For further information on understanding heritage gradings in Merri-bek please refer to **Attachment 1**.

Decision-making guidance for the Responsible Authority

Where a planning permit is required the Heritage in Merri-bek policy at Clause 15.03-1L (Heritage in Merri-bek) of the scheme provides decision guidance:

Encourage ancillary site services that support the sustainability of heritage fabric and reduce the operational environmental impact of the existing building (such as solar panels, water tanks, solar hot water systems, etc.) to be sensitively integrated into the design of the heritage place. These services may be visible, if there is no reasonable alternative location.

The Victorian Planning Provisions (VPP) decision guidelines at Clause 59.07 of the Merri-bek Planning Scheme include:

- *Whether the proposed solar energy system can be sited to minimise visibility from a street or public park without significantly impacting its performance.*
- *Whether the proposed solar energy system can be designed to minimise the impact on the significance, character or appearance of the heritage place.*

Collectively, this guidance supports a balanced and proportionate assessment approach that enables renewable energy outcomes while ensuring heritage values are appropriately considered.

2. Background

This section provides context to inform Council's consideration of planning permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within the Heritage Overlay.

The Heritage Overlay in Merri-bek

The Heritage Overlay applies to approximately 13 per cent of properties in the City of Merri-bek. Within this context:

- Around 87 per cent of buildings across the municipality are fully exempt from planning permit requirements for solar energy systems.
- Planning permits are required only where solar panels are visible from a street or public park on Heritage Overlay properties.

The spatial distribution of Heritage Overlay properties is shown at **Attachment 2**.

Current solar panel permit activity in the Heritage Overlay

In July 2018, Heritage Overlay solar applications were moved into the VicSmart fast-track process, featuring:

- Ten business day decision timeframes.
- No third-party notice or review rights.
- Reduced application fees.

Planning permit activity for visible solar energy systems in the Heritage Overlay has remained consistently low. At Merri-bek between mid-2005 and mid-2025:

- 155 applications were received, averaging around eight applications per year.
- In recent years, this has reduced to around six applications per year.
- Applications relate to approximately 1.2 per cent of heritage properties in Merri-bek.

All applications have been approved. In some instances, permit conditions have been included to reduce the visibility of solar panels.

Only one matter has been appealed to VCAT in 20 years, indicating that the current framework is operating effectively and with minimal dispute.

Please refer to **Attachment 3** for the number of solar energy system applications 2005-2025.

Amendment C233mbek (Heritage and fix up amendment)

In September 2025, Council resolved to seek authorisation for Amendment C233mbek, a broader heritage and “fix up” amendment to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme. As part of this Amendment, Council is proposing to further narrow permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within the Heritage Overlay.

While application volumes are relatively low, Council identified an opportunity to simplify the planning framework, improve environmental outcomes, provide greater certainty to residents, and reduce unnecessary regulatory burden where heritage impacts can be appropriately managed through clear and objective design criteria.

Under this proposal, permits would no longer be needed for a visible solar system on contributory or non-contributory buildings where:

- It has a flat profile design installed flush with the roof profile and does not overhang any ridgelines or eaves.
- Is setback at least 3m from the front side of the roof.
- Is not located on the front verandah/porch roofing, the front roof form or any part of the roof that faces the street.

The relevant extract from Amendment C233mbek is at **Attachment 4**.

The Amendment is currently awaiting authorisation from the Minister for Planning, after which it will be exhibited for community feedback and reported back to Council for consideration of submissions and next steps (Decision Gateway 2).

3. Issues

Response to Notice of Motion

Visible solar panels are already permitted on all heritage buildings in Merri-bek, subject to a planning permit. The key question raised by the Notice of Motion is whether the current permit trigger remains necessary, or whether further reform could simplify the planning framework.

The Notice of Motion seeks advice on reviewing the Merri-bek Planning Scheme to “switch off” permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within the Heritage Overlay Schedule, as permitted by State-wide Amendment VC226 in 2022, either as a standalone priority review or as part of a broader review of the Planning Scheme.

Planning scheme mechanisms available to Council

In responding to the Notice of Motion, Council’s ability to remove or modify planning permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within the Heritage Overlay is limited to the mechanisms available under the planning scheme.

Within this framework, there are two mechanisms available to Council to alter permit requirements for visible solar energy systems in the Heritage Overlay (Table 1). Any use of these mechanisms requires Council to initiate and justify a planning scheme amendment.

Table 1. Planning mechanisms to modify requirements for visible solar energy systems

Mechanism	Key characteristics	Practical implications
1. Heritage Overlay Schedule (permitted under VC226)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Switches permit requirements on or off using a simple “Yes/No” trigger in the Heritage Overlay schedule.• Can apply differently to significant, contributory, and non-contributory places.• Does not rely on detailed design criteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highly permissive and straightforward to administer.• Provides certainty for property owners.• Less ability to tailor outcomes to site-specific conditions or manage visual impacts through design controls.
2. Incorporated document	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specifies defined circumstances where a permit is not required, usually through design and siting criteria.• Can apply across all heritage gradings or selectively.• Retains permit requirements where criteria are not met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More targeted and conservative approach.• Enables exemptions while managing heritage risk through clear design parameters.• Requires ongoing interpretation and assessment by the Responsible Authority.

Council has already resolved to pursue the Incorporated Document approach through Amendment C233mbek. This approach enables permit exemptions to be applied in defined circumstances, while retaining the ability to manage heritage impacts where appropriate.

Emerging Victorian context

Reform in this area is emerging across Victoria, with several councils progressing more permissive approaches to planning permit requirements for visible solar energy systems within heritage areas.

- The City of Melbourne is progressing the removal of planning permit requirements for visible solar energy systems through the Heritage Overlay Schedule, as enabled by VC226. This approach applies to the Parkville Heritage precinct and retains permit requirements for individually significant heritage places. Amendment C444 (Parkville Heritage Review) is well advanced and is expected to be tested through an independent planning panel later this year.
- Yarra City Council and the City of Boroondara are considering or developing criteria-based exemptions through incorporated documents, broadly consistent with the approach being pursued by Merri-bek.

Amendment C233mbek positions Merri-bek within this broader reform context by narrowing permit requirements while retaining appropriate safeguards for individually significant heritage places. The outcomes of the Melbourne Planning Scheme Amendment C444 and other panel processes are expected to provide valuable guidance to inform any further planning changes in Merri-bek.

Officer analysis

Officers recognise strong Council interest in further reducing regulatory barriers to renewable energy within heritage areas and advancing climate action outcomes.

The available data indicates that the current framework is not constraining solar uptake, with low application volumes, high approval rates and minimal enforcement activity. This suggests that the existing permit process is functioning as intended while enabling renewable energy outcomes.

Council has already taken proactive steps through Amendment C233mbek to narrow permit requirements for visible solar energy systems on contributory and non-contributory heritage buildings. Progressing the Amendment provides an immediate and tangible reform measure.

Establishing a staged pathway for further consideration enables Council to build on this work in a structured and evidence-informed manner. As planning panel outcomes and independent heritage advice emerge from amendments in other municipalities, Council will be well positioned to assess whether additional refinements to permit requirements are appropriate.

This approach supports Council's climate leadership, provides clarity and certainty to the community, and ensures that any further reform is robust, defensible and aligned with State planning policy and heritage conservation objectives.

Officer recommendation

Officers recommend a staged pathway to investigate and assess options for potential further reform, subject to future Council consideration.

1. Short term - Continue progressing Amendment C233mbek.

This Amendment represents a step toward reducing permit requirements by:

- Narrowing permit triggers for visible solar energy systems on contributory and non-contributory heritage buildings; and
- Retaining permit requirements where potential heritage impacts are greater.

Council has resolved to pursue this Amendment, and a planning scheme amendment process is currently underway.

Subject to the outcome of exhibition, Amendment C233mbek will be considered a seriously entertained planning proposal when making decisions on relevant planning applications once the Panel Report has been received by Council.

2. Medium term – report back to Council by late 2027 on options to explore less restrictive solar energy system planning controls to the Merri-bek Planning Scheme.

This report will be informed by:

- The outcomes of Amendment C233mbek.
- Planning panel precedents from other municipalities.
- Independent heritage and planning advice.
- The findings of the Planning Scheme Review.
- Consultation with Council's Liveability Advisory Committee.

One potential option for future consideration would be to exempt visible solar energy systems on contributory and non-contributory heritage buildings, while retaining permit requirements for individually significant places.

Any future amendment would require further investigation, consultation, and resourcing. Preliminary cost estimates are in the order of \$100,000, which may be reduced if combined with other future planning scheme amendments.

Future reform will require careful engagement with the heritage sector and consideration of panel outcomes. Emerging precedents will provide valuable guidance to refine and strengthen any subsequent amendment.

Considerations to help inform Council's decision-making

Visible solar energy systems can support the ongoing use, adaptation and long-term viability of heritage buildings, enabling them to respond to contemporary environmental challenges while continuing to be valued for their historic significance.

There is strong interest in further reducing permit requirements to support renewable energy uptake in heritage areas. In progressing reform, it will be important to ensure that any changes remain consistent with state planning policy and appropriately manage the significance of individually important heritage places.

A staged and evidence-informed approach enables Council to advance its sustainability objectives while maintaining appropriate heritage safeguards. This pathway provides flexibility to incorporate emerging panel guidance and sector feedback as reform continues.

Moratorium on enforcement

The Notice of Motion resolution includes:

The report should also consider any other mechanisms, including for example a moratorium on enforcement in certain circumstances.

The planning scheme provides the statutory framework for managing land use and development in line with community objectives. Council's planning enforcement approach is focused on achieving practical and proportionate outcomes, with an emphasis on education, resolution and appropriate prioritisation of matters based on impact and risk.

The approach to planning enforcement functions at Merri-bek City Council seek to:

- Ensure that the level of enforcement action undertaken is proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the offence.

- Ensure that Planning Enforcement Officers exercise their discretion in relation to breaches in an appropriate manner and that Council's resources to deal with breaches are appropriately allocated in a manner consistent with the public interest.
- Promote the positive role of Council in reaching successful outcomes on non-compliance/s associated with breaches of its legislative framework.

In practice, enforcement matters relating to visible solar energy systems within the Heritage Overlay are very limited. Complaints account for less than one per cent of Council's annual reactive enforcement workload.

Where issues have arisen, they have been resolved through negotiation and the planning permit process, including the submission of an application and, where appropriate, minor design amendments to reduce visibility. No infringements or legal proceedings have been required.

The primary objective is to achieve compliance without penalty to the offender. This is encouraged through educating and offering opportunity for voluntary compliance.

Reference has been made in Councillor inquiries to the 2018–19 Amendment C169more, which involved signage on Council sportsgrounds. That process is not directly comparable, as signage was managed through Council's lease arrangements with sporting clubs rather than through the planning enforcement framework.

Given the very limited enforcement activity in this area and the effectiveness of existing discretionary practices, officers consider that a formal moratorium is not necessary at this time. It is considered that Current practices are already achieving a balanced and pragmatic outcome consistent with Council's climate and heritage objectives.

While some councils have exercised discretion in enforcement prioritisation, there is no formal mechanism to suspend permit requirements under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. Merri-bek's existing approach provides appropriate flexibility while remaining consistent with legislative obligations.

Community impact

The Merri-bek Planning Scheme planning permit requirements for solar energy systems, emphasise minimal regulatory burden while balancing heritage and environmental concerns.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

Retaining the permit requirement for individually significant buildings won't unreasonably prevent the Merri-bek community from taking climate action and switching to renewable energy, which supports Council's Zero Carbon goals.

Economic sustainability implications

There is no economic sustainability implications related to the report.

Legal and risk considerations

There are no legal and risk implications related to the report.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

There are no human rights implications related to the report.

4. Community consultation and engagement

There are no community consultation implications related to the report.

At the time that Council considers Step 2 as outlined in the report, the Notice of Motion seeks consultation with Council's Liveability Advisory Committee to seek their feedback.

Affected persons rights and interests

Before making a decision that affects a person's rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views.

There are no affected rights implications related to the report.

Communications

There are no communications implications related to the report.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and resources implications

Financial

There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report. However, should Council wish to progress further investigation or a more permissive planning scheme amendment prior to the proposed late-2027 reporting timeframe, additional resourcing may be required, including for independent heritage and planning advice. Any future costs would be subject to Council consideration through the annual budget process.

Resources

Planning permit exemptions for visible solar energy systems in some circumstances may reduce the number of planning permit applications received by Council, which could have positive resource implications. However, given the very low number of applications and VCAT cases for visible solar energy systems within the Heritage Overlay, any resource benefit is expected to be minimal.

7. Implementation

Following authorisation by the Minister for Planning and subsequent formal exhibition of Amendment C233mbek, the amendment will be reported to Council for consideration of any submissions received and to determine the next steps.

Attachment/s

1	Understanding heritage gradings in Merri-bek	D26/61094
2	Heritage properties in Merri-bek - location and significance	D26/57439
3	Number of solar energy system applications 2005-2025	D26/57599
4	C233mbek - Proposed permit exemption solar energy system in HO	D26/57647

Understanding heritage gradings in Merri-bek

Individually significant places

Places that are important in their own right and demonstrate clear heritage significance. They are typically well-intact and readily identifiable as heritage places in the streetscape.

Examples of individually significant places in Merri-bek



Contributory places

Places that contribute to the cultural significance of a heritage precinct but are not individually significant. While often modest on their own, collectively they create the historic character and consistency of the area.

Examples of individually significant places in Merri-bek

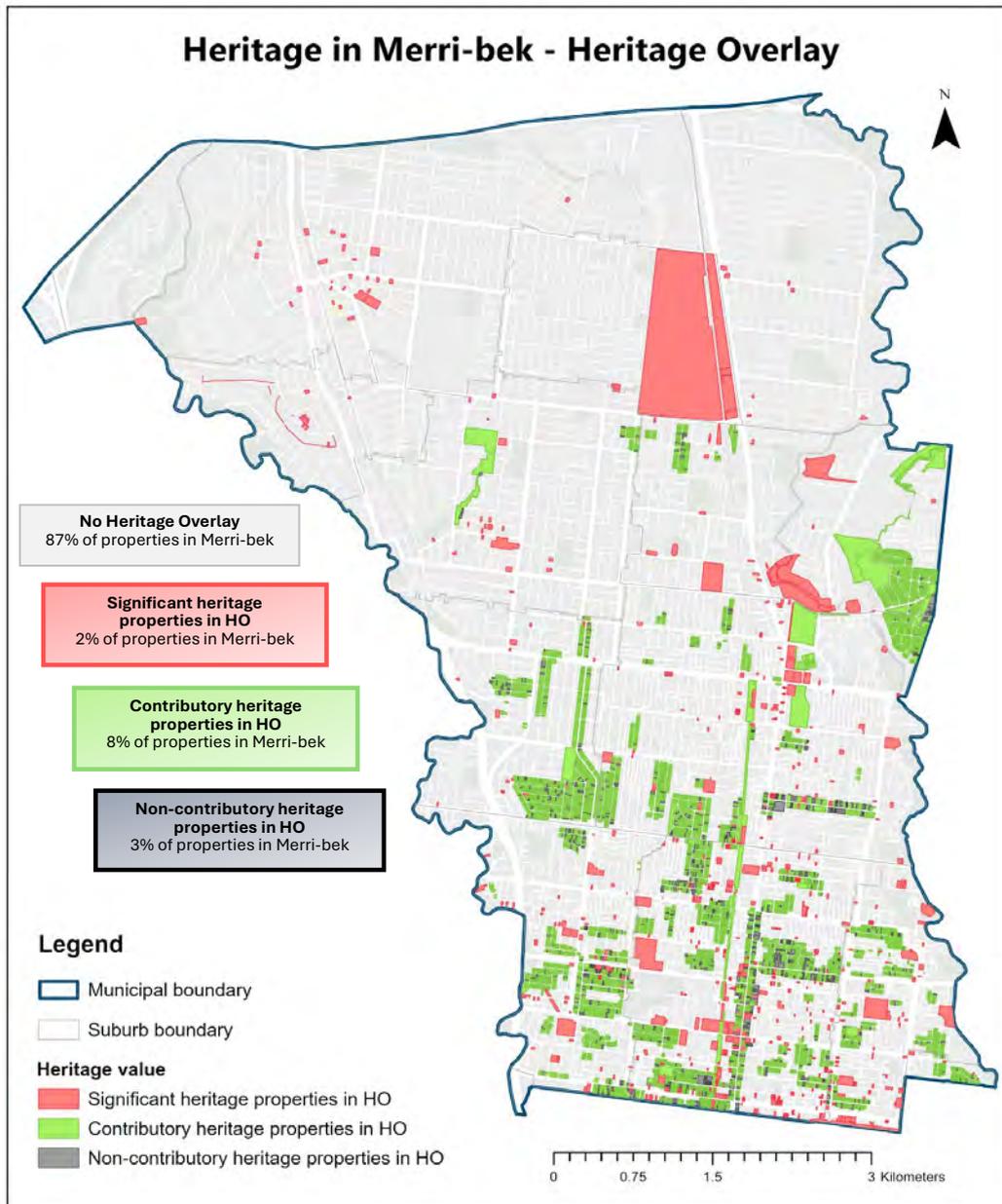


Non-contributory places

Places within a heritage precinct that do not contribute to its cultural significance, usually due to later construction or substantial alteration.

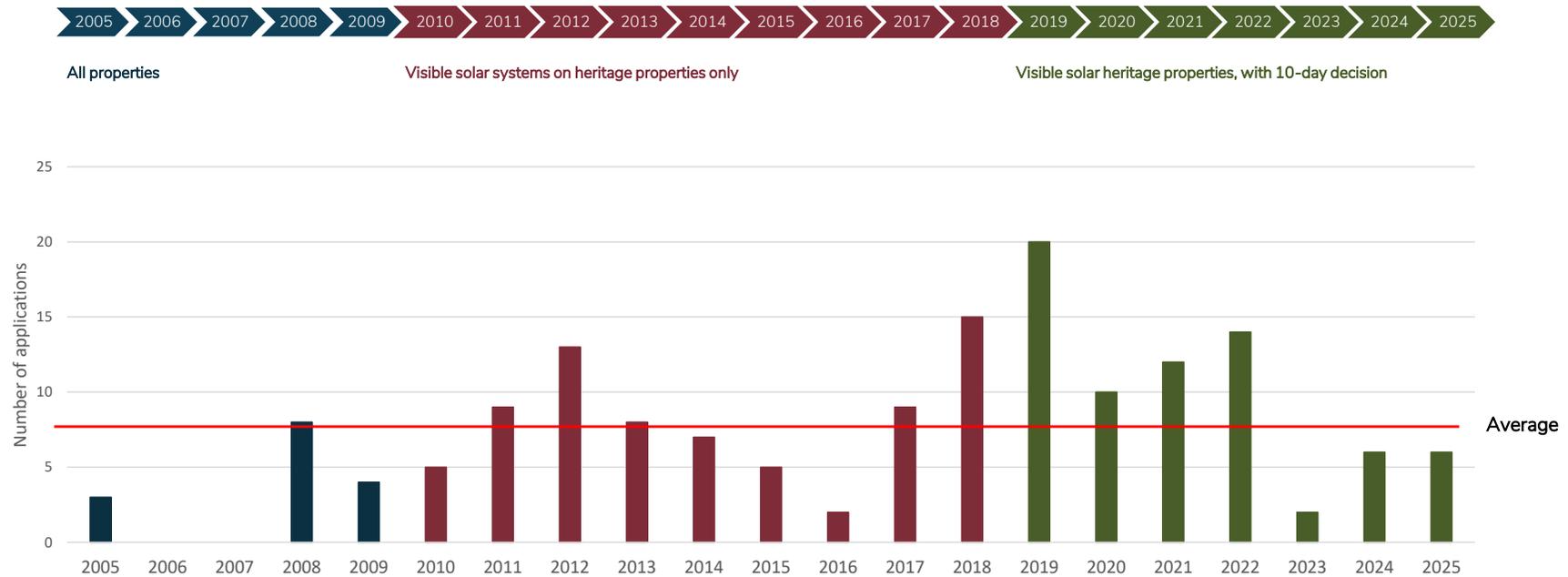
Examples of individually significant places in Merri-bek







Number of solar energy system applications



Solar energy system

Demolish or remove

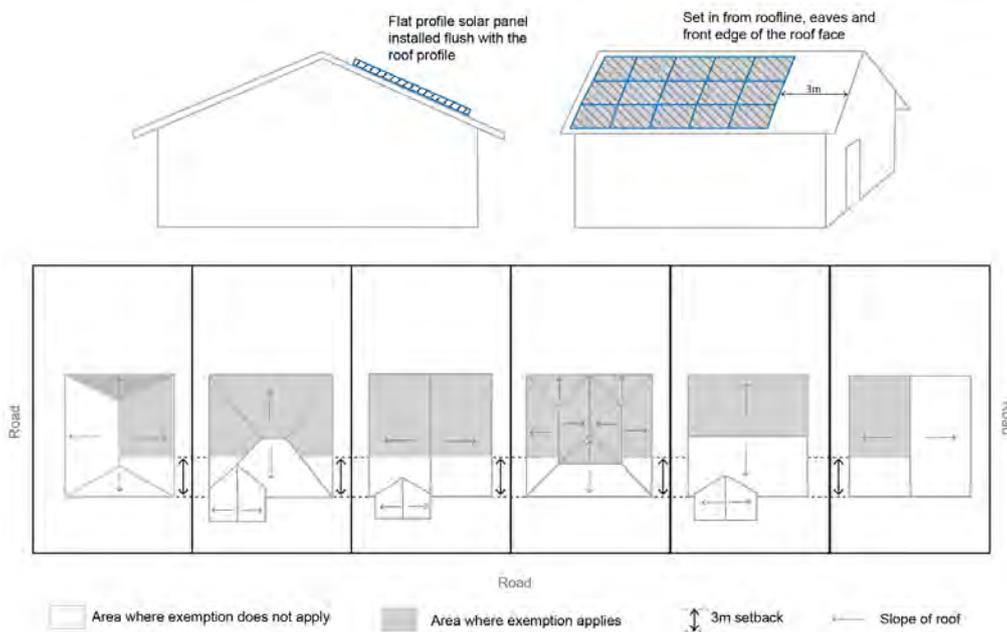
A permit is not required to demolish or remove a solar energy system.

Applies to	Significant	Contributory	Non-Contributory
	Yes	Yes	Yes

Construct, install or carry out works

A permit is not required to construct or install a solar energy system, where:

- it has a flat profile design installed flush with the roof profile and does not overhang any ridgelines or eaves;
- is setback at least 3m from the front side of the roof; and
- is not located on the front verandah/porch roofing, the front roof form or any part of the roof that faces the street (not including a laneway).



Applies to	Significant	Contributory	Non-Contributory
	No	Yes	Yes

7.11 PROPOSED SALE OF COUNCIL LAND AT THE REAR OF 436-442 SYDNEY RD COBURG

Director Place and Environment, Pene Winslade

Property

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Declares the property at the rear of 436-442 Sydney Road, Coburg, formally known as Lot 2 on Plan No. TP4689V, as surplus to Council's needs.
2. In accordance with section 114 of the *Local Government Act 2020*, publishes notice of its intention to sell the property on Council's website and invites feedback from the community.
3. Receives a further report outlining any feedback received and presenting a recommendation as to whether or not to proceed with the proposed sale of the property.

REPORT

Executive summary

As a result of a series of historic road discontinuances, Council has retained ownership of a relatively small parcel of land, located at the rear of 436-442 Sydney Road, Coburg ('the Property'). The Property was formerly a road and now runs along the back of 4 properties fronting Sydney Road, which appear to have been encroaching on the Property since at least the 1970s.

The owner of the abutting 4 properties has expressed a desire to purchase the Property from Council and has agreed in principle to purchase it at market value, plus provide reimbursement of Council's legal and valuation fees.

The Property has been assessed by internal Council stakeholders as having no other use or obvious strategic benefit to Council, given its size, the position of the abutting road and the boundaries of the neighbouring properties.

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement from Council to commence the statutory sale process for the Property in accordance Section 114 of the *Local Government Act 2020* by publishing written notice on its website and undertaking community engagement in line with Council's community engagement policy.

Whether to proceed with the sale of the Property will be the subject of a future Council decision, following the receipt of feedback from the community on the proposal.

Previous Council decisions

This matter has not been the subject of any previous Council decisions.

1. Policy Context

Council Plan 2025-2029

The Council Plan 2025-2029 outlines our strategic objectives, and the initiatives needed to achieve the Community Vision, along with clear indicators to measure our progress over the next 4 years. The Council Plan also highlights Council's commitment to protecting, improving and promoting the health and wellbeing of all individuals in Merri-bek.

Council Plan Priority 5.6 affirms that Council will:

Prioritise sustainable, climate resilient, equitable, finance management to ensure financial sustainability and effective use of resources and robust decision making.

Ensuring that decisions regarding the sale, purchase or retention of Council assets are made in a sustainable way, reflecting current and future needs of the community, will ensure that this priority can be achieved.

Community Engagement Policy

Community consultation regarding the proposed sale will be undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy 2024.

2. Background

The relevant property is the parcel of land at the rear of the properties at 436-442 Sydney Road, Coburg, as shown below in purple on the aerial map provided in Attachment 1. It was formerly a road, discontinued at some point between 1976 and 1994, having not been utilised as a road for a significant period of time.

It is a relatively small parcel of land, being only 84 square metres (approximately) in total. 436-442 Sydney Road, Coburg, comprises 4 separate properties with their own titles, all owned by a single owner ('Proposed Purchaser').

The four abutting properties at 436-442 Sydney Road appear to have been encroaching into the Property since at least the 1970s, with improvements including outbuildings and plumbing built on the Property, and fencing constructed to enclose the Property within the neighbouring land.

The encroachment onto the Property was first brought to the attention of Council around 2020, at which time the Proposed Purchaser was advised that Council could consider the sale of the Property to the Proposed Purchaser, or alternatively, the offending encroachments would need to be removed.

The Proposed Purchaser contacted Council again in 2025 expressing an interest in the purchase of the Property. The Proposed Purchaser has confirmed their agreement, in principle, to purchase the Property at market value (\$184,000 as at December 2025).

3. Issues

Council considers land sales against a Strategic Property Framework – which has been undertaken for this site in the tables below. In summary, given the size and location of the site, there are no obvious strategic benefits to Council to retain the land, while selling the land to the occupier of the Property would clean up an ownership anomaly, as well as provide income to Council.

1.	Service need (surplus to need)	Yes
1a.	Does the property support a current service delivery, or does it have potential to support a future a service delivery need in the short to medium term, having regard to the Community Vision, Council Plan and other adopted Council strategies or plans?	No
1b.	Is the property part of a strategic land holding (e.g. within an urban renewal area, part of a larger landholding that could be consolidated)?	No

2.	Further assessment	
2a.	Service - Have alternative options for the use of the property been assessed, considering Council's service needs? (e.g. delivery of a different service, use by a different tenant to deliver the service, redevelopment of the site to facilitate a community need)	Yes
2b.	Strategic – Has the potential strategic importance of the property been assessed?	Yes
2c.	Having considered the above, is it clear that no alternative service use is available for the property and that the property has no strategic importance?	Yes

3.	Suitability for disposal: value, timing and compliance	
3a.	Is the property able to be disposed of at fair market value?	Yes
3b.	Is the timing optimal to proceed with disposal (eg Council is maximising the value of the sale, such as through a planning scheme amendment)?	Yes
3c.	Can the disposal be completed in a compliant and transparent manner?	Yes

4.	Risk	Yes
4a.	Are there any atypical risks that may arise from disposal of the property (eg unintended negative consequences or outcomes generated by the sale)?	No
4b.	If yes, can these risks be mitigated	N/A

5.	Benefits	Response
5a.	What are the types of benefits that could be expected to be realised from sale of the property?	Funds generated from this sale can go into General Revenue The land will become rateable, thereby deriving additional income
5b.	Are there any potential disbenefits associated with disposal?	No

Legal and risk considerations

Retaining the Property

There are several encroachments from the neighbouring land into the Property. Were the sale to not proceed; in order to reduce any risk to Council associated with its liability for the land, it is recommended to pursue the Proposed Purchaser's removal of the encroachments.

If the Proposed Purchaser does not willingly remove their encroachments, it may be necessary to enforce the matter through legal proceedings. This may prove costly for both parties. Accordingly, proceeding with the sale reduces Council's risk in this regard.

Interest from other parties

Given the location of the Property, it is considered unlikely that other residents would object or that any other party would have a desire to purchase the Property.

However, publishing notice on Council's website and inviting feedback in line with the requirements of the *Local Government Act* and Council's Community Engagement Policy 2024 mitigates any such risk, by ensuring that such objections to the sale can be received by Council and given appropriate consideration before the decision to sell is made.

Compliance with the *Local Government Act 2020*

The *Local Government Act 2020* section 114 requires that before selling land, Council must:

- (a) *at least 4 weeks prior to dealing with the land, publish notice of intention to do so—*
 - i. *on the Council's Internet site; and*
 - ii. *in any other manner prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this subsection; and*
- (b) *undertake a community engagement process in accordance with its community engagement policy; and*
- (c) *obtain from a person who holds the qualifications or experience specified under section 13DA(2) of the Valuation of Land Act 1960 a valuation of the land which is made not more than 6 months prior to dealing with the land.*

If Council resolves to proceed, the above process regarding notice and community engagement could commence. While a valuation has been obtained, a further and final valuation would be obtained closer to the sale date, to ensure that it falls within the 6-month window specified by the Act.

Human Rights consideration

The engagement process will be carried out in line with Council's Community Engagement Policy and having regards to Council's human rights policy.

4. Community consultation and engagement

community engagement would be undertaken in accordance with Council's Community Engagement Policy and the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Council's Policy specifies that for the sale or exchange of land, Council will typically provide engagement at the level of 'Consult or Involve' for the community.

In this case, consulting the community would be achieved through providing details of the proposed sale of the Property and seeking feedback through Council's 'Conversations Merri-bek' page.

Additionally, letters would be posted to owners within the immediate vicinity of the Property, notifying them of the proposed sale and directing them to provide any feedback via the Conversations page or by post.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and resources implications

The Proposed Purchaser has indicated their willingness to purchase the Property for market value, being \$184,000 as at December 2025.

Additionally, the Proposed Purchaser has advised they are willing to reimburse Council's legal fees and valuation costs, making this aspect of the sale cost-neutral for Council.

Following the sale of the Property, the land would also become rateable, providing additional ongoing revenue.

7. Implementation

If the Officer Recommendation is endorsed, officers will commence the community engagement process and public notice period as detailed above as soon as practicable.

Following the community engagement period, officers would present a further report to Council, anticipated to be within the next 3-4 months, detailing any feedback received and providing the officer recommendation as to whether to proceed with the sale.

Attachment/s

- 1 [↓](#) Property Services - site plan for land rear of 436-442 Sydney Rd Coburg D26/73838

Aerial photograph of the Applicant's properties with the Council-owned parcel bordered in red:



7.12 PROCUREMENT POLICY 2025-2029

Acting Director Business Transformation, Anita Curnow

Financial Services

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability recommended that the Federal Government aim to reduce workplace segregation and achieve wage parity for people with disability by 2034.
2. Notes that no definitive information exists with respect to current Merri-bek contractors paying sub-minimum wages operating as an Australian Disability Enterprise (and whether they utilise the Supported Wage System) as documented in **Confidential Attachment 1** and if sub-minimum wages are paid, this is lawful under the *Fair Work Act 2009*.
3. Notes that for future public tenders, a question will be asked about whether in the delivery of the goods or services to Merri-bek, employees are paid sub-minimum wages under an Australian Disability Enterprise, and that scoring guidance for evaluation panels will specify that if the answer is yes, a reduced score will apply to the mandatory social sustainability criterion in the assessment.
4. Notes that no change to the Procurement Policy is required to implement the change in practice outlined at paragraph 2.

REPORT

Executive Summary

At the meeting on 8 October 2025, Council resolved to investigate the implications of not procuring from organisations such as prison industries and businesses which use the Supported Wage System such as Australian Disability Enterprises (ADE) for future contracts and provides a report back to Council by December 2025.

A confidential report on *Procurement Matters* was considered in December and Council sought an additional report by March 2026.

The current Procurement Policy was adopted in June 2025. Section 4.16 of the policy states *Merri-bek City Council aims to use procurement processes to drive sustainability, using our buying power to make a difference beyond the financial value of the goods and services we purchase. We aim to contribute to a fair, inclusive, economically, environmentally and socially sustainable community for all, via our suppliers and supply chain, supporting the targets and measures established by Council...*

Merri-bek City Council recognises its obligations under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and Australia's International Human Rights treaty commitments and respects, protects and promotes human rights when making procurement decisions.

Currently suppliers are required to provide yes or no answers in relation to their compliance with:

- *Fair Work Act 2009*
- *Modern Slavery Act (Cth) 2018*

As the Supported Wage System is lawful under the *Fair Work Act 2009*, potential suppliers do not need to declare if they utilise prison industries and or an Australian Disability Enterprises.

Officers recommend a change in process that does not require a change to the Procurement Policy. Subject to Council endorsement, the public tender documentation can be amended to add a question for all suppliers above the public tender threshold. The question would be scored under the mandatory sustainability weighting. The question would ask whether the supplier is an Australian Disability Enterprise and if so, whether they utilise the Supported Wage System or pay minimum wage to employees with a disability. If the tenderer answers yes to being an Australian Disability Enterprise that utilises the Supported Wage System, this would result in the tenderer receiving a lower score (scored down) in the sustainability evaluation criteria.

Previous Council Decisions

Procurement matters (Confidential report) – 10 December 2025

That Council:

...

5. ... Council receives a report by March 2026 outlining ... Council's options to inform further consideration of amendments to Council's Procurement Policy ...

Notice of Motion - Procurement Policy and subminimum wages for disabled people in segregated workplaces – 8 October 2025

That Council investigates the implications of not procuring from organisations such as prison industries and businesses which use the Supported Wage System such as Australian Disability Enterprises for future contracts and provides a report back to Council by December 2025.

Procurement Policy – 11 June 2025

That Council:

1. *Adopts the revised Procurement policy, at Attachment 1 of this report, with an amendment to section 4.12 Public Tender Requirements to add:*
 - *For major construction contracts greater than \$3 million, Council is committed to providing employment opportunities to youth employment (aged 15 to 24). For construction tenders with an estimated value of greater than \$3 million, suppliers are required to specify the number of youth employment opportunities both in full-time equivalent and in dollar spend this contract will create. Local employment opportunities will be looked at favourable, however is not mandatory.*
2. *Receives a briefing by the end of July on options for Council to not procure goods or services from suppliers with subminimum wages for workers with disabilities and associated procurement policy implications.*

1. Policy Context

The Procurement Policy is made under Section 108 of the *Local Government Act 2020*. The Act requires each council to:

- Prepare and adopt a procurement policy which specifies the principles, processes and procedures applying in respect of the purchase of goods and services and carrying out of works by the Council.
- Review its Procurement Policy at least once during each 4-year term of the Council.

The purpose of the policy is to:

- Provide a procurement framework for Council to achieve value for money in the procurement of goods and services, including for carrying out works;
- Assist in advancing the Council's sustainability and social objectives;

- Ensure continuous improvement in the provision of services for the community; and
- Ensure that Council resources are used efficiently and effectively for the benefit of the community.

The current procurement policy was endorsed on 11 June 2025.

2. Background

At the meeting on 8 October 2025, Council resolved to investigate the implications of not procuring from organisations such as prison industries and businesses which use the Supported Wage System such as Australian Disability Enterprises for future contracts and provides a report back to Council by December 2025.

Section 4.16 of the policy states Merri-bek City Council aims to use procurement processes to drive sustainability, using our buying power to make a difference beyond the financial value of the goods and services we purchase. We aim to contribute to a fair, inclusive, economically, environmentally and socially sustainable community for all, via our suppliers and supply chain, supporting the targets and measures established by Council.

Social Sustainability - aiming to elevate the inherent social value of doing business, by:

- Increasing employment opportunities for First Nations people and businesses to address inequity and strengthen their role in the Victoria economy
- Increasing employment opportunities for people experiencing social and economic exclusion or disadvantage, including but not limited to a disability, refugees, disadvantaged people and long term unemployed
- Promotion of equity, diversity and equal opportunity
- Ensuring suppliers do not exploit workers and provide fair wages, including business practices
- Respect for human rights, and the rule of law and international norms of behaviour.

Fair Work Act

Currently, under the Fair Work Act, employees with disability have the same minimum wage entitlements as other employees except when the Supported Wage System covers them. Employees eligible for a supported wage, under Schedule D of the Supported Employment Award, are entitlement to a minimum supported wage that is calculated differently to other awards. Employees are entitled to a percentage of the relevant minimum pay rate for their classification. The percentage applied is the higher of:

- the employee's assessed work capacity, rounded to the nearest whole percentage, or
- \$3.12 per hour.

In most awards, employees eligible for a supported wage can't be paid less than \$109 per week. This also applies to casuals, and junior employees.

As the Supported Wage System is lawful under the *Fair Work Act 2009*, officers currently do not know if a potential supplier utilises prison industries and businesses which use the Supported Wage System such as Australian Disability Enterprises.

Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability final report, in 2023, made 222 recommendations.

Recommendation 7.31 relates to raising subminimum wages, and includes that the Australian Government takes a phased approach to introduce a scheme to ensure that employees with a disability are paid at least half the minimum wage by 2034; further that this scheme is reviewed after five years of operation and use the results of the review to develop a pathway to lift minimum wages payable to employees with a disability to 100 per cent of the minimum wage by 2034.

Recommendation 7.32 relates to ending segregated employment by 2034. This recommendation calls for government to develop a roadmap to transform Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs) and eliminate subminimum wages for people with disability by 2034; it also includes that this recommendation (7.32), would operate in advance of recommendation 7.31 to raise all subminimum wages to the full minimum wages by 2034.

These recommendations have not been accepted in full by the Australian Government.

In November 2024, The UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Professor Tomoya Obokata, reported on his official visit to Australia. In his report after the visit, Obokata stated: "In Australia, persons with disabilities can be employed in sheltered workshops, referred to as Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs), where they engage in manual labour work, such as warehousing, 'picking and packing', cleaning and laundry services, sometimes against their will. Disturbingly, they are paid a sub-minimum wage as low as \$3 per hour for their work when the national minimum wage not covered industrial awards and registered agreement is \$24.10."

3. Issues

Council has several options for discouraging the payment of sub-minimum wages. Officers have considered and assessed the following options that could achieve this outcome.

Options considered

- **Option 1:** Amend the Procurement Policy to exclude procuring from companies whose main business relies on being an Australian Disability Enterprise or that specialise in Australian Disability Enterprises. This could have two different variants:
 - **Option 1A:** To apply for future contracts only
 - **Option 1B:** To apply to existing contracts when extensions are exercised

It is not feasible to cease using suppliers who have complied with Council's policy at the time of contract award and have no obligation to disclose whether they pay sub-minimum wages.

- **Option 2:** Do not amend the Procurement Policy but amend practice: have a **question** as part of public tender processes around whether a tenderer is an Australian Disability Enterprise, and if yes, do they utilise the Supported Wage System. In this instance, the mandatory sustainability evaluation criteria weighting would be scored accordingly, incentivising Australian Disability Enterprises not to pay sub-minimum wages.

Community impact

There may be unintended consequences of excluding Australian Disability Enterprises (who pay sub-minimum wages under the Supported Wage System) from Council Contracts (Option 1) if those enterprises are also a social enterprise, have local employment and/or have first nation employees. Option 2 provides a disincentive to these organisations bidding for contracts but does not exclude those suppliers, avoiding these unintended consequences.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

The policy implications in relation to the climate emergency and environmental sustainability are included throughout the Procurement Policy. This includes but not limited to a minimum weighting criteria of 10 per cent for Social, Environmental and Economic Sustainability for all public tender procurement activities. This is not a change from the current Procurement Policy, and the minimum weighting remains the same. There is nothing to differentiate the performance of Option 1 and Option 2 on climate emergency and environmental terms.

Economic sustainability implications

The policy implications include in relation to economic sustainability are embedded throughout. This includes a key principle of the policy being value for money as well as section 4.15 which talks through what value for money means and the consideration of financial and non-financial costs when demonstrating value for money.

The Social and Economic Sustainability aspects of the Procurement Policy are oriented to support local businesses and social enterprises. Option 1 could exclude some local or social enterprises from participating in procurement activities at Merri-bek, countering the other local economic benefits. Option 2 would lead to a reduction in the Social Sustainability score achieved, but this could be recovered somewhat if those suppliers have other social, local and environmental strengths in the assessment.

Legal and risk considerations

The Procurement Policy has been developed in alignment with the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of presenting this report to Council have been assessed and as a result there are no human right implications associated with presenting this report to Council.

4. Community consultation and engagement

Council's Community Engagement Policy 2020 states that for policy matters related to Council's internal organisational operations Council will not engage the community. Therefore, as this revised policy has a negligible impact on the community more broadly, nor can the policy be influenced significantly by the community; Council has not carried out any community engagement.

Affected persons rights and interests

Before making a decision that affects a person's rights, Council must identify whose rights may be directly affected and provide an opportunity for that person (or persons) to convey those views regarding the effect on their rights and consider those views.

Council sought to obtain information from existing Australian Disability Enterprises who may make use of the Supported Wage System Award. It has not been possible to obtain this information and the invitation for any relevant suppliers to contact Council to discuss the matter has not been taken up. It is important to note that the businesses have no obligation to disclose this information to Council and if they are utilising the Supported Wage System it is lawful under the *Fair Work Act 2009*. **Confidential Attachment 1** outlines the approach taken.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

There are no direct financial implications or resource implications related to this policy. Proper application of the policy will continue to improve general financial outcomes relating to purchasing and contract management.

There is a possibility that Option 1 would lead to less competition in tendering, and therefore higher contract costs. However, it is not possible to sensibly estimate the extent to which this could apply. Option 2 may lead to a slightly higher priced tender receiving an overall higher score, due to different scores for Social Sustainability. Again, this would be very difficult to estimate.

7. Implementation

Subject to Council adopting the officer recommendation, the public tender response form template will be amended to introduce the requirement for tenderers to state whether they are an Australian Disability Enterprise, and if yes, do they utilise the Supported Wage System.

Attachment/s

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| 1 | Australian Disability Enterprises
<i>Pursuant to section 3(1)(g)(ii) of the Local Government Act 2020 this attachment has been designated as confidential because it relates to private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.</i> | D26/86894 |
|---|---|-----------|

7.13 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 JANUARY 2026

Acting Director Business Transformation, Anita Curnow

Financial Services

Officer Recommendation

That Council receives the Financial Management Report for the period ending 31 January 2026, at Attachment 1 to this report.

REPORT

Executive Summary

This report presents the Financial Management Report for the financial year to date period ending 31 January 2026. A detailed financial review was undertaken across the organisation at the end of December 2025. The results of this review are included in this report as the Annual Forecast.

For the seven months ended 31 January 2026 an operating surplus of \$102.5 million was achieved, which is \$0.2 million lower than the year-to-date (YTD) budget. As set out in the issues section of this report, operating surplus funds do not convert to immediately available cash to Council. The accounting surplus includes items such as non-cash contributions, capital grants and is used to fund items such as loan repayments, the rates funded capital works program and transfers (savings) via reserves.

Council has spent \$26.1 million on capital expenditure, which is tracking below the YTD budget of \$37.1 million. After the detailed review of the program undertaken at the end of December, a total program of \$80.1 million is forecast, with \$53.9 million remaining.

Previous Council Decisions

2025-26 Second Quarter Financial Report – 11 February 2026

That Council,

1. *Notes the 2025-26 Second Quarter Financial Report for the period ending 31 December 2025, including operating performance and capital performance at Attachment 1.*
2. *Notes the status of the capital works program for 2025-26.*
3. *Notes the full-year forecast for operating income of \$286.9 million, operating expenditure of \$249.8 million and an accounting surplus of \$37.0 million arising from the Second Quarter Financial Review.*
4. *Endorses the full-year capital expenditure forecast of \$80.1 million, arising from the 2025-26 Second Quarter Financial Review.*
5. *Carries forward the following capital project funding to the 2026-27 Capital Works Program (\$20.8 million):*
 - a) *Fully or partially grant (or external) funded projects to be carried forward if the funding is secured and received this financial year:*
 - *Fawkner Netball Club Roof – \$4,483,220*
 - *Kendall/Harding Footbridge over Merri Creek – \$2,000,000*
 - *Victoria St - Streets for People – \$2,000,000*
 - *Coburg North Sports Hub Upgrades – \$813,421*
 - *40 km/h Rollout - Traffic Calming – \$400,000*
 - *Sportsfield Lighting - Dunstan Reserve (N&S) – \$400,000*
 - *Coburg Bluestone Cottage Complex Redevelopment – \$64,338*

- b) *Reserve funded projects:*
- *Park Renewal, Loyola Ave Pitt St (Design, Construct and Road Closure – \$300,000*
 - *Park Renewal, Calder Reserve (Design and Construct) – \$282,600*
 - *Parks and Reserve Flooding Rectification – \$200,000*
 - *Central Coburg Roads and Drainage – \$150,000*
- c) *Rates funded projects:*
- *McDonald Reserve Hockey Pitch - \$3,422,218*
 - *Glenroy Activity Centre Upgrade - Wheatsheaf Rd – \$1,351,912*
 - *Heavy Vehicles Replacement Program – \$1,000,000*
 - *Road Reconstruction, Northumberland Rd from Arndt to Crowley – \$800,000*
 - *West Street Neighbourhood Streetscape – \$721,000*
 - *DeChene Reserve - Gender Inclusive Facilities – \$702,775*
 - *Sylvester St Oak Park Land Slide – \$550,000*
 - *O'Hea St Bike Path Extension - Sussex to Derby St – \$400,000*
 - *Road Reconstruction, Tinning Street from Walter to Patterson – \$300,000*
 - *Fawkner Transport Study Projects- \$236,486*
 - *Hadfield Depot Masterplan Development & Drainage - \$200,000*
 - *Coburg Town Hall Upgrade – \$80,000*
 - *Carelink Go+ Device Purchases – \$59,584*
 - *Accommodation Changes to Meet Service Demand – \$50,000*
 - *Fawkner Library Upgrade Works - \$50,000*
 - *Balfe Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - \$20,000*
 - *Holbrook Reserve Pavilion and Gender Inclusive Change Rooms - \$10,000*
- d) *Adjustment to rates funded projects previously approved*
- *Coburg Outdoor Pool - 8 X 15 Toddlers Pool – (\$175,000)*
6. *Approves funding for the following new projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program (\$1.2 million):*
- *Wheeler Street – Retaining Wall - \$920,000*
 - *Brunswick Baths Changeroom Works - \$175,905*
 - *Union Street – Sinkhole/Cavity Remediation Works - \$100,510*
 - *Raeburn Lighting Pole Rectification - \$36,000*
7. *Approves additional funding for the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program (\$1.5 million):*
- *Park Renewal – Sewell Reserve - \$278,852*
 - *Reactive Drainage Program - \$266,570*
 - *Wombat Crossings – Barrow St & Blair St, Coburg - \$200,000*
 - *Light Plant and Equipment Replacement Program - \$200,000*
 - *Brunswick City Baths Repainting & Renewal - \$160,000*
 - *Raised Intersection – Landells Rd & Essex St, Pascoe Vale - \$116,000*
 - *Narre Narre Stadium Floor Renewal - \$109,264*
 - *115 Nicholson Street Footpath Upgrade - \$60,000*
 - *Gowanbrae Dog Park - \$19,051*
 - *Municipal Art Collection - \$13,115*
 - *Edgars Creek Corridor Connection Project - \$6,617*
 - *Road Reconstruction, Herbert Street from Pascoe Vale to Dead End - \$6,356*
 - *Road Reconstruction, Fowler Street from Walsh to Dead End - \$4,817*
 - *Brunswick Early Years Hub - \$4,500*
 - *Pedestrian Access & Priority Treatments - \$4,024*
 - *Public Art Program Across Merri-bek - \$1,385*

- Richards Reserve Natural Turf Renewal - \$1,182
 - Park Renewal – Soudan St - \$312
8. Notes savings realised from the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program (\$ 4.5 million):
- Drainage, Union St from Millward St to Brunswick Rd - \$1,450,000
 - Road Reconstruction, Northumberland Rd from Fawkner to Longview - \$353,393
 - Brunswick Activity Centre Upgrade Works – Wilson Ave - \$350,061
 - Road Reconstruction, Jersey St from Ohea to Gaffney – Both Carriageways - \$306,920
 - Sim Cr & Victoria St – Engeny Hot Spot No 8 - \$212,027
 - Road Reconstruction, Tinning Street from Patterson to Garnet - \$202,044
 - Light Vehicles Replacement Program - \$200,000
 - School Active Travel and Safety Infrastructure - \$200,000
 - Jukes Rd & William St, Fawkner – Priority Crossing - \$150,000
 - Climate Vulnerability Implementation – Buildings - \$120,000
 - Brunswick Baths – Modifications for Improvements to AV, IT & Lighting Systems - \$120,000
 - Raeburn Reserve – Cricket Training Nets - \$114,013
 - Parker Reserve – Baseball – Change Room & Refurbishment - \$109,264
 - Rehabilitation, Moonee Pde from Jewel to Union - \$100,000
 - Bain Avenue from Plaisted to Boundary, Road Reconstruction - \$97,746
 - Balfe Parks Sports Field Lights - \$83,113
 - Fawkner Transport Study Projects - \$64,000
 - Footpath & Bikepath Renewals - \$60,000
 - Road Safety and Amenity Improvements Program - \$52,000
 - Large Scale WSUD (Sportsfield Stormwater Reuse) - \$43,799
 - Brunswick City Baths Community Meeting Space - \$40,000
 - Park Renewal – Esslemont Reserve - \$30,000
 - Additional Seating on Walking Routes to Shops - \$2,250

...

2025-26 First Quarter Financial Report – 12 November 2025

That Council,

1. *Notes the 2025-26 First Quarter Financial Report for the period ending 30 September 2025, including operating performance and capital performance at Attachment 1.*
2. *Notes the status of the capital works program for 2025-26.*
3. *Notes the increase to the full-year forecast for operating income of \$9.2 million and the increase to operating expenditure of \$6.0 million arising from the 2025-26 First Quarter Financial Review.*
4. *Approves a decrease of \$2.7 million to the transfer to the Significant Projects Reserve (to \$1.8 million) in 2025-26 to fund additional expenditure relating to the Elevate Transformation Program and the bring forward of the Coburg basketball feasibility study. This reduction will be offset by a corresponding increase to the reserve in the 2026-2030 budget.*
5. *Endorses the full-year capital expenditure forecast of \$102.9 million, arising from the 2025-26 First Quarter Financial Review.*
6. *Carries forward the following capital project funding to the 2026-27 Capital Works Program:*
 - a) *Fully or partially grant funded projects to be carried forward if the funding is secured and received this financial year:*
 - *AG Gillon Stormwater Harvesting - \$1,000,000*

- Coburg Bluestone Cottage Complex Redevelopment - \$611,324.
- b) Rates funded projects:
- Bin Purchases (waste charge funded) - \$2,258,519
 - West Street Neighbourhood Streetscape - \$1,000,000
 - DeChene Reserve - Gender Inclusive Facilities - \$700,421
 - Coburg Outdoor Pool - 8 X 15 Toddlers Pool - \$175,000
 - Fawkner Library Upgrade Works - \$70,000.
7. Brings forward the following capital project funding to the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:
- Brunswick Early Years Hub (grant funded) - \$261,663
 - Coburg Olympic Pool - Repainting - \$135,000
 - Balfe Park Sportsfield Redevelopment - \$50,000.
8. Approves funding for the following new projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:
- Fawkner Netball Club Roof (grant funded) - \$4,560,000
 - Jukes Rd & William St, Fawkner - Priority Crossing (grant funded) - \$437,000
 - Blackspot Project - Intersection of Widford St & View St, Glenroy (grant funded) - \$263,900
 - Raised Crossing - Everett St & Moreland Rd (SLRSP) (grant funded) - \$184,000
 - Electric Vehicle Chargers (externally funded) - \$170,000 (previously budgeted as operating)
 - Emergency Road Works - Ivy St, Brunswick - \$104,010
 - Blackspot Project - Intersection of Albert St & Wilkinson St, Brunswick (grant funded) - \$57,330
 - Brunswick Bowls Club - \$16,646
 - Albion St/Lillian St Rectification - \$15,000
 - Glenroy Community Hub - Electrical Works - \$10,815
 - Coburg Lake Bridge Rectification Works - \$10,620.
9. Approves additional funding for the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:
- Mitchell Parade Retaining Walls (grant funded) - \$1,068,852
 - Drainage, Moama Crescent and Jhonson Street - Hot Spot No 21 - \$381,650
 - Victoria St - Streets for People (grant funded) - \$374,000
 - York Street Park Close to Home (reserve funded) - \$265,374
 - Rehabilitation, Moonee Pde from Jewel to Union - \$245,000
 - Wombat Crossings - Barrow St & Blair St, Coburg - \$200,000
 - Brunswick City Baths Repainting & Renewal - \$174,345
 - Road Reconstruction, Katawa Grove from Cooraminta to Dead End - \$168,000
 - 40 km/h Rollout - Traffic Calming - \$100,000
 - South Street - Engeny Hot Spot No 12 - \$99,404
 - Richards Reserve Natural Turf Renewal - \$85,485
 - South Street from Jensen to West, Road Reconstruction - \$82,866
 - Fawkner Leisure Centre Redevelopment - \$55,195
 - South Street from Dickinson to Everitt, Road Reconstruction - \$51,421
 - Park Renewal - Soudan St (reserve funded) - \$48,599
 - Building Maintenance - Capital Purchases - \$28,138
 - Fallon St From Union to Collier Both Carriageways - \$16,889
 - Park Renewal - Beccles / Oulton Reserve (reserve funded) - \$12,974
 - Tyson Street from Jukes Rd to Denys Street, Road Reconstruction - \$12,028
 - Mobile Phone Purchases - \$15,408
 - Shade Sail Installation - Anne Sgro Child Care (grant funded) - \$6,302.

10. *Notes savings realised from the following existing projects in the 2025-26 Capital Works Program:*

- *Road Reconstruction, O’Hea Street from Lonsdale St to Clifton Grove - \$548,786*
- *Road Reconstruction, O’Hea Street from Montefiore St to Lonsdale St - \$425,878*
- *Road Reconstruction, O’Hea Street from Sussex St to Bishop St - \$356,397*
- *Road Reconstruction, O’Hea Street from Bishop St to Montefiore St - \$350,514*
- *Road Reconstruction, Dalgety Street from Hope to Whitby - \$325,000*
- *Road Reconstruction, Devon Street from View to Oak - \$300,000*
- *Park Renewal, Cox Reserve, including playground upgrade (reserve funded) - \$227,239*
- *School Active Travel and Safety Infrastructure - \$200,000*
- *Road Reconstruction, Garden Street from Belfast to Glenlyon (both Carriageways) - \$165,237*
- *Road Safety and Amenity Improvements Program - \$143,000*
- *Wombat Crossing - Albion to Melville - \$115,000*
- *Coburg North Sports Hub Upgrades - \$95,755*
- *Patterson Street from Tinning to Albion, Road Reconstruction - \$26,760*
- *Parker Reserve - Baseball - Change Room & Refurbishment - \$25,000*
- *Snell Gve-Public Toilet-Snell Gve, Oak Park - \$15,859*
- *Fawkner Community Hall - CB Smith Reserve - \$7,000.*

2024-25 Financial Statements and Performance Statements – 10 September 2025

That Council, in accordance with the recommendations of the Audit and Risk Committee, and having considered Council’s Financial and Performance Statements for 2024-25 Statements at Attachments 1 and 2 to this report:

1. *Approves ‘in principle’ the Financial and Performance Statements 2024-25.*
2. *Authorises the Mayor, Cr Helen Davidson, Deputy Mayor, Cr Helen Politis, and the Chief Executive Officer, Cathy Henderson, to certify the Financial and Performance Statements for 2024-25 in their final form.*
3. *Carries forward the \$473,339 of tied operating funding that were not spent as of 30 June 2025.*
4. *Carries forward the \$32,410,329 of capital project funds into the 2025/26 Capital Works Program.*
5. *Authorises the Principal Accounting Officer to implement any minor administrative changes to the Financial and Performance Statements for 2024-25 if recommended by the Auditor-General upon final review, for approval by the Chief Executive Officer.*

1. Policy Context

The 2025-2029 Budget was adopted by Council on 23 June 2025. The Budget sets out the resources required to deliver the Council Plan, Services and Capital Works Program for the 2025-26 financial year.

This report supports Council’s continuing commitment to open and accountable management of the financial resources of Merri-bek on behalf of its ratepayers.

2. Background

The Financial Management Report at Attachment 1 provides Council’s financial statements for the year to date (YTD) period ended 31 January 2026. The actual results are compared to the budget in all parts of the report.

3. Issues

Operating Performance Summary

Year to Date Result

For the seven months ended 31 January 2026, an operating surplus \$102.5 million was recorded, which is \$0.2 million (0%) less than YTD budget of \$102.7 million. This comprises total revenue of \$243.9 million which is \$4.3 million (2%) more than the YTD budget of \$239.6 million and total expenditure of \$141.5 million which is \$4.6 million (3%) more than the YTD budget of \$136.9 million.

Further details on the YTD result are included in **Attachment 1**.

Forecast Year End Result

Council adopted the 2025-26 budget projecting a surplus of \$43.3 million in June 2025, which has now been revised to \$37.0 million following the Q2 review.

Although the annual forecast result remains an underlying surplus (underlying result), the lower surplus compared to budget indicates a decline in the operating position. While the underlying result has declined, the unrestricted result is forecasting a smaller decline to budget due to of savings from rates funded capital projects.

Further details of the annual forecast (including Q1 and Q2) are included in **Attachment 1**.

Capital Performance Summary

Year to Date Result

Council has spent \$26.1 million on capital expenditure YTD which is \$11 million (30%) lower than the YTD budget of \$37.1 million. After the detailed review of the program undertaken at the end of December, a total program of \$80.1 million is forecast, with \$53.9 million remaining.

Forecast Year End Result

Following the Q2 review the program is forecast to decrease by \$13.8 million from the adopted budget. This consists of savings of \$26.7 million 26-27 carry forwards and \$13.0 million in additional funding for 108 projects.

Financial Position Summary

Year to Date Result

Council is still showing a strong balance sheet position, with YTD cash assets at \$101.2 million. This is a \$5.1 million increase on 30 June 2025 cash levels. Cash fluctuates frequently over the year due to a number of factors. This increase is affected by the timing of rates instalments as well as lower than anticipated delivery of Capital Works program.

Forecast Year End Result

The forecast financial position for 30 June 2026 is a cash and investment position of \$81.7 million (an increase of \$13.9 million compared to the Q1 forecast) and net current assets of \$71.0 million (an increase of \$13.8 million compared to the Q1 forecast). This increase is primarily due to the increase in cash resulting from the forecast decrease in rates funded capital works of \$14.3 million in 2025-26.

Key Definitions

Surplus – is reported based on the Australian Accounting Standards and includes all operating income and expenditure recognised in the financial period, including gifted subdivisional assets (non-monetary), developer contributions and grants towards capital works projects. It is important to note that the surplus is not a cash surplus. It does not convert to immediately available cash for Council. Significant amounts of the

surplus are restricted by legislation and must be used for future infrastructure investment.

Adjusted underlying surplus – is the surplus for the year adjusted for non-recurrent capital grants and contributions. It is an accepted measure of financial sustainability as it is not impacted by non-recurring or once-off items of revenue and expenses that can often mask the operating results.

Unrestricted result – this is the net funding result after considering the funding requirements to meet loan principal repayments and transfers to and from reserves.

Solvency Assessment

Council officers have reviewed Council's liquidity (Current Assets divided by Current Liabilities), and the revised forecast is 2.1. The Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) recommends that this ratio be 1.5 or higher. This is a positive result and shows that Council is solvent.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities. There are no Human Rights impacts.

4. Community Consultation and Engagement

Community consultation and engagement was not required for this report as it reflects the performance against the budget and delivery of the capital works program. Advice was sought from officers across Council to provide performance results for the Second Quarter Financial Review.

Affected persons rights and interests

There are no individual rights or interests affected.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

The overall corporate objective is to deliver the 2025-26 budget with the best possible outcome for Council and the community, and in line with the approved revised forecast targets.

7. Implementation

The financial position of Council and the progress of the capital works program will continue to be monitored and managed.

Attachment/s

- [1](#) Council Monthly Financial Management Report - January 2026 D26/75697



Council Monthly Financial Management Report

7 Months Ended January 2026

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Executive Summary

Operating Performance

For the seven months ended 31 January 2026, Council recorded an operating surplus of \$102.5 million which is \$0.2 million (0%) less than the year to date (YTD) budget of \$102.7 million. This comprises total revenue of \$243.9 million which is \$4.3 million (2%) more than the YTD budget of \$239.6 million and total expenditure of \$141.5 million which is \$4.6 million (3%) unfavourable compared to the YTD budget of \$136.9 million.

Income Statement	YTD	YTD	YTD	YTD	Annual Budget	Annual Forecast	Annual Variance
	Actuals	Budget	Variance	Variance			
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Total Revenue	243,913	239,594	4,319	2%	281,292	286,861	5,569
Total Expenses	141,458	136,906	(4,552)	(3%)	237,964	249,832	(11,869)
Surplus/(Deficit)	102,454	102,688	(233)	(0%)	43,328	37,028	(6,300)

Adopted budget - YTD favourable variance in revenue is primarily driven by Grants - Capital (\$1.6 million), Supplementary Rates (\$1.5 million) and Parking Fines (\$1.0 million). YTD unfavourable variance in expenses is due to Employee Benefits leave provisions (\$4.0 million) and the provision for doubtful debts is higher than anticipated as some debts are not expected to be received (\$0.5 million).

Annual Forecast - The Q2 review is projecting a surplus of \$37.0 million, which is an unfavourable movement of \$6.3 million from adopted budget. Q2 also forecasts an adjusted underlying surplus of \$16.6 million which is \$5.4 million less than adopted budget.

Capital Works Program

YTD - Council has spent \$26.1 million on capital expenditure to 31 January 2026, which is \$11.0 million (30%) less than YTD adopted budget, with \$67.8 million (72.2%) of the full year budget remaining. The variance is driven by underspends in Roads projects (\$3.1 million), Recreational, Leisure & Community Facilities projects (\$2.6 million), Plant, Machinery & Equipment (\$2.2 million), Building Improvements (\$0.9 million), Buildings (\$0.9 million) and Footpaths & Cycleways (\$0.5 million).

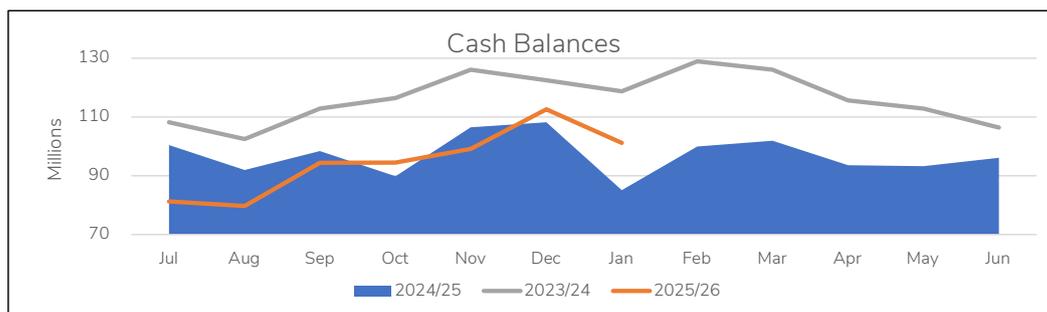
Annual Forecast - The capital works program is forecast to decrease by \$13.8 million from the adopted budget following the Q2 forecast. This consists of savings of \$26.7 million 26-27 carry forwards and \$13.0 million in additional funding for 108 projects.

Financial Results Summary	YTD	YTD	YTD	YTD	Annual Budget	Annual Forecast	Annual Variance
	Actuals	Budget	Variance	Variance			
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
New asset expenditure	2,767	3,252	485	15%	12,345	9,275	3,070
Asset renewal expenditure	16,428	24,908	8,479	34%	60,648	51,993	8,655
Asset upgrade expenditure	6,938	8,947	2,010	22%	20,894	18,787	2,107
Total capital works expenditure	26,133	37,106	10,974	30%	93,887	80,055	13,832

Cash & Investments

Cash assets are \$101.2 million as at 31 January 2026. This is an increase of \$5.1 million on 30 June 2025 cash levels, mainly as a result of due to the timing of when rates instalments fall due. Cash fluctuates frequently over the year due to a number of factors, mainly due to the timing of when the rates instalments fall due and the delivery of Capital Works projects.

Of the \$101.2 million cash assets, \$75.2 million is convertible to cash in less than 60 days and \$78.0 million (100%) is held in green investments. The portfolio is in compliance with Council policy which requires at least \$20.0 million to be convertible to cash and green investments to make up greater than 70% of all investments.



Operating Performance

Income Statement

YTD Variance (\$)		YTD Variance (%)	
▲	> \$500k	▲	> 10%
■	< \$500k & > (\$500k)	■	< 10% & > (10%)
▼	< (\$500k)	▼	< (10%)

Income Statement	Notes	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	YTD Variance %	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Revenue								
Rates and charges	1	204,222	202,442	▲ 1,781	1%	202,778	204,278	▲ 1,500
Statutory fees and fines	2	12,289	11,267	▲ 1,022	9%	19,323	20,276	▲ 953
User Fees	3	5,492	4,962	▲ 530	11%	8,899	9,748	▲ 849
Contributions - Monetary		4,702	4,969	■ (267)	(5%)	8,232	9,406	▲ 1,174
Grants - Operating	4	10,214	11,560	▼ (1,346)	(12%)	21,205	21,385	■ 179
Grants - Capital	5	1,649	-	▲ 1,649	100%	12,964	12,556	■ (408)
Other Revenue	6	5,316	4,368	▲ 948	22%	7,797	8,969	▲ 1,172
Asset Sales		29	26	■ 2	8%	92	243	■ 150
Total Revenue		243,913	239,594	▲ 4,319	2%	281,292	286,861	▲ 5,569
Expenses								
Employee Benefits	7	69,743	66,076	▼ (3,668)	(6%)	116,144	119,801	▼ (3,657)
Contracts, Materials & Services	8	42,342	42,486	■ 143	0%	73,199	80,196	▼ (6,996)
Depreciation	9	24,010	25,445	▲ 1,436	6%	43,621	42,323	▲ 1,297
Amortisation		212	205	■ (7)	(3%)	236	352	■ (116)
Bad and doubtful debts		2,189	1,786	■ (403)	(23%)	3,153	3,749	▼ (596)
Net loss on disposal of assets	10	2,081	-	▼ (2,081)	(100%)	-	1,811	▼ (1,811)
Finance Costs		475	472	■ (3)	(1%)	820	829	■ (9)
Other Expenses		406	436	■ 30	7%	790	771	■ 19
Total Expenses		141,458	136,906	▼ (4,552)	(3%)	237,965	249,832	▼ (11,869)
Net Result		102,454	102,688	■ (233)	(0%)	43,329	37,028	▼ (6,300)

Year to Date Result

Revenue

- Statutory Fees and Fines** ended \$1.0 million (9%) favourable due to process improvements and the impact of the newly implemented licence plate recognition system.
- User Fees** ended \$0.5 million (11%) favourable due to extension of meals provision contract (budgeted to end Sept 2025) for Darebin City Council (\$0.4 million).
- Grants - Operating** ended \$1.3 million (12%) unfavourable due to later than anticipated receipt of funding from the Department of Transport for school crossing supervisors (\$0.6 million) and Commonwealth Home Support Program (\$0.5 million).
- Grants - Capital** ended \$1.6 million (100%) favourable due to recognition of funding for a variety of different capital projects phased for June 2026.
- Other Revenue** ended \$0.9 million (22%) favourable to earning greater interest from Council's term deposits than budgeted (\$0.4 million) and recognition of contribution from Darebin City Council for Kendall/Harding Footbridge (\$0.1 million).

Expenses

- Employee Benefits** ended \$3.7 million (6%) unfavourable due to recalculation of annual leave and long service leave provisions.
- Depreciation** ended \$1.4 million (6%) favourable due to delays in capital projects being completed resulting in less capitalisations. This is a permanent variance, which has been reflected in the annual forecast.
- Net loss on disposal of assets** ended \$2.1 million (100%) unfavourable due to disposal of assets which generate nil proceeds like footpaths, roads, kerb & channel.

Forecast Year End Result

Revenue

1. Rates and Charges are forecast to increase by \$1.5 million due to greater than anticipated supplementary rating revenue (\$1.6 million).

2. Statutory Fees and Fines are forecast to increase by \$1.0 million primarily due the financial impact of the newly implemented licence plate recognition system (\$0.5 million increase in parking fines).

5. Other Revenue is forecast to increase by \$1.2 million primarily as a result of a greater than anticipated investment balance earning interest (\$0.7 million).

Expenses

7. Employee Benefits are forecast to increase by \$3.7 million primarily due to an increase in leave provisions (\$1.5 million), maternity leave (\$0.2 million), and increased costs in Social Support (\$0.2 million) and Parking (\$0.1 million), which are both offset by additional revenue.

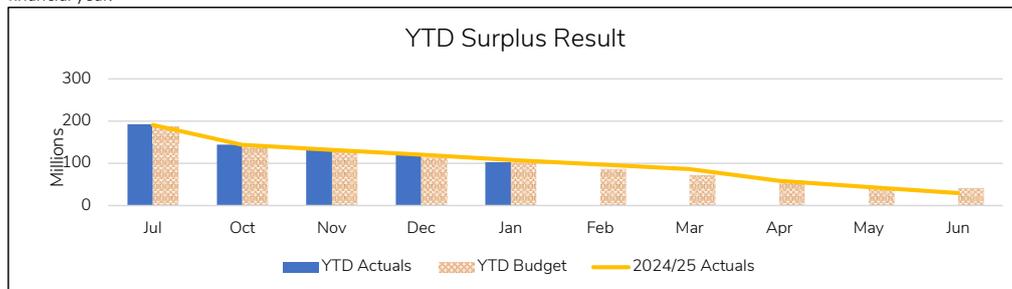
8. Contracts, Materials & Services are forecast to increase by \$7.0 million primarily due to earlier than anticipated lifecycle project expenditure for Elevate (\$2.5 million) and increased project delivery costs for Coburg Central (\$0.8 million), as well as increased service delivery costs relating to waste collection (\$0.5 million), building maintenance (\$0.5 million) and IT applications (\$0.4 million).

9. Depreciation is forecast to decrease by \$1.3 million due to delays in capital projects being completed resulting in less capitalisations.

10. Net Loss on Disposal of Assets is forecast to increase by \$1.8 million due to the process of disposal of existing assets when they are replaced with new assets.

YTD Operating Result

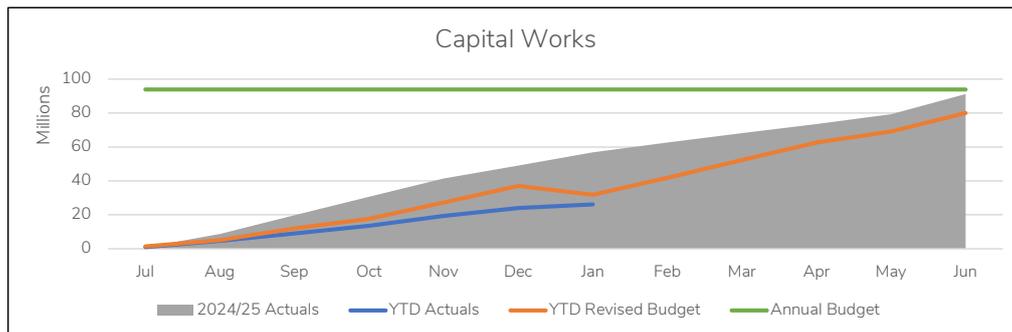
YTD surplus result is impacted by total rates being recognised in July and the surplus will reduce progressively over the course of the financial year.



Capital Works

YTD - Council has spent \$26.1 million on capital expenditure to 31 January 2026 which is \$11 million (30%) lower than the YTD budget, with \$67.8 million (72%) of the full year budget remaining.

Annual Forecast - The capital works program is forecast to decrease by \$13.8 million from the adopted budget following the Q2 forecast. This consists of savings of \$26.7 million 26-27 carry forwards and \$13.0 million in additional funding for 108 projects.

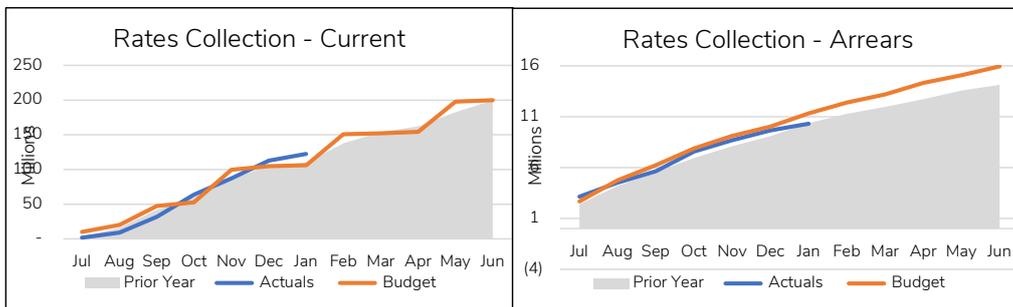


Debtors



Rates Collection

Rates cash collections are on budget and will be monitored over the upcoming months for impact on the forecast cash balances.



Investments

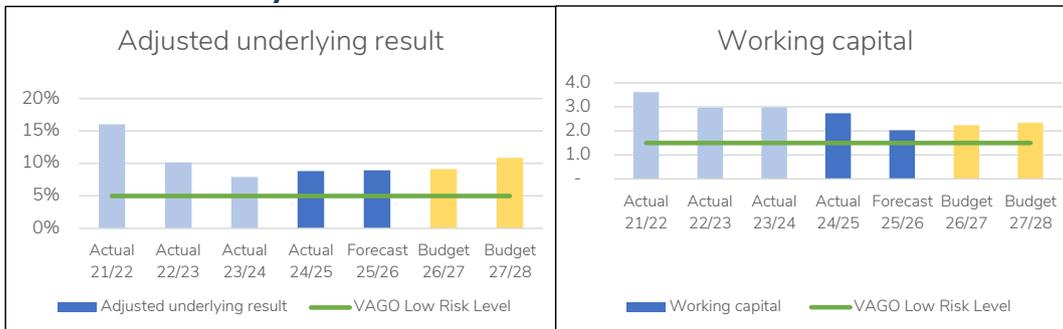
Of the \$101.2 million cash assets, \$75.2 million is convertible to cash in less than 60 days and \$78.0 million (100%) of term deposit investments are held in green investments. The portfolio is in compliance with Council policy which requires at least \$20.0 million to be convertible to cash and green investments to make up greater than 70% of all investments.

Bank	Maturity Date	Green %	Interest Rate %	S & P short term rating	Amount \$'000	Ratio %
Minor Cash*	N/A		N/A	N/A	99	
Westpac	N/A		4.20%	A-1+	12,954	
Westpac	N/A		4.30%	A-1+	10,121	
ME Bank - 2	18/02/2026	100%	4.05%	A-2	5,000	
ME Bank - 2	30/03/2026	100%	4.00%	A-2	5,000	21.8%
ME Bank - 2	17/02/2026	100%	3.95%	A-2	7,000	
Bendigo Bank - 2	23/03/2026	100%	4.00%	A-2	5,000	19.2%
Bendigo Bank - 2	18/02/2026	100%	4.00%	A-2	5,000	
Bendigo Bank - 2	8/04/2026	100%	4.10%	A-2	5,000	
Suncorp - 3	23/03/2026	100%	4.18%	A-1	10,000	12.8%
IMB - 3	8/04/2026	100%	4.10%	A-2	10,000	12.8%
Westpac - 6	27/02/2026	100%	4.14%	A-1+	6,000	
Westpac - 6	10/04/2026	100%	4.17%	A-1+	4,000	
Westpac - 6	4/06/2026	100%	4.32%	A-1+	10,000	33.3%
Westpac - 6	23/06/2026	100%	4.44%	A-1+	6,000	
Total		100%			101,174	100.0%
Green					78,000	100.0%

* Minor cash includes NAB holding account and Petty Cash

Financial Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Ratios

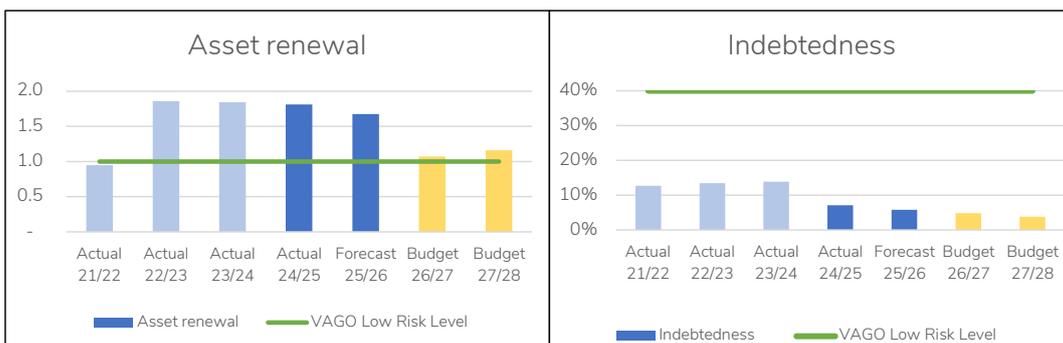


Adjusted underlying surplus (deficit) / adjusted underlying revenue

This ratio measures an entity's ability to generate its own cash. A positive result indicates a surplus, and the larger the percentage, the stronger the result. The result highlights Council's challenges in generating enough cash to fund future capital works without borrowing.

Current assets / current liabilities

Compares current assets to current liabilities, which provides a measure of the ability to pay existing liabilities in the next 12 months. This year's result expected to be in the low-risk range.



Renewal & upgrade spend/ depreciation

Ratios higher than 1.0 indicate that spending on existing assets is faster than the depreciation rate. This year's result is expected to stay in the low-risk range.

Non-current liabilities / own-source revenue

Measures Council's ability to pay the principal and interest on its borrowings as due from the funds it generates. This year's result is expected to stay in the low-risk range.

Treasury Corporation of Victoria (TCV)

TCV loan requirements		Target	Forecast
Interest Cover	EBITDA/Interest Expense	> 2	▲ 93
Interest Bearing Loans	Interest Bearing Liabilities/Own Source Revenue	< 60%	▲ 6%

TCV financing is conditional upon the Council maintaining a sustainable financial position when measured by the interest cover and interest bearing loans ratios. Forecast results indicate that the Council is meeting the minimum requirements. TCV loan requirements are well within target given limited borrowing compared to own source revenue and liability obligations.

Standard Statements

Comprehensive Income Statement

Comprehensive Income Statement	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Revenue						
Rates and charges	204,222	202,442	1,781	202,778	204,278	1,500
Statutory fees and fines	12,289	11,267	1,022	19,323	20,276	953
User Fees	5,492	4,962	530	8,899	9,748	849
Contributions - Monetary	4,702	4,969	(267)	8,232	9,406	1,174
Grants - Operating	10,214	11,560	(1,346)	21,205	21,385	179
Grants - Capital	1,649	-	1,649	12,964	12,556	(408)
Other Revenue	5,316	4,368	948	7,797	8,969	1,172
Asset Sales	29	26	2	92	243	150
Total Revenue	243,913	239,594	4,319	281,292	286,861	5,569
Expenses						
Employee Benefits	69,743	66,076	(3,668)	116,144	119,801	(3,657)
Contracts, Materials & Services	42,342	42,486	143	73,199	80,196	(6,996)
Depreciation	24,010	25,445	1,436	43,621	42,323	1,297
Amortisation	212	205	(7)	236	352	(116)
Bad and doubtful debts	2,189	1,786	(403)	3,153	3,749	(596)
Net loss on disposal of assets	2,081	-	(2,081)	-	1,811	(1,811)
Finance Costs	475	472	(3)	820	829	(9)
Other Expenses	406	436	30	790	771	19
Total Expenses	141,458	136,906	(4,552)	237,964	249,832	(11,869)
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	102,454	102,688	(233)	43,328	37,028	(6,300)

Underlying Result	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Surplus for the Year	102,454	102,688	(233)	43,328	37,028	(6,300)
Other Comprehensive Income						
Net asset revaluation	-	-	-	49,206	49,206	-
Total Comprehensive Result	102,454	102,688	(233)	92,534	86,234	(6,300)
Non Operating Income and Expenditure						
Net loss on disposal of assets	2,052	(26)	2,079	(92)	1,568	1,661
Contributions Capital (cash & non-monetary)	(141)	(9)	(132)	(32)	(993)	(961)
Grants - Capital	(1,649)	-	(1,649)	(12,964)	(12,556)	408
PRRLF Reserve	(4,346)	(4,543)	198	(8,200)	(8,200)	-
DCP Reserve	(215)	(213)	(2)	-	(213)	(213)
Net asset revaluation	-	-	-	(49,206)	(49,206)	-
Total Capital Income	(4,299)	(4,792)	493	(21,289)	(20,394)	895
Underlying Result	98,156	97,895	260	22,040	16,635	(5,405)
Less						
Loan Principal Repayments	1,218	1,218	-	14,212	14,209	3
Additional Rates Funded CAPEX	(1,982)	(1,982)	-	13,041	(3,397)	16,438
Transfers to Reserves - Operating	215	4,540	4,325	7,783	7,783	0
Transfers from Reserves - Operating	-	-	-	(13,500)	(16,640)	3,140
Carry Forwards processed into FY27	14,833	14,833	-	-	14,833	(14,833)
Total Transfers & Other	14,285	18,610	4,325	21,536	16,788	4,747
Unrestricted Surplus/(Deficit)	83,870	79,285	4,585	504	(154)	(657)

Statement of Financial Position

Statement of Financial Position	YTD Actuals \$'000	30/06/25 Actuals \$'000	Movement Inc/(Dec) \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Current assets						
Cash and cash equivalents	23,174	36,116	(12,942)	89	14,137	14,048
Trade and other receivables	144,107	41,679	102,428	45,793	45,887	94
Other financial assets	78,000	60,000	18,000	73,107	67,607	(5,500)
Inventories	690	690	-	659	659	-
Prepayments	3,935	3,160	775	2,429	2,429	-
Non-current assets classified as held for sale	25,153	22,975	2,178	-	-	-
Other assets	4,863	4,156	707	2,208	2,208	-
Total current assets	279,922	168,776	111,147	124,284	132,926	8,642
Non-current assets						
Unlisted Shares	2	2	-	2	2	-
Property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	2,632,811	2,635,161	(2,350)	2,983,191	2,968,845	(14,346)
Right-of-use assets	738	813	-	128	128	-
Investments	37,232	37,232	-	36,024	36,024	-
Total non-current assets	2,670,783	2,673,207	(2,350)	3,019,345	3,004,999	(14,346)
Total assets	2,950,705	2,841,983	108,797	3,143,629	3,137,926	(5,704)
Current liabilities						
Payables						
Payables	28,178	20,543	7,635	18,753	18,753	-
Revenue Received in Advance	4,082	2,302	1,779	6,898	6,898	-
Provisions	22,695	20,923	1,772	27,110	27,706	596
Interest Bearing Loans and Borrowings	14,209	14,209	-	2,172	2,172	-
Trust Funds & Deposits	1,063	5,822	(4,759)	6,384	6,384	-
Lease liabilities	59	121	(62)	-	-	-
Total current liabilities	70,286	63,920	6,366	61,318	61,913	596
Non-current liabilities						
Provisions	2,910	2,510	400	2,603	2,603	-
Interest-bearing liabilities	12,448	12,961	(513)	11,437	11,437	-
Lease liabilities	463	457	7	-	-	-
Trust Funds & Deposits	706	706	-	-	-	-
Total non-current liabilities	16,528	16,633	(106)	14,040	14,040	-
Total liabilities	86,813	80,554	6,260	75,358	75,954	596
Net assets	2,863,892	2,761,430	102,462	3,068,272	3,061,972	(6,300)
Equity						
Asset revaluation reserves	1,871,467	1,871,459	8	-	-	-
Other reserves	50,598	66,701	(16,103)	2,151,921	2,164,788	12,867
Accumulated surplus	941,828	823,270	118,557	916,351	897,184	(19,167)
Total equity	2,863,892	2,761,430	102,462	3,068,272	3,061,972	(6,300)

Statement of Cashflows

Statement of Cash Flows	YTD	Annual	Annual	Annual
	Actuals	Budget	Forecast	Variance
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows	Inflows
	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)	(Outflows)
Cash flows from operating activities				
Rates and charges	98,912	199,737	201,162	1,425
Statutory fees and fines	10,138	18,357	19,291	934
User fees	3,542	8,721	9,570	849
Grants - operating	10,214	21,205	21,385	179
Grants - capital	3,428	12,964	12,556	(408)
Contributions - monetary	4,704	8,232	9,406	1,174
Interest received	3,123	-	851	851
Trust funds and deposits taken	35,614	41,524	41,524	-
Other receipts	4,754	7,797	8,118	320
Net GST refund/(payment)	1,378	-	-	-
Payments to Employees	(70,405)	(113,670)	(117,327)	(3,657)
Payments to Suppliers	(48,440)	(73,167)	(80,163)	(6,996)
Trust funds and deposits repaid	(24,412)	(41,414)	(41,414)	-
Other payments	(447)	(790)	(771)	19
Net cash (used in) / provided by operating activities	32,103	89,497	84,187	(5,310)
Cash flows from investing activities				
Payments for property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	(25,640)	(93,886)	(80,054)	13,832
Proceeds from sale of property, infrastructure, plant and equipment	344	92	242	150
Payments/(Proceeds) for investments	(18,000)	4,993	4,993	-
Net cash used in investing activities	(43,296)	(88,801)	(74,819)	13,982
Cash flows from financing activities				
Finance costs	(468)	(816)	(825)	(9)
Repayment of borrowings	(1,219)	(14,212)	(14,209)	3
Interest paid - lease liability	(7)	-	-	-
Repayment of lease liabilities	(55)	(20)	(20)	-
Net cash used in financing activities	(1,749)	(15,048)	(15,054)	(6)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	(12,942)	(14,352)	(5,686)	8,666
Cash at beginning of period	36,116	14,441	36,116	21,675
Cash at end of period	23,174	89	30,431	30,342
Cash Position				
Non-restricted Cash at 1 July 2025	36,116	14,441	36,116	21,675
Other Financial Assets at 1 July 2025	60,000	78,100	60,000	(18,100)
Cash & cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	96,116	92,541	96,116	3,575
Non-restricted Cash at end of financial period	23,174	89	14,137	14,048
Other Financial Assets at end of financial period	78,000	73,107	67,607	(5,500)
Cash & cash equivalents at end of financial period	101,174	73,196	81,744	8,548

Statement of Capital Works

Statement of Capital Works	YTD Actuals \$'000	YTD Budget \$'000	YTD Variance \$'000	Annual Budget \$'000	Annual Forecast \$'000	Annual Variance \$'000
Property						
Land	2	-	(2)	-	-	-
Buildings	1,856	2,670	814	8,910	5,783	3,127
Building Improvements	2,139	2,968	829	7,535	8,361	(826)
Total property	3,996	5,638	1,642	16,445	14,144	2,301
Plant and equipment						
Plant, machinery and equipment	987	3,186	2,199	5,877	5,460	417
Fixtures, Fittings and Furniture	35	63	28	171	176	(4)
Computers and telecommunications	503	619	115	1,125	1,021	104
Artworks	13	44	31	47	61	(14)
Library books	625	655	30	1,082	1,082	0
Total plant and equipment	2,163	4,566	2,403	8,302	7,800	503
Infrastructure						
Roads	8,575	11,699	3,124	27,223	27,432	(209)
Bridges	136	329	193	3,334	1,369	1,965
Footpaths and cycleways	2,266	2,727	461	6,662	5,209	1,453
Drainage	960	1,132	172	2,946	1,727	1,219
Recreational, leisure & community facilities	3,004	5,602	2,599	14,025	9,778	4,247
Waste management	172	220	48	2,183	269	1,914
Parks, open space and streetscapes	4,861	5,193	332	12,767	12,327	440
Total infrastructure	19,973	26,902	6,929	69,140	58,111	11,029
Total capital works expenditure	26,133	37,106	10,974	93,887	80,055	13,832
Represented by:						
New asset expenditure	2,767	3,252	485	12,345	9,275	3,070
Asset renewal expenditure	16,428	24,908	8,479	60,648	51,993	8,655
Asset upgrade expenditure	6,938	8,947	2,010	20,894	18,787	2,107
Total capital works expenditure	26,133	37,106	10,974	93,887	80,055	13,832

Procurement reporting**Contracts approved under delegation**

This includes a listing of all of the contracts entered under delegation for the month of January.

Contract Description	Contract	Start date	Delegation	Total Contract (excluding GST)
Charles Mutton Reserve Sports Field Lighting Upgrade	RFT-2025-57	15/01/2026	CEO	\$614,455.00
Widford Street and View Street - Pedestrian Refuge Islands	RFQ-2025-102	30/01/2026	Manager	\$149,649.00

7.14 GOVERNANCE REPORT - MARCH 2026 - CYCLICAL REPORT

Acting Director Business Transformation, Anita Curnow

Governance and Strategy

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Notes the summary of minutes from Advisory Committees at Attachment 1 to this report, as follows:
 - a) First Peoples Advisory Committee held 5 February 2026
 - b) Friends of Aileu Community Committee held 10 February 2026
 - c) Arts Advisory Committee held 17 February 2026
2. Endorses the recommendation of the Arts Advisory Committee meeting held 17 February 2026 and, in accordance with the *Art Acquisition and Collection Development Policy*, approves the purchase of John Englart's portrait by Maggie Cowling as part of the annual art collection acquisition budget.
3. Notes the Records of Meetings, at Attachment 2 to this report.
4. Endorses the motions at attachment 3, to be submitted for the next MAV State Council meeting to be held on 29 May 2026.
5. Endorses the motions in Attachment 4, to be submitted for the next ALGA National General Assembly of Local Government to be held on 23-25 June 2026.
6. Approves interstate travel and registration of Mayor Abboud and Councillor/s _____ to represent Council at the 2026 National General Assembly of Local Government in Canberra from 23-25 June 2026, noting the travel, accommodation and registration expenses will be met from the Mayor and Councillor Support budget.
7. Notes the Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations and Findings Report at Attachment 5 to this report.
8. Revokes the Management of Mobile and Temporary Food Premises Policy.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The Governance report is prepared as a monthly standing report to Council which provides a single reporting platform for a range of statutory compliance, transparency, and governance related matters.

This Governance report includes:

- A summary of the minutes of Advisory Committees and Groups.
- The Arts Advisory Committee's recommendation to purchase the art work as listed in the officer recommendation.
- Records of Meetings, with a recommendation that Council notes the records.
- Proposed topics for the Municipal Association Victoria State Council meeting in May 2026.
- Proposed topics for the Australian Local Government Association, National General Assembly in June 2026.

- Proposed nominations for Mayor and selected Councillors to attend the Australian Local Government Association National General Assembly in June 2026.
- The Merri-bek City Council Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations and Findings Report.
- A revocation of the Council endorsed Management of Mobile and Temporary Food Premises Policy noting guidelines have been implemented to replace the provision of this process.

Previous Council Decisions

Governance Report – February 2025 - Cyclical Report – 12 February 2025

That Council:

...

9. *Approves interstate travel and registration of the Mayor Cr Davidson and Councillors (to be confirmed) to represent Council at the 2025 National General Assembly of Local Government in Canberra from 24–27 June 2025, noting the travel, accommodation and registration expenses will be met from the Mayor and Councillor Support budget.*

...

Mobile and Temporary Food Van Policy – 12 February 2014

Council resolve:

1. *To adopt the revised Mobile and Temporary Food Premises Policy.*
2. *To publicise the revised Policy.*

1. Policy Context

Reports from Advisory Committees to Council are provided in accordance with the Terms of Reference.

The Merri-bek Art Acquisition and Collection Development Policy guides the acquisition of pieces for the Merri-bek Art Collection, whether by purchasing or commissioning artworks, or as the recipient of donations, gifts or bequests.

The *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) and the Governance Rules set out the requirements for keeping and reporting records of meetings held under the auspices of Council.

Support, Expenses and Resources Policy requires that all travel, accommodation and registration to conference and events with a value of \$100 or more per ticket, be approved by a resolution of Council.

2. Background

The Governance Report is prepared as a monthly report to Council to provide a single reporting platform for a range of statutory compliance, transparency, and governance related matters.

In accordance with best practice principles and good governance practice, and to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Act, this report incorporates matters including reporting of Advisory Committees, records of meetings held under the auspice of Council, items relating to the delegation of Council powers and duties, and policy and strategy reporting.

3. Issues

Advisory Committee minutes

A summary of the minutes of Advisory Committees are provided at **Attachment 1** for Council's information:

- a) First Peoples Advisory Committee held 5 February 2026
- b) Friends of Aileu Community Committee held 10 February 2026
- c) Arts Advisory Committee held 17 February 2026

The Arts Advisory Committee minutes contains a recommendation for the acquisition of John Englart's portrait by Maggie Cowling for the Merri-bek Art Collection as part of the annual art collection acquisition budget at a value of \$1,800, in line with the Art Acquisition and Collection Development Policy.

Further acquisitions will be referred to later Council meetings.

Records of Meetings held under the auspice of Council

Records of matters discussed at meetings organised or hosted by Merri-bek that involve Councillors and Council officers are kept in accordance with the Governance Rules.

Meeting Records must include meeting attendees, including organisations represented by external presenters; the title of matters discussed; and any conflicts of interests disclosed and whether the declarant of a conflict of interests recused themselves from the meeting.

Some examples include Councillor Briefings, meetings with residents/developers/clients/organisations/Government departments/statutory authorities and consultations.

Records of Meetings received since the previous Council Meeting are presented at **Attachment 2** as follows:

- Councillor Briefing - 9 February 2026
- Councillor Briefing - 16 February 2026
- Central Coburg Oversight Committee - 25 February 2026
- Special Councillor Briefing - 25 February 2026
- Councillor Briefing - 2 March 2026
- Audit and Risk Committee - 3 March 2026

MAV and ALGA Motions 2026

The MAV State Council Meeting scheduled for 29 May 2026 enables Council to propose priorities with statewide significance for MAV to advocate on its behalf.

The topics are listed below, and the detailed motion is shown in **Attachment 3**:

- Improving bus services in Victoria
- Extreme heat as an emergency and support for cool spaces

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) will hold its annual National General Assembly (NGA) in Canberra from 23-26 June 2026. The theme for the event is Stronger Together: Resilient. Productive.

ALGA requested councils submit motions aligned to its theme, the topics are listed below and the detailed motion is shown in **Attachment 4**:

- Signing and ratifying the UN Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons
- Climate adaption fund to deliver place-based climate solutions including cool spaces

Attendance - 2026 National General Assembly of Local Government

It is proposed that Council approves interstate travel and registration of Mayor Abboud and Councillors (yet to be confirmed) to represent Council at the 2026 National General Assembly of Local Government in Canberra from 23–25 June 2026.

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) has announced the 32nd National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA) will be held in Canberra at the National Convention Centre from 24-25 June 2026.

The event will include the Regional Cooperation and Development Forum on Tuesday 23 June and the NGA from Wednesday 24 June to Thursday 25 June 2026.

Early bird registration fee is \$999.00 per delegate, early bird closes 30 April 2026.

The National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA) is the largest annual gathering of local government leaders in Australia”, and is targeted at local government, with active participation from a range of councils working directly with guest speakers.

This 3-day conference and workshop will bring together local government leaders and policy-makers from across Australia and will contribute to the improvement of local government engagement.

Audit and Risk Committee Recommendations and Findings Report

The Audit and Risk Committee is required to report its Recommendations and Findings report to Council twice a year.

The Audit and Risk Committee recommendations and findings report is shown at **Attachment 5**.

Revocation of Management of Mobile and Temporary Food Premises Policy

The Management of Mobile and Temporary Food Premises Policy is no longer required as it is outdated and does not reflect current legislation or contemporary operational practices. In line with legislative updates and improvements to Council’s internal processes, Council has developed new Roadside Trading Application Guidelines and refreshed fact sheets for food truck owners and operators to provide clear, accessible and up-to-date guidance that supports safe and lawful trading. As these documents are operational in nature, they do not require formal Council endorsement and can be updated administratively to remain current with evolving regulatory requirements and best-practice approaches. Collectively, these contemporary resources now offer a more practical, accurate and flexible framework for managing temporary and mobile food operations, effectively replacing the need for a standalone policy.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

There are no climate emergency implications associated with this report.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, and this report does not contravene or limit any of the 20 fundamental human rights as set out in the Charter.

4. Community consultation and engagement

Advisory committees provide a valuable communication and consultation link between the organisation, Councillors, Council and the community.

Affected persons rights and interests

This report and its recommended decision does not affect any person’s rights.

5. Officer Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council officers involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in the matters listed.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

The purchase of the artwork is included in the adopted Budget 2025/26 as part of the annual art collection acquisition budget.

Travel, accommodation and registration expenses associated with Mayor and Councillor attendance at the 2026 National General Assembly of Local Government will be met from the Mayor and Councillor Support budget.

There are no further financial implications associated with this report.

7. Implementation

Governance activity, including reports of Committees to Council, Records of Meetings and Community Question Time items will continue to be reported to Council monthly.

Subject to Council's decision the next steps include:

- Purchasing the artwork listed in the Officer Recommendation.
- The submission of the Council endorsed motions for consideration at the National General Assembly, to the Australian Local Government Association by 30 March 2026.
- Booking the approved interstate travel for Councillors to represent Council at the 2026 National General Assembly of Local Government in Canberra from 24-25 June 2026.
- The removal of the Management of Mobile and Temporary Food Premises Policy from all communication channels.
- The implementation of the newly developed Roadside Trading Application guidelines, along with corresponding updates to Council's website.
- The updated fact sheets for owners and operators of food trucks to be made available on Council's website.

Attachment/s

1 ↓	Reports from Advisory Committees to Council - March 2026	D26/90018
2 ↓	Records of Meetings - March 2026	D26/90136
3 ↓	Proposed MAV Motions	D26/91418
4 ↓	National General Assembly of Local Government - Proposed Motions	D26/91486
5 ↓	Audit and Risk Committee - Recommendations and Findings Biannual Report	D26/91531

FIRST PEOPLES ADVISORY COMMITTEE - 5 FEBRUARY 2026

A report of the First Peoples Advisory Committee meeting held on 5 February 2026 are provided for Council's information.

Councillors appointed to the First Peoples Advisory Committee: Cr Sue Bolton.

Key Items Discussed

- The committee received a brief induction covering Council structure and the annual budget cycle, and the ways the committee can inform the budget
- Members raised concerns about Elders facing barriers when accessing My Aged Care, and officers will follow up with Aged Services.
- The Committee noted the need to consider Ballert Mooroop alongside other major projects in the municipality and requested clearer information about how the draft Council budget supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities.
- Officers presented background for the First Peoples Strategy, outlining current commitments and partnerships, including with Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Corporation and Aboriginal Housing Victoria.
- Members discussed procurement targets, and Aboriginal Housing Victoria housing programs, and the need for clearer data on Aboriginal business engagement.
- Questions were raised about the Ballert Mooroop business case, land title, and funding pathways.
- The Committee was informed that that the State Government intends to transfer the land to Wurundjeri, with rezoning underway and funding decisions due in March.
- Wurundjeri will lead Ballert Mooroop Day 2026. An Aboriginal Health Expo has been proposed to be held at Glenroy Hub on 15 April and Council is interest in hosting another Welcome Baby to Country event.
- The next meeting will be held on 26 March 2026 at 4 pm, with the remaining dates to be set by the co-chairs.

Disclosures of Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest was disclosed at the meeting.

Committee Recommendation

The Committee recommends that Council:

- Endorses that Council actively engages with Aboriginal Housing Victoria to finalise a draft Memorandum of Understanding for Council adoption.

Attachment/s

There are no attachments for this report.

FRIENDS OF AILEU COMMUNITY COMMITTEE - 10 FEBRUARY 2026

A report of the Friends of Aileu Community Committee meeting held on 10 February 2026 is provided for Council's information.

Councillors appointed to the Friends of Aileu Community Committee are:

- Merri-bek: Cr Pulford (apology)
- Hume: Cr Bell (apology) and Cr Kurt (apology)

Key Items Discussed

- Dates for bi-monthly meetings of the Committee in 2026 were agreed.
- Minutes of the Committee meeting of 9 December 2025 were endorsed.
- The Financial Summary (fundraising & donations and coffee sales) for calendar year 2025 as noted.
- Funds available for 2026 funds on-hand as of 31 January 2026 were noted: \$22,811 (\$22,611 already committed and \$1,086 uncommitted balance).
- The target for additional fundraising during 2026 was agreed: \$40,250 (\$37,500 as per indicative priorities tabled for the meeting, plus an additional \$3,000 for a replacement motorcycle for the Aileu Resource and Training Centre, which the meeting accepted as another urgent priority).
- Action Plan priorities for 2026, including the following, were generally noted and agreed:
 - Friends of Aileu Annual Report 2025: to be submitted to the 14 April meeting of the Committee
 - Financial report for Consumer Affairs Victoria: to be lodged by 30 June
 - Future Collective PermaYouth trip October 2025: ongoing follow up with the 3 Youth Award participants (sponsored by Friends of Aileu and Friends of Baucau), on their commitments to undertake agreed community activities sharing their experiences
 - Victoria University pre-school education support: options were being considered following the visit in October
 - The Committee endorsed the funds as below being transferred to Aileu, following confirmation of scholarship nominees for 2026:
 - \$10,660 for Aileu Scholarship Program, funds raised from 2025 Trivia Quiz
 - \$5,200 for Baucau Teachers College tuition fees, Hume City Council 2025/26 education donation
 - Oral Health Promotion project: Glenyys Romanes reported progress, including Working Group meetings in December and February, and the fundraising dinner being organised for 27 March at the Trugo Club.
 - Other project priorities and fundraising targets:
 - Aileu Friendship Commission (operations contribution): the Committee endorsed up to \$1,500 being transferred to Aileu
 - Aileu Municipal Youth Centre (operations contribution): \$1,500
 - Aileu Resource and Training Centre (operations contribution, replacement motorcycle and the Aileu Expo): \$12,500

- Aileu Anan Association (PermaYouth activities): \$5,000
 - Maryknoll Sisters women's sewing group (proposed upgraded & relocated kiosk): \$1,250
 - Holstep Health: an approach be made to discuss re-activating the relationship and the potential for future financial support
 - The Australia Timor-Leste Friendship Network's Friendship Grants (closing 15 March): an application to be made for one of the three \$5,000 grants donated by Kirsty Sword Gusmão from donations from her 2025 study tour.
- The following events and activities for 2026 were also supported:
 - A social fundraiser with Brunswick Zebras during FIFA World Cup (June-July).
 - Aileu Resource and Training Centre support: an invitation for a visit by Joaquin dos Reis in August, along with a fundraiser.
 - A Friends of Aileu presence at Council festivals, including the Sydney Road Street Party, the Glenroy Festival and possibly the Hume Winter Lights Festival.
 - Two public Library Talk events, following the success of the 2025 events at Glenroy and Broadmeadows.
 - The Trivia Quiz fundraiser for Aileu Scholarship Program: a date to be selected for a Friday in October 2026.
 - Inner North Foundation: opening a Fund (either 'Friends of Aileu' or 'Inner North Friends of Timor-Leste' with Friends of Baucau) is to be further considered by the Project Reference Group and the Committee.
 - A possible future FoA / Council delegation to Aileu around 20 May 2027 (25th anniversary of Restoration of Independence) was noted.

Disclosures of Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest was disclosed at the meeting.

Committee Recommendation

There were no recommendations from the committee to Council.

Attachment/s

There are no attachments for this report.

ARTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING - 17 FEBRUARY 2026

A report of the Arts Advisory Committee meeting held on 17 February 2026 are provided for Council's information.

Councillors appointed to the Arts Advisory Committee: Deputy Mayor Cr Jay Iwasaki.

Key Items Discussed

- Induction to the committee
- Brunswick Town Hall Activation
- 2026 Counihan Gallery Program
- Acquisition of John Englart's portrait by Maggie Cowling to the Merri-bek Art Collection, to commemorate John's contribution to Merri-bek and his recent passing.
- Summary of 2023-2030 Arts and Culture Strategy

Disclosures of Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest was disclosed at the meeting.

Committee Recommendation

That Council notes the summary of minutes from the Arts Advisory Committee to Council and endorses the Committee's recommendation to purchase of John Englart's portrait by Maggie Cowling as part of the annual art collection acquisition budget at a value of \$1,800, in line with the Art Acquisition and Collection Development Policy.

Further acquisitions will be referred to later Council meetings.

Attachment/s

There are no attachments for this report.

Record of Meeting

Meeting: Councillor Briefing

Date: 9 February 2026

Meeting time: 6.00pm to 8.40pm



This Record is kept in accordance with the Governance Rules adopted by Council.

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The record will include the attendees at the meeting, including the organisations represented by external presenters, the title of matters discussed and any conflicts of interest disclosed and whether the person with the conflict of interest left the meeting.

Attendees	
Councillors	Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor Cr Jay Iwasaki, Deputy Mayor Cr Katerine Theodosis Cr Helen Davidson Cr Liz Irvin Cr Chris Miles Cr Adam Pulford Cr Ella Svensson Cr Sue Bolton
Apologies	Cr Oscar Yildiz JP Cr Helen Politis
Council Staff (name and position)	Sue Vujcevic, Acting Chief Executive Officer Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation Greg Rodwell, Acting Director City Infrastructure Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community Leanne Giardina, Manager Aged and Community Support (item 2) Jemma Wightman, Chief Financial Officer (Item 2 and 3)
External participants	Nil

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	Council Meeting Agenda	Nil	
2	Budget Workshop: Aged Care and Community Support	Nil	
3	Budget Workshop	Nil	
4	CEO Employment Matters	Confidential item not involving officers	Directors, Acting Directors and Acting CEO

Name and title of Council officer completing record: Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation

This form is kept in accordance with the Information Privacy Principles and Merri-bek City Council's Privacy Policy and practices as stated on Merri-bek's [website](#).

Record of Meeting

Meeting: Councillor Briefing

Date: 16 February 2026

Meeting time: 6.00pm to 8.25pm



This Record is kept in accordance with the Governance Rules adopted by Council.

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Attendees											
Councillors	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor</td> <td>Cr Jay Iwasaki, Deputy Mayor</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cr Katerine Theodosis</td> <td>Cr Helen Davidson</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cr Liz Irvin</td> <td>Cr Helen Politis</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cr Adam Pulford</td> <td>Cr Ella Svensson</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cr Chris Miles</td> <td>Cr Sue Bolton</td> </tr> </table>	Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor	Cr Jay Iwasaki, Deputy Mayor	Cr Katerine Theodosis	Cr Helen Davidson	Cr Liz Irvin	Cr Helen Politis	Cr Adam Pulford	Cr Ella Svensson	Cr Chris Miles	Cr Sue Bolton
Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor	Cr Jay Iwasaki, Deputy Mayor										
Cr Katerine Theodosis	Cr Helen Davidson										
Cr Liz Irvin	Cr Helen Politis										
Cr Adam Pulford	Cr Ella Svensson										
Cr Chris Miles	Cr Sue Bolton										
Apologies	Cr Oscar Yildiz JP										
Council Staff (name and position)	Sue Vujcevic, Acting Chief Executive Officer Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation Greg Rodwell, Acting Director City Infrastructure Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community Jemma Wightman, Chief Financial Officer Victoria Hart, Manager Sustainability and Climate Seamus Lowe, Unit Manager Property Peter Sagar, Program Director Central Coburg Kim Critchley, Unit Manager Aquatic and Leisure Services Christina Grayland, Acting Manager Community Wellbeing Julia Hardiman, Unit Manager Urban Design Indivar Dhakal, Acting Manager City Design and Economy										
External participants	CEO, CERES Deputy Chair, CERES										

Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 CERES introduction and report back on financial sustainability (pre-reading attached)	Nil	

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	Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
2	Central Coburg Property Assembly and Engagement Report	Nil	
3	Contract Award: RFT-2025-47 Aquatics and Leisure (Confidential)	Nil	
4	568 Sydney Road Park Close to Home - report back on engagement	Nil	
5	Procurement Policy Update (Supported Wage Systems)	Nil	

Name and title of Council officer completing record: Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation

This form is kept in accordance with the Information Privacy Principles and Merri-bek City Council's Privacy Policy and practices as stated on Merri-bek's [website](#).

Record of Meeting

Meeting: Central Coburg Oversight Committee

Date: 25 February 2026

Meeting time: 4:00pm



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The record will include the attendees at the meeting, including the organisations represented by external presenters, the title of matters discussed and any conflicts of interest disclosed and whether the person with the conflict of interest left the meeting.

Attendees	
Councillors	Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor Cr Jay Iwasaki, Deputy Mayor Cr Liz Irvin Cr Helen Politis
Apologies	Cr Chris Miles
Council Staff (name and position)	Sue Vujcevic, Acting Chief Executive Officer Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment Peter Sagar, Program Director Central Coburg Lisa Dempster, Manager Community Development
External participants	Nil

Items discussed (list topics discuss, excluding welcome & next meeting)	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 Central Coburg matters	-	-

Name and title of Council officer completing record: Peter Sagar, Program Director Central Coburg

This form is kept in accordance with the Information Privacy Principles and Merri-bek City Council's Privacy Policy and practices as stated on Merri-bek's [website](#).

Record of Meeting

Meeting: Special Councillor Briefing

Date: 25 February 2026

Meeting time: 5.30pm



This Record is kept in accordance with the Governance Rules adopted by Council.

Rule 9.1 provides that a record of the matters discussed at all **Hearing of Submission Meetings, Advisory Committee Meetings** and **Councillor Briefings** organised or hosted by Council will be kept.

The record will include the attendees at the meeting, including the organisations represented by external presenters, the title of matters discussed and any conflicts of interest disclosed and whether the person with the conflict of interest left the meeting.

Attendees	
Councillors	Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor Cr Jay Iwasaki, Deputy Mayor Cr Helen Davidson Cr Liz Irvin Cr Katerine Theodosis Cr Chris Miles Cr Sue Bolton Cr Ella Svensson Cr Adam Pulford
Apologies	Cr Oscar Yildiz JP
Council Staff (name and position)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sue Vujcevic, Acting Chief Executive Officer • Pene Winslade, Director Place & Environment • Greg Rodwell, Acting Director City Infrastructure • Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community • Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation • Indivar Dhakal, Acting Manager City Strategy & Economy • Alayna Chapman, Unit Manager Strategic Planning • Peter Sagar, Program Director Central Coburg
External participants	Nil

Items discussed (list topics discuss, excluding welcome & next meeting)	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 Infrastructure Contributions Plan	-	
2 Central Coburg matters	-	

Name and title of Council officer completing record: Pene Winslade, Director Place & Environment

This form is kept in accordance with the Information Privacy Principles and Merri-bek City Council's Privacy Policy and practices as stated on Merri-bek's [website](#).

Record of Meeting

Meeting: Councillor Briefing

Date: 2 March 2026

Meeting time: 6.00pm to 8.53pm



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The record will include the attendees at the meeting, including the organisations represented by external presenters, the title of matters discussed and any conflicts of interest disclosed and whether the person with the conflict of interest left the meeting.

Attendees	
Councillors	Cr Nat Abboud, Mayor Cr Katherine Theodosis Cr Liz Irvin Cr Adam Pulford Cr Chris Miles Cr Jay Iwasaki, Deputy Mayor Cr Helen Davidson Cr Helen Politis Cr Ella Svensson Cr Sue Bolton
Apologies	Cr Oscar Yildiz JP
Council Staff (name and position)	Sue Vujcevic, Acting Chief Executive Officer Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation Greg Rodwell, Acting Director City Infrastructure Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community Danielle Pepyat, Manager Amenity and Compliance Sandra Troise, Customer Experience Lead Georgina Earl, Unit Manager Library Services Lisa Dempster, Manager Cultural Development Abs Ramen, Acting Unit Manager Waste Services Michaela Skett, Unit Manager Sustainable Communities Simon Adams, Acting Manager City Services Vaughn Allan, Unit Manager Transport Planning Indivar Dhakal, Acting Manager City Design and Economy Anna Morath, Unit Manager Community Engagement and Public Participation Oznur Demirhan Ozmen, Coordinator Accessible & Inclusive Communications Stefan Grun, Manager Customer Communications and Engagement Kim Critchley, Unit Manager Aquatic and Leisure Services Christina Grayland, Acting Manager Community Well-being Alayna Chapman, Unit Manager Strategic Planning

Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1 Councillor Workshop - Review of Local Law	Nil	
2 Library Strategy	Nil	

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	Items discussed	Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
3	Fortnightly Rubbish – Trial Evaluation and Engagement Approach	Nil	
4	Streets for People Project – Breese Street	Nil	
5	Engagement on the Community Engagement Policy and the Accessible and Inclusive Communications Policy	Nil	
6	Brunswick Baths Gym Expansion Design	Nil	
7	Brunswick Heritage Study	Nil	

Name and title of Council officer completing record:

Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation

This form is kept in accordance with the Information Privacy Principles and Merri-bek City Council's Privacy Policy and practices as stated on Merri-bek's [website](#).

Record of Meeting

Meeting: Audit and Risk Committee Meeting

Date: 3 March 2026

Meeting time: 6.00pm



This Record is kept in accordance with the Governance Rules adopted by Council.

Rule 9.1 provides that a record of the matters discussed at all **Hearing of Submission Meetings, Advisory Committee Meetings** and **Councillor Briefings** organised or hosted by Council will be kept.

The record will include the attendees at the meeting, including the organisations represented by external presenters, the title of matters discussed and any conflicts of interest disclosed and whether the person with the conflict of interest left the meeting.

Attendees	
Councillors	Cr Helen Politis Cr Liz Irvin
Apologies	Cr Katerine Theodosis
Council Staff (name and position)	Sue Vujcevic, Acting Chief Executive Officer Anita Curnow, Acting Director Business Transformation Greg Rodwell, Acting Director City Infrastructure Eamonn Fennessy, Director Community Pene Winslade, Director Place and Environment Jemma Wightman, Chief Financial Officer Bernie McMullen, Program Director Transformation Yvonne Callanan, Manager Governance and Strategy Robert Raiskums, Manager Information Technology Stefan Grun, Manager Customer Communications and Engagement Sophie Barison, Unit Manager Governance and Risk
External participants	John Watson, Chairperson - Audit and Risk Committee Marilyn Kierney (online) (independent member) - Audit and Risk Committee Lisa Tripodi (independent member) - Audit and Risk Committee Jeff Rigby (independent member) - Audit and Risk Committee Crowe representative RSD Audit representative

Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
1	Declaration of interests and/or conflicts of	Nil	

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Items discussed		Conflict disclosed by, general or material and the nature	Left meeting
	interest		
2	CEO update	Nil	
3	Confirmation of items asterixed for discussion	Nil	
4	Business Actions Report	Nil	
5	Elevate Transformation Program Report	Nil	
6	Climate Risk and Resilience Report	Nil	
7	Finance Management Report	Nil	
8	Audit Actions Report	Nil	
9	Audit and Risk Report bi-annual report	Nil	
10	Memorandum of Audit Planning and Audits Completed	Nil	
11	External Audit Report	Nil	
12	Risk Management Report	Nil	

Name and title of Council officer completing record: Sophie Barison – Unit Manager Governance and Risk.

This form is kept in accordance with the Information Privacy Principles and Merri-bek City Council's Privacy Policy and practices as stated on Merri-bek's [website](#).

Proposed MAV Motions

Motion title: Improving bus services in Victoria

Motion:

That the MAV: Call on the Victorian Government to:

1. Fund and implement Victoria's Bus Plan, as outlined in the Department of Transport and Planning's Bus Network Reform Implementation Approach, to improve bus services in Victoria and;
2. Deliver a vibrant public education campaign to promote bus use.

Rationale:

A clearly written rationale (max. 350 words) in support of the motion is to be provided. This rationale provides background to the motion.

Infrastructure Victoria says more than a third of Melburnians have never caught the bus, even though 8 out of 10 homes are within 400 metres of a bus stop. Buses are often considered a less attractive transport option due to outdated timetables that fail to link with other services, bus routes that wind through local streets or are delayed by traffic and infrequent services that don't run at night or on the weekend. Buses are not meeting our community's transport needs.

Better bus services can connect people to other forms of public transport, including train stations and tram routes and can link people to shopping, work, education and entertainment precincts. More services, more often that start earlier in the day and finish later in the evenings, as well as on weekends, provide more choices for people including workers in industries such as industrial, retail and healthcare who work less regular hours.

More direct bus routes, buses that have priority on the road and timetables coordinated with train and tram timetables would create better quality bus services. Better quality bus services attract more users.

In 2021 the Department of Transport released [Victoria's Bus Plan](#)— a blueprint that set out how the Victorian Government would deliver a modern, productive, environmentally sustainable bus network. Key reform objectives included restructuring and simplifying the network; a cleaner and smarter bus fleet; improved performance; better accessibility and customer experience; and stronger planning and partnerships. This was followed by DTPs cabinet submission in September 2023, [Bus Network Reform Implementation Approach](#). However, the plan was never implemented.

The Victorian Government has delivered some bus service reforms in recent years such as:

- Chadstone to Dandenong key activity centres – better weekend services
- Fishermans Bend key activity centre – route improvements, increased frequency and later weekend services
- Yarra Valley outer suburbs – simplified routes and timetables, improved weekend services
- Armstrong Creek and Torquay – extra services including evening and weekend and new routes.

In all these cases, better services resulted in significant increases in passengers, which had other benefits including people using cars less which saves people money and lowers transport emissions.

Research by Infrastructure Victoria found that more frequent bus services in Melbourne deliver around \$1.20 in benefits for every dollar spent. Running buses more often delivers similar benefits to one of Victoria's big road or rail projects, but is far cheaper.

Motion title: Extreme heat as an emergency and support for cool spaces

Motion:

That the MAV: Call on the Victorian Government to:

1. Recognise extreme heat as an emergency, in the same way other disasters such as floods, cyclones, bushfires are considered emergencies; and
2. Support councils to develop appropriate cool spaces for their community.

Rationale:

[Victoria's Climate Science Report 2024](#) recognises heatwaves as one of a number of climate hazards in Victoria, warning that the more the planet warms, the longer, more intense, and more frequent heatwaves will be.*

The number of hot days in Melbourne (above 37 °C) increased from a late 20th century average of around 4 days per year to around 5 days per year on average for the past 20 years; very hot days (above 41.2 °C for Melbourne) from an average of 4 per decade to an average of 10 per decade.** Inland locations have experienced larger changes, e.g. very hot days in Rutherglen (above 38.4 °C) increased from an annual average of less than 4 days in 1986–2005 to almost 8 days in the 2003–22.¹

A Monash University study found that more than 1,000 people died in Australia as a result of heatwaves from 2016 to 2019.² Researchers analysed heatwave-related mortality across 2,288 local communities and found that an average of 1.08 deaths per 100,000 were attributable to heatwaves each year.³

Most councils rely on libraries and leisure centres as cool spaces for community members who don't have access to or can't afford air conditioning or are experiencing blackouts.

When libraries and leisure centres are shut, there is no free community space for people to go to cool down. Councils own community infrastructure and can make venues available to the community during heatwaves but need financial support from state and/or federal government to upgrade and operate them.

Some local councils in Australia, including Blacktown City Council, are trialing different types of Cool Centres. City of Melbourne is funding Cool Centres with air-conditioning, drinking water, toilets and family-friendly activities.

* A heatwave is at least 3 consecutive days above the 95th percentile of daily average temperatures

** Very hot days are days with daily maximum temperature exceeding the 99.9th percentile

Proposed Motions - Australian Local Government Association (ALGA)- National General Assembly (NGA) June 2026

Topic: Sign and ratify the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Category: (please tick one)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Climate Change | <input type="checkbox"/> Closing the Gap | <input type="checkbox"/> Cyber Security |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Sustainability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing and Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Intergovernmental Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs and Skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Roads and Infrastructure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other issues | |

Motion:

The National General Assembly reaffirms the motion passed at the ALGA NGA in 2021 and calls on the Australian Government to:

- *sign and ratify the United Nations (UN) Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.*

National Objective:

Why is this a national issue and why should this be debated at NGA? (Maximum 200 words)

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) has been adopted by an overwhelming majority of the world's nations – there are currently 95 signatories and 74 state parties. The Australian Labor Party (ALP) has consistently maintained and reaffirmed its 2018 pledge, reinforced in 2021 and 2023, to sign and ratify the United Nations TPNW while in government. Despite this, the Albanese Labor Government has not yet formally signed or ratified the treaty.

Summary of Key Arguments

In 2021 The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) [passed a motion](#) at its National General Assembly calling on Australia to sign and ratify the United Nations TPNW:

'The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.'

A letter noting the NGA outcome was sent to the then Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator The Hon. Marise Payne.

A similar motion at the ALGA level has not been passed since the Albanese Government was elected in 2022, and again in 2025. Labor has a [policy](#) to sign and ratify the TPNW in government.

In Australia, 51 local councils across all states and territories have endorsed the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons [Cities Appeal](#) - a global call from cities and towns in support of the TPNW.

Topic: Climate adaption fund to deliver place-based climate solutions including cool spaces

Category: (please tick one)

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate Change | <input type="checkbox"/> Closing the Gap | <input type="checkbox"/> Cyber Security |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emergency Management | <input type="checkbox"/> Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Sustainability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing and Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Intergovernmental Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs and Skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Roads and Infrastructure | <input type="checkbox"/> Other issues | |

Motion:

The National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

Create a new \$400 million climate adaptation fund, distributed to all Australia's councils each year, to deliver ongoing and sustainable place-based climate solutions, including upgrades to buildings and infrastructure to deal with increasing heatwaves.

National Objective:

Local governments, as the closest level of government to the community, are best placed to identify and deliver locally-led and community-based adaptation solutions that meet community needs. Increasingly, communities around Australia are exposed to heatwave events that cause significant health, social and mental health impacts. Heatwave related health impacts can be minimised with a range of programs across different levels of government, industries, and community organisations. Most state and local governments across the country have some heatwave warning systems and cool space infrastructure in place. However, we lack a nationally consistent approach and more cool space infrastructure is needed.

Summary of Key Arguments

As Australia's climate continues to warm, heatwaves are expected to become more frequent, more intense, and longer lasting. Every decade since 1950 has been warmer than the last. Extreme heat leads to more deaths and hospital admissions annually than any other hazard in Australia.¹

Most councils rely on libraries and leisure centres as cool spaces for community members who don't have access to or can't afford air conditioning or are experiencing blackouts.

When libraries and leisure centres are shut, there is no free community space for people to go to cool down. Councils own local infrastructure that can be available to community during heatwaves, but need financial support from other levels of government to upgrade and operate them.

A new annual climate adaption fund would provide local governments flexibility to implement locally-led and community-based adaptation solutions including cool spaces, building upgrades, retrofitting for safer homes and more.

Audit and Risk Committee

Biannual Report



In accordance with Part 2, Division 8, clause 54 (5) of the *Local Government Act 2020*, the Audit and Risk Committee presents its biannual audit and risk report that describes the activities of the Audit and Risk Committee (Committee).

This is the first biannual report for the 2025/26 financial year and covers the period 1 July to 31 December 2025. This report includes the committee meetings that took place on 2 September 2025 and 18 November 2025. The Committee's activities for the reporting period are summarised below.

Focus Area	Outcome
Compliance and Legislative Requirements	
Policy	<p>An update on the review of the status of Council policies was presented at the following committee meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Transformation Directorate - 2 September 2025 • City Infrastructure Directorate - 18 November 2025 <p>The Committee noted the reports.</p>
Councillor Expenses	<p>The Committee received a report on 2 September 2025 which listed Councillor expenses between January – June 2025. The reports included a table of the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation • Conferences, Seminars and Professional Development • IT, Mobile and Data • Refreshments • Subscriptions • Travel and Mileage. <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>
Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality	<p>The Committee received a report on 18 November 2025 which outlined the gifts offered and received to staff and Councillors between April - September 2025. The report included a table of the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of offer/receipt • Recipient of gift/offer • Department • Approximate value of offer/gift • Description of the offer/gift • Who was the offer/gift received from? • Reason • At what setting was the gift/offer received? • What, if any, is the relationship with the service provider? • Who approved? • Declined or retained by recipient? <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>
Interstate and Overseas Travel	<p>The Committee received a report on 2 September 2025 which listed the Interstate and Overseas travel completed by Councillors and Staff. The report included a table of the following information:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name and position Purpose of Travel Dates of Travel Cost (Accommodation, Transport, Meals, Other). <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>								
CEO Credit Card Transactions	<p>The Committee received reports on 2 September and 18 November 2025 which listed the CEO's credit card transactions. The report included a table of the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Posting Date Transaction Date Description Amount <p>The Committee noted the reports.</p>								
Audit and Business Actions	<p>The Committee received reports on 2 September and 18 November 2025. The reports detailed the business actions and audit actions to be completed and implemented by Council staff.</p> <p>The Committee noted the progress toward completion of outstanding actions.</p>								
Audit Actions Progress Overview 2025-2026	Audit Actions Progress Overview 2025-26								
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Audit Actions at start of 2025-26</th> <th>Actions added up to 30 December 2025</th> <th>Actions closed up to 30 December 2025</th> <th>Actions remaining at end of 2025</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>44</td> <td>16</td> <td>37</td> <td>23</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Audit Actions at start of 2025-26	Actions added up to 30 December 2025	Actions closed up to 30 December 2025	Actions remaining at end of 2025	44	16	37	23
	Audit Actions at start of 2025-26	Actions added up to 30 December 2025	Actions closed up to 30 December 2025	Actions remaining at end of 2025					
44	16	37	23						
Council Financial and Performance Reporting									
Council Plan	<p>The Committee received a report on 18 November 2025 which outlined the four-year implementation of the Council Plan 2021-25.</p> <p>The Committee noted the strategic indicators update achieved against the Council Plan 2021-25, the outcomes achieved against the Council Action Plan 2024-25, and progress towards completion of delayed actions and the status of these actions.</p>								
Finance Management	<p>The Committee received reports on 2 September and 18 November 2025.</p> <p>The Committee noted the reports.</p>								
Annual Financial Report and Performance Statement 2024/25	<p>At the 2 September 2025 meeting, the committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Informed Council that the Committee has received and considered: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the Annual Financial Report (comprising audited Financial Statements) and the audited Performance Statement for the financial year ending 30 June 2025 ('Audited Statements'); the External Auditor's Closing Report and Final Management Letter relating to the audit process for the Audited Statements; the Governance and Management Checklist completed by management that accompanies the final form of the Audited Statements in Council's 2024/25 Annual Report; and the draft Management Representation Letter to be presented to the External Auditor; Assured Council that the Committee has raised and discussed with the External Auditor and management all matters it has identified as part of such consideration and is satisfied with clarifications and advice it has received from the External Auditor and management. 								

	<p>3) Is satisfied from its enquiries that there are no incomplete or unresolved matters of a material nature pertaining to the audit that prevents the Committee from providing the following recommendations to Council.</p> <p>4) Based on the Committee’s considerations and enquiries, recommends that Council pass a resolution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) giving its approval in principle to the Audited Statements b) authorising the Chief Executive Officer to submit the approved-in-principle Audited Statements to the Victorian Auditor-General’s Office (VAGO) for reporting on the audit c) if any subsequent changes recommended or agreed by VAGO are to be made to the approved-in-principle Audited Statements², authorising Council’s Principal Accounting Officer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. to make any changes that are of a non-material nature; and ii. to make any changes that are of a material nature after first consulting with the Committee’s Chairperson d) requiring that Council’s Principal Accounting Officer prepare a summary of any changes made to the approved-in-principle Audited Statements to enable them to be presented in their final form and provide this summary to both Council and the Committee for their noting e) authorise the certification (signing) of the final form of the Audited Statements by the Mayor, another Councillor and the Chief Executive Officer. <p>5) The Committee expressed its thanks to the External Auditor and the Council staff involved in working with the External Auditor, and acknowledged the efforts involved to bring the external audit process for the financial year ending 30 June 2025 to a satisfactory conclusion and for the high standard of presentation.</p>
Risk Management and Fraud and Corruption Prevention	
Annual Fraud Risk Report	<p>The Committee received a report on the 2 September 2025 which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of fraud risks identified and the action to establish and implement treatment plans • The Fraud and Corruption Incident Register • Actions arising from Fraud Reviews • An overview of fraud prevention and detection activities undertaken <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>
Annual Risk Report	<p>The Committee received a report at the 18 November 2025. The report included an overview of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the Enterprise Risk Management Framework and Implementation Strategy • Council’s Operational Risk Profile • An overview of key risks • The effectiveness of risk management systems • An overview of the processes for risk identification <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>
Internal Audit	
Audit Reports	<p>Cyber Security, Climate Change</p> <p>The Committee received and noted the two audit reports on 2 September 2025</p>

	Library Services, Occupational Health and Safety - Depot Employees The Committee received and noted the two audit reports on 18 November 2025	
Memorandum of Audit Planning (MAP)	Strategic Planning Governance The Committee received and endorsed the MAP on 2 September 2025 Customer Service and Complaints Handling The Committee received and endorsed the MAP on 2 September 2025 Asset Management (Infrastructure) The Committee received and endorsed the MAP on 18 November 2025 Project Management - Elevate Transformation Program The Committee received the MAP on 18 November 2025 and endorsed the MAP out of session on 17 December 2025	
Recent Reports and Publications	The Committee received the Curious Eyes publication on 2 September 2025 and 18 November 2025 and noted the reports and management comments.	
External Audit		
Final Management Letter	The committee received the Final Management Letter at the 2 September 2025 meeting. The Committee noted the report.	
Audit and Risk Committee Attendance		
Committee Member	2 September 2025	18 November 2025
John Watson (Chair)	√	√
Jeff Rigby	√	√
Lisa Tripodi	√	√
Marilyn Kearney	√	√
Cr Helen Davidson	√	√
Cr Helen Politis	√	X
Cr Ella Svensson	√	√
Key √ In attendance X Apology O No requirement to attend meeting as was not an appointed member		
Committee Member Terms		
Committee Member	Appointment / Extension	Term End
John Watson (Chair)	15 May 2023	15 May 2026
Jeff Rigby	1 July 2021	30 June 2027
Lisa Tripodi	1 January 2023	31 December 2025
Marilyn Kearney	1 July 2022	30 June 2028
Cr Helen Davidson	December 2024	December 2025
Cr Helen Politis	December 2024	December 2025
Cr Ella Svensson	December 2024	December 2025

7.15 CONTRACT AWARD: RFT-2024-26 - PANEL OF ENGINEERING CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Acting Director City Infrastructure, Greg Rodwell

Capital Works Planning and Delivery

Officer Recommendation

That Council:

1. Authorises the Chief Executive Officer to:
 - a) Accept the Schedule of Rates submitted by tenderers and make a formal offer to each of the individual panel contractors listed in Table 1 below according to the various service categories, for the **Contract RFT-2024-26 - Panel of Engineering Consultancy Services (Contract)** on the following terms and otherwise subject to and in accordance with paragraph 1(b) of this Resolution
 - i. For a period of three (3) years commencing 1 April 2026, with an option for a further two (2), one (1) year extensions at the discretion of Council.
 - ii. For a maximum amount of \$4,590,000 million (inc. GST) for the term of the contract, including extension options.

Table 1.

Preferred Tenderer Name	ABN	ACN
Category A, Civil engineering design (12)		
Argot Consultants Pty Ltd	39 084 902 974	849 029 974
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
Civil Design Pty Ltd	92 633 472 456	633 472 456
Civil Road Solutions Pty Ltd	13 151 174 104	151 175 104
CRE Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	11 078 132 804	078 132 804
FMG Engineering	58 083 071 185	083 071 185
HDR Pty Ltd	76 158 075 220	158 075 220
JCA Land Consultants Pty Ltd	75 083 816 915	083 816 915
NK Civil design Pty Ltd	866 748 480 72	674 848 072
SMEC Australia Pty Ltd	47 065 475 149	065 475 149
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Taylor's Development Strategists Pty Ltd	80 128 948 523	128 948 523
Category B, Hydraulic engineering flood modelling, integrated water management (9)		
Afflux Consulting Pty Ltd	37 166 270 257	166 270 257
Alluvium Consulting Australia Pty Ltd	76 151 119 792	151 119 792
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
Engeny Australia Pty Ltd	70 656 040 961	656 040 961
Morphum Environmental Ltd	80 159 252 669	159 252 669
Optimal Stormwater Pty Ltd	53 139 725 894	139725894
Rain Consulting Pty Ltd	31 635 469 680	635 469 680
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Water Technology Pty Ltd	60 093 377 283	093 377 283
Category C - Geotechnical engineering (8)		
ARRB Group Ltd	68 004 620 651	004 620 651
Engeny Australia Pty Ltd	70 656 040 961	656 040 961
FMG Engineering	58 083 071 185	083 071 185
Geoporte Pty Ltd	82 668 762 972	668 762 972
Intrax Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	31 106 481 252	106 481 252
LR Pardo & Associates Pty Ltd	29 133 787 612	133 787 612
Site Geotechnical Pty Ltd	23 114 166 997	114 166 997

Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Category D - Environmental engineering & contaminated soil service (8)		
ARRB Group Ltd	68 004 620 651	004 620 651
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
Blue Sphere Environmental Pty Ltd	84 146 980 761	146 980 761
Engeny Australia Pty Ltd	70 656 040 961	656 040 961
Morphum Environmental Ltd	80 159 252 669	159 252 669
Prensa Pty Ltd	12 142 106 581	142 106 581
Senversa Pty Ltd	89 132 231 380	132 231 380
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Category E – Land surveying (10)		
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
CAF Consulting Services Pty Ltd	37 160 560 556	160 560 556
Earth Civil Surveying	82727689052	Sole Trader
Intrax Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	31 106 481 252	106 481 252
JCA Land Consultants Pty Ltd	75 083 816 915	083 816 915
Moonland Group Pty Ltd	97994395762	Not Supplied
Reeds Consulting Pty Ltd	17 251 075 871	079 642 818
SMEC Australia Pty Ltd	47 065 475 149	065 475 149
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Taylor's Development Strategists Pty Ltd	80 128 948 523	128 948 523
Category F – Traffic & strategic transport engineering (9)		
ARRB Group Ltd	68 004 620 651	004 620 651
Beveridge Williams & Co Pty Ltd	38 006 197 235	006 197 235
HDR Pty Ltd	76 158 075 220	158 075 220
O'Brien Traffic	55 007 006 037	007 006 037
Ratio Consultants	93 983 380 225	005 422 104
SMEC Australia Pty Ltd	47 065 475 149	065 475 149
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Trafficworks Pty Ltd	59 125 488 977	125 488 977
Traffix Group Pty Ltd	32 100 481 570	100 481 570
Category G – Structural engineering (11)		
ARRB Group Ltd	68 004 620 651	004 620 651
BCE Design Corporation Pty Ltd	12 655 325 929	655 325 929
CAF Consulting Services Pty Ltd	37 160 560 556	160 560 556
Engeny Australia Pty Ltd	70 656 040 961	656 040 961
FMG Engineering	58 083 071 185	083 071 185
Hatch Pty Ltd	59 008 630 500	008 630 500
HDR Pty Ltd	76 158 075 220	158 075 220
Intrax Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	31 106 481 252	106 481 252
JJ Ryan Consulting Pty Ltd	69 145 797 726	145 797 726
SMEC Australia Pty Ltd	47 065 475 149	065 475 149
Stantec Australia Pty Ltd	17 007 820 322	007 820 322
Category H – Quantity surveying (5)		
Berkowitz	68 204 272 653	105 846 884
Currie & Brown (Australia) Pty Ltd	97 128 823 843	128 823 843
Melbourne Quantity Surveyors Pty Ltd	96 635 662 725	635 662 725
Project Cost Management Group Pty Ltd	68 153 898 974	153 898 974
Rider Levett Bucknall Victoria Pty Ltd	28 006 699 476	006 699 476
Category I – Forensic engineering (2)		
FMG Engineering	58 083 071 185	083 071 185
Intrax Consulting Engineers Pty Ltd	31 106 481 252	106 481 252
Category J – Underground service proving (2)		
Access Utility Engineering Pty Ltd	35 603 853 756	603 853 756
Utility Mapping (AUST) Pty Ltd	60 605 720 401	605 720 401

- b) Negotiate and finalise the terms of the Contract between Council and each Contractor provided that:
 - i. the terms specified in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution shall not be altered without a further Resolution of Council; and
 - ii. other than terms referred to in paragraph 1(a) of this Resolution, the terms of the Contract are acceptable to the Chief Executive Officer.
2. Conditional on acceptance of the Contract by the Contractor in accordance with the terms of this Resolution, authorise the Chief Executive Officer to:
 - a) Do all things necessary to execute the Contract and any required documentation for the Contract;
 - b) Exercise the option(s) to extend contracts in accordance with the provisions within the Contract; and
 - c) To allow contractors to work across different categories if required, ensuring we can maintain a range of suitable suppliers to meet Council's needs, providing the total contract amount to remain as paragraph 1 (a);
 - d) To accept new panel contractor(s) during the contract term subject to the same public tender/evaluation process as adopted for the original panel contractors, to ensure we can maintain a range of suitable suppliers to meet Council's needs, providing the total contract amount to remain as paragraph 1 (a); and
 - e) Advises all tenderers of Council's decision in relation to the Contract.

REPORT

Executive Summary

The increasing scale and complexity of Council's Capital Works Program necessitated the establishment of a new prequalified Panel of Engineering Consultancy Services to support the planning, design, delivery and review of infrastructure project across multiple departments.

The report outlines the procurement process undertaken for RFT 2024-26 and recommends the appointment of preferred tenderers to the Panel of Engineering Consultancy Services. The panel will provide Council with access to a broad and diverse range of engineering services. This arrangement will ensure continuity of service, improved coordination across departments, and the flexibility to respond to changing project demands. The proposed panel will operate for an initial term of three (3) years, with two (2) optional one-year extensions at Council's discretion, providing a maximum overall term of five (5) years. The estimated contract value for the initial three-year term is \$2.93 million (GST Incl.), with a total estimated value of \$4.59 million (GST Incl.) should both extension options be exercised. Expenditure under this contract will be determined by available annual budget allocations and works required during the contract term.

The objective of the panel is to assemble a broad and diverse range of engineering disciplines capable of delivering advisory, consultancy and due diligence services. The panel will support Council in undertaking comprehensive technical assessments to ensure the feasibility, safety, efficiency and long-term sustainability of capital works projects.

The scope of services includes the following disciplines:

- Category A – Civil Engineering
- Category B – Hydraulic Engineering, Flood Modelling and Integrated Water Management
- Category C – Geotechnical Engineering

- Category D – Environmental and Contaminated Soil Services
- Category E – Land Surveying
- Category F – Traffic and Strategic Transport Engineering
- Category G – Structural Engineering
- Category H – Quantity Surveying
- Category I – Forensic Engineering
- Category J – Underground Services Proving

The tender complies with section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Previous Council Decisions

Nil.

1. Policy Context

This report is in keeping with Council's commitment to accountability and sound financial management. It also addresses the requirement under section 109(1) of the *Local Government Act 2020* which requires Council to adhere to its Procurement Policy when entering into contracts for the purchasing of goods or services, or the carrying out of works. Council adopted the Procurement Policy on 11 June 2025 which sets the threshold for conducting a public tender for goods, services and works where once-off or ongoing cumulative spend over the life of the contract is expected to exceed \$350,000 (incl GST).

2. Background

Council's previous Engineering Services Panel Contract expired on 27 May 2024. While the former arrangement delivered satisfactory services, internal feedback identified the need to broaden the scope of engineering disciplines to better meet cross departmental requirements, improve coordination and achieve greater efficiencies across the organisation.

Officers recommended re-establishing a new and enhanced consolidated panel through a competitive tender process. Establishing a schedule of rates through the process will promote value for money, leverage economies of scale and ensure continuity of service delivery.

The objective of the panel is to assemble a comprehensive range of engineering specialists capable of delivering technical expertise across the following disciplines:

- Category A – Civil Engineering
- Category B – Hydraulic Engineering, Flood Modelling and Integrated Water Management
- Category C – Geotechnical Engineering
- Category D – Environmental and Contaminated Soil Services
- Category E – Land Surveying
- Category F – Traffic and Strategic Transport Engineering
- Category G – Structural Engineering
- Category H – Quantity Surveying
- Category I – Forensic Engineering
- Category J – Underground Services Proving

Prior to commencing the procurement process, a Procurement Risk Assessment was completed.

An advertisement inviting tenders was placed in The Age newspaper and issued via Council's e-tender portal on Saturday 12 October 2024. The Request for Tender closed on Friday 22 November 2024 with 74 tenders received of which 68 submissions were deemed conforming. Due to the significant number of tender submissions received, as well as resourcing challenges the tender evaluation has taken longer than anticipated. As a part of the evaluation process, all shortlisted suppliers were asked to confirm pricing, confirming their original pricing submission remained unchanged.

The conforming tender submissions were evaluated in accordance with Council's Procurement Policy, at the time of tendering.

The following is a breakdown of the Evaluation Criteria applicable to this procurement project.

Table 2: Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Weighting%
Pricing Response	
Price	40%
Qualitative Criteria Response	
Capability, Experience & Past Performance Capability of the contractor to undertake the contract.	25%
Capacity of the tenderer to provide the goods and/or services and/or works.	5%
Methodology and task appreciation	15%
Social Sustainability	5%
Economic Sustainability	5%
Environmental Sustainability	5%
Total Qualitative Criteria Response	60%
Total Scores	100%

The membership of the tender evaluation panel was as follows.

Project Manager/ Generalist or Nominated Speciality	Full Voting / Advisory Member
Senior Procurement Consultant (external)	Procurement Compliance
Unit Manager Engineering Services	Voting
Senior Construction Engineer	Voting
Construction Engineer	Voting
Principal Urban Designer	Voting
Senior Transport Engineer	Voting

3. Issues

All tenders were evaluated in accordance with the approved Procurement Evaluation and Probity Plan for this contract.

The Officer Recommendation is to allow the Chief Executive Officer to allow contractors to work across different categories if required, ensuring we can maintain a range of suitable suppliers to meet Council's needs, providing the total contract amount remains unchanged.

It worth noting, for panel arrangements Council does not guarantee either a minimum quantity of work in relation to any of the Contract components or any particular mix of work within the Contract components.

Collaboration

Section 109(2) of the Local Government Act 2020 requires that any report to the Council that recommends entering into a procurement agreement must include information in relation to any opportunities for collaboration with other councils or public bodies which may be available.

Under this contract there are no opportunities to collaborate with other Councils or public bodies because they have existing contracts that do not align with our contract current requirements.

Climate emergency and environmental sustainability implications

All tender submissions by vendors were scored and assessments weighted against Economic, Environmental and Social Sustainability requirements. Council officers engaging with suppliers and service providers will ensure these are adhered to as part of ongoing contractor performance monitoring.

Human Rights Consideration

The implications of this report have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

4. Consultation / Recommendation from Management

The evaluation panel applied the pre-defined criteria to the tender submissions and determined that the following panel of contractors provided suitable experience, rates and other quality and sustainability attributes to achieve the highest scores in the evaluation and therefore be recommended for the contract.

Relevant consultation with other internal business units that will be utilising the Engineering Services Consultancy Panel for their services has been conducted.

5. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

Council Officers, external consultants and all other parties involved in the preparation of this report have no conflict of interest in this matter.

6. Financial and Resources Implications

Expenditure under this contract will be determined by available annual budget allocations and works required during the contract term.

The approved budget for this contract is \$4,590,000.00 - this is across multiple cost codes as the panel arrangement is utilised by multiple business units.

It worth noting, for panel arrangements Council does not guarantee either a minimum quantity of work in relation to any of the Contract components or any particular mix of work within the Contract components.

7. Implementation and Timeline

It is proposed that the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to do all things necessary to execute the contracts with each of the recommended panel contracts and any other required documentation, including execution of the future optional contract extension(s).

The contracts will commence on 1 April 2026 following Council endorsement.

Attachment/s

- 1 Tender Recommendation Report - RFT-2024-26 - Panel of Engineering Consultancy Services D26/75562

Pursuant to section 3(1)(g)(ii) of the Local Government Act 2020 this attachment has been designated as confidential because it relates to private commercial information, being information provided by a business, commercial or financial undertaking that if released, would unreasonably expose the business, commercial or financial undertaking to disadvantage.

8. NOTICES OF MOTION

8.1 ADVOCACY PIECE FOR THE LEVEL CROSSING REMOVAL PROJECT

Cr Jay Iwasaki

Motion

That Council:

1. In response to community request, advocates to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure and the Level Crossing Removal Authority (LXRA) to commit to a formal, public-facing Environment Effects Statement for the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal Project.
2. Requests that this statement specifically addresses:
 - a) the unique urban fabric of the North Brunswick Station precinct, focusing on:
 - i. Preservation of current usage of Bulleke-bek Park and preservation of mature trees and guerilla plantings by the Upfield Urban Foresters.
 - ii. Potential integration of a relocated new northern station with the vacant site(s) on the southern side of Hope Street immediately east of the rail corridor.
 - b) Integration with other transport modes.
 - c) Sydney Road impacts in regard to accessibility for all users during and after construction.
 - d) Sydney Road upgrades for all stakeholders (including east-west bus routes, cyclists, pedestrians, businesses).
 - e) Prioritising reopening of the bike lanes as part of construction staging.
 - f) Collaboration with Merri-bek Council about set down sites for the duration of the project.

1. Background

Cr Iwasaki's background:

The scale of the Brunswick Level Crossing Removal spanning multiple crossings in a high-density, heritage-rich corridor presents challenges that differ significantly from previous removals. While the removal of crossings is welcomed, the community remains concerned about design, mitigations, and details regarding the footprint.

A formal Impact Statement is necessary because:

Connectivity: The Upfield corridor is a vital artery for active transport; any design must ensure no net loss of safety or accessibility for cyclists and pedestrians. There is still a lack of alternatives for accessible transport and safe cycling.

Transparency: Residents deserve a clear, data-driven understanding of how noise, light, and visual bulk will be mitigated.

Sustainability: The Upfield Urban Forest group have spent many years working on improving the Upfield Line corridor and their efforts should be recognised. Mature trees and the canopy they provide are irreplaceable in Brunswick and should be maintained.

2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

The Brunswick Level Crossing Removal is a commitment of the Victorian Government which will see the removal of eight level crossings from Park to Albion Streets and elevated rail along a 2.1 kilometre section of the Upfield rail corridor. The Victorian Government has confirmed that as part of the project three existing stations will be replaced with a new northern and a new southern Brunswick station.

In April 2023 Council endorsed its 'Reshaping Brunswick' position paper on the Brunswick LXP, based on large scale community engagement, which responds to the community desire for the Brunswick LXP to drive broader urban renewal.

A Stage 1 Urban Design Framework for public land adjacent to the project area was endorsed by Council in July 2024, following community consultation. This related to an original proposed alignment with three stations. The UDF included concept designs identifying public realm upgrades that could be delivered by the LXP, such as when reinstating areas used for construction. This was shared with LXP to influence their early design work.

The State proposal was amended to a two station alignment in late 2024. The State undertook community consultation in 2024-25. In January this year the Victorian Infrastructure Delivery Authority (VIDA) advised that they have referred the project to the Minister for Planning to review and decide if further assessments are required under the Victorian Environment Effects Act 1978 (EEA).

Under the EEA, the potential impact of a project is assessed, considering a range of environmental, heritage, social and economic matters. VIDA has indicated that it considers the project has the potential to meet two of the referral criteria being visual amenity and heritage.

The Minister for Planning will review the referral and decide if the project requires further assessment under the Victorian Environment Effects Act 1978, or if existing legislation and approval processes are sufficient to manage the potential environmental effects of the project. It is unclear whether the reasons raised by community members will be considered sufficient by the Minister to trigger an Environmental Effects Statement, but Council can write to the Minister to raise the community's concerns.

It is understood that the State intends to release concept designs in 2027 and complete the works by 2030.

3. Financial implications

Officer's comments:

The costs of actioning this resolution can be accommodated within existing budget.

4. Resources implications

Officer's comments:

The actioning of the resolution can be accommodated within existing resources

8.2 LANEWAY BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM

Cr Helen Politis

Motion

That Council receives a report on a project to scope a laneway beautification program, which could:

1. Identify laneways to beautify.
2. Explore laneways that can be better activated.
3. Identify ways to encourage laneway greening projects in appropriate neighbourhoods.

1. Background

Cr Politis's background:

Merri-bek has approximately 67 kilometres of laneways, many that are not well maintained or utilised. With planned densification our laneways provide an opportunity to encourage better use of these underutilised spaces for creating better connected community spaces, where people feel safe to walk, play, create and socialise. This motion seeks a report that explores how laneways can be beautified, activated and greened to contribute to the liveability, health and wellbeing of Merri-bek and its citizens.

2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

Council has an approximately 110km network of constructed and unconstructed laneways that are used by community for several purposes (94 km constructed and 16 km unmade). Rights of way and laneways support and complement the existing road network throughout the city by providing primary or secondary access to properties and in some cases a quieter alternative to traverse the city.

Laneway activations have been the subject of previous Council consideration and the issue is quite complex – in part because of the scale and breadth of laneways in place across the municipality.

A report considering the scope of a potential laneway beautification program could consider factors such as:

- A process to develop a classification system for current laneways to determine their suitability for different types of beautification and community use.
- Council's Right of Way Strategy 2011-2021, which is due for a review, provides some guidance on Council's approach to laneway maintenance, activation and rationalisation.
- Council's Road Management Plan which outlines current levels of service for constructed laneways.
- Consideration of unconstructed laneways which are mostly in residential areas and provide either secondary access to properties (backyard access to properties which have another street frontage) or an easement for drainage and other utilities.

- The relevant provisions of the Road Management Act and Local Government Act and their implications for different types of beautification, greening and activation. For example, the requirements for road closures may be more complex than where beautification, greening and activation could be achieved without road closure.
- Potential development of design principles, technical notes and safety standards that might be required to support a laneway beautification program.
- Elements of communication and community engagement that might be considered to encourage the community's interest in better activation and use of Merri-bek's laneways.

3. Financial implications

Officer's comments:

The preparation of a Council report to scope out a project to develop a laneway program can be achieved within existing financial resources. However, development of design principles policy and technical notes, and the identification of laneways for priority works and the actual works on laneways, would require a funding decision. The cost of such work will depend on the outcome of the Council report.

4. Resources Implications

Officer's comments:

There are no immediate resource implications to prepare the report other than the time required. However, resource implications for the development of tech notes and the actual work are subject to the outcome of the Council report.

8.3 SUPPORT FOR VICHEALTH - PREVENTION BETTER THAN CURE

Cr Liz Irvin

Motion

That Council:

1. Acknowledges the critical role played by VicHealth, Victoria's world leading independent health promotion foundation set up with support across the political spectrum, in keeping the Merri-bek community healthy, active and well.
2. Notes the community initiatives Merri-bek Council has been able to deliver thanks to partnerships with VicHealth, including supporting sustainable food systems, community training, women's and girls' participation in sport, and others.
3. Notes that for every dollar spent on public health, early intervention and prevention, \$14.30 is saved on future health costs by averting more costly and chronic health issues down the line.
4. Calls on the Victorian Government to reverse their decision to abolish VicHealth.
5. Notes the importance of maintaining independent preventive health bodies, particularly where health promotion initiatives may be subject to competing interests.
6. Requests the Mayor write to the Minister for Health, Mary-Anne Thomas MP, to express:
 - a) Council's strong support for VicHealth as a critical partner driving positive health outcomes for our communities.
 - b) Council's support for VicHealth's role as an independent body, that has the ability to challenge the commercial interests of industries such as tobacco, ultra-processed food and alcohol that lead to poor health outcomes in our communities.
 - c) Our concern that any reduction in health promotion activity or funding will harm the health of our communities, leading to poorer social and economic outcomes and worsening inequality, in addition to increasing need for already stretched council services.
 - d) That any funding reduction would also directly undermine council's capacity to deliver critical health prevention projects; shifting avoidable illness into the acute health system and increasing long-term costs both to council and other health partners.
 - e) A call for genuine and adequate consultation with local government and peak bodies, including the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), prior to any changes to VicHealth's role, funding or focus.
7. Requests the CEO write to State MPs that are representatives for electorates that include the Merri-bek municipality to notify them of this motion, Council's position, and seek their advocacy and support on this matter.

1. Background

Cr Irvin's background:

The social determinants of health are well-known, with inequality being a leading driver of ill-health. The Public Health and Wellbeing Act (2008) recognises the key role of councils in improving the health and wellbeing of people in their municipality, work reflected in councils' Health and Wellbeing Plans. Local councils help create the conditions for healthy communities through public services (e.g. swimming pools, parks, aged care, libraries, mental health programs, maternity services and vaccinations) and broader initiatives such as community grants, work with First Nations peoples and other work.

By engaging in early intervention, prevention and health promotion work of this nature, councils are a key stakeholder in reducing health inequality.

As the world's first health promotion foundation, VicHealth has been instrumental in major reforms and initiatives, including the Quit and SunSmart programs, the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program, and the first Victorian breast screening and cervical screening programs. Locally, VicHealth has supported the Merri-bek Community Food Alliance, supported research that shows up to 83% of Merri-bek would ride a bike if they felt safe enough, and developed resources through the This Girl Can program to support council's objectives around women's and girls' participation in sports and physical activity.

Evidence shows that partnership working between councils and VicHealth has led to improved health outcomes for local communities. Victorian councils also rely on municipal level data from VicHealth to ensure policy actions are targeted to areas and communities in greatest need (e.g. via accessing data on diet, physical activity, rates of smoking).

It is likely that any reduction, or loss of independence, of this prevention work is likely to exacerbate health inequalities, also increasing pressure on already stretched council services to fill gaps or address unmet needs.

2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

Merri-bek City Council's Council Plan (2025-2029) integrates the Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plan, which guides how Council supports the health and wellbeing of our community.

Council plays an important role in shaping the places where people live, work, learn and play, helping to create environments that support healthy lifestyles and reduce inequality.

The Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing plan is informed by the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan, the Merri-bek Health and Wellbeing Profile, community and stakeholders views, and prioritises areas where Council can make the biggest difference.

3. Financial Implications

Officer's comments:

Responding to this Notice of Motion can be undertaken within existing budgets.

4. Resources Implications

Officer's comments:

Responding to this Notice of Motion can be undertaken with existing resources.

8.4 NATIONAL GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Cr Helen Politis

Motion

That Council raises the Greek flag on Greek Independence Day on the 25 March.

1. Background

Cr Politis's background:

Greek Independence Day is a national day of celebration that commemorates the start of the Greek war of independence. For the Greek diaspora, their descendants and other ethnic communities, this day of national significance symbolises the right to culture, independence and freedom.

This motion seeks to raise the flag on that day in honour of the occasion and in recognition of the significant number of Greek citizens that reside in Merri-bek.

2. Policy Context

Officer's comments:

Council has an adopted Civic Flag Policy and an accompanying Community Flag Schedule. The Schedule specifies that the Greek Flag is to be flown on 25 March. At its meeting on 10 September 2025, Council resolved to raise the Palestinian Flag, which is currently flown on the fourth flagpole.

3. Financial Implications

Officer's comments:

There are no financial implications as a result of this Notice of Motion.

4. Resources Implications

Officer's comments:

There are no resource implications as a result of this Notice of Motion.